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4th Quarter 2000

Regional War

Land Struggles

University
Restructuring

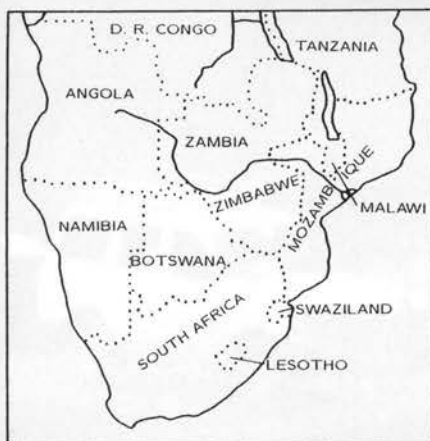
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Internally displaced refugees near the Rwandan border with the D.R. Congo, October 1998

Regional War

Regional war. The first time as heroism. The second time: not as farce, but as tragedy – specifically the tragedy of war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is a war that has drawn in national armies from across the region (Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe) and from eastern Africa as well (Uganda and Rwanda). It is also a war that seems to have no easy end in sight –

despite the fact that, as we write this editorial (in late-October), leaders of several of these belligerent nations are meeting once again, this time in Maputo, Mozambique, to seek to find a way out of the quagmire that the Congo has become.

The first time as heroism? The reference is to the thirty years' war

for southern African liberation, 1960 to 1990, a high water mark of regional accomplishment that seems all too hastily to have receded into the mists of history. Then, as had been only infrequently the case in Africa north of the Zambezi, revolutionary violence and ever more effective forms of mass action had proven necessary to defeat white minority rule, colonial and quasi-

colonial, across most of southern Africa.

It was a period bounded, in its beginnings, by the 1960 banning of the African National Congress (ANC) and Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) precipitating attempts by these movements to launch armed struggles in South Africa, by a further build-up in Angola of the pressures that erupted into violent confrontation there in 1961, and by Dar es Salaam's emergence as the central staging ground for liberation movements from Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa dedicated to struggles farther south. It was a period that spanned the ensuing conflicts that brought independence to both Angola and Mozambique in 1975 and the establishment of majority rule in Zimbabwe in 1980. And it was a period that closed, in 1990, with the liberation of Africa's last colony, Namibia, and with the release, in South Africa, of Nelson Mandela and the unbanning of the ANC that set the stage for a period of negotiations (1990-1994) towards establishment of a democratic constitution there and the holding of the "freedom elections" of 1994 that brought the ANC to power. The victory that was thus cumulatively earned has come to stand as one of the most dramatic moments in all of African history.

The outcome of the thirty years war also remained a contradictory one, of course. Certainly, the overthrow of white minority rule was an achievement of world historical consequence: however much it was an historical anomaly, such rule would not have disappeared of its own accord. At the same time, the devastation inflicted across the region during the war, and especially upon Mozambique and Angola, was vast both in material and human terms. Moreover, as we have had numerous occasions to note in the pages of *SAR* over the years, the broader goals that often emerged so tantalizingly in the course of

these struggles – the promise of a deep-cutting democratization of the societies affected, for example, and the transformation of the impoverished state of the mass of the population of the region – have proven difficult to realize. Even the sense of a common regional identity that might have been expected to surface from a shared region-wide struggle has been offset, if not entirely effaced, by many of the same kinds of xenophobias and inter-state rivalries that mark the rest of the continent.

Enter, then, the second regional war, the range of regional intervention in the DRC marked, at times, by certain quasi-legitimate security concerns on the part of some of the protagonists (Rwanda and Angola, for example) but more often by the venality and opportunism evident on all sides. At the core of the problem has been the cruel and exploitative Kabila regime itself, resolutely opposed to any hint of a democratic process that might offer a chance of domestic reconciliation and a way out. But Kabila is also ringed, for and against, by African states (and a range of global economic actors as well) whose elites have seemed to be principally preoccupied with carving up the riches of the Congo for themselves. The only sure losers, it can confidently be said, have been the peoples of southern, central and eastern Africa themselves.

It is within this desperate context that the interview with Congolese rebel militant Jacques Depelchin presented in this issue might be thought to offer, nonetheless, a flickering ember of hope. For he sees in certain specific patterns of bottom-up resistance to the war of the elites that otherwise rages above the heads (and over the dead bodies) of ordinary people in the Congo the prospect of a new kind of peace-making in Africa. It is a process he has seen at work in Mozambique in recent years and one he also professes to be at work, increasingly, in neighbouring Angola.

One can only hope that the kind of people's peace-making thus evoked by Depelchin can indeed find greater resonance – and in Angola at least as urgently as in the Congo. For in Angola the denouement of the thirty years war for southern African liberation has been even more fraught than elsewhere in the region. There the seeds of violence sown within the anti-colonial struggle itself and watered by the war's further internationalization after "independence" continued to produce bitter fruit well after 1990 and right up to the present day. Indeed, in contemporary Angola – as powerfully described by David Sogge in another key article in the present issue – the politics of warlordism and elite venality has become so extreme as to seem almost a cruel parody of the genre.

More than Depelchin, Sogge also emphasizes the context of a parasitic global capitalism that at once feeds, and feeds off, this kind of domestic political cancer. His is a chilling account indeed of "business as usual" and of the parameters of clientage in post-Cold War southern Africa – what with oil company executives and US State Department officials all but falling over themselves in jockeying to reach the Angolan feeding trough.

Lest we despair altogether, however, Sogge also sees fit to offer us some hope – developing a strand to his argument that represents, in effect, a positive echo of Depelchin's own main point. For Sogge too finds some promise in the opportunities still discernible in Angola for resuscitation of mass action from below, and for the kind of popular assertions that might ultimately ground a more promising project of domestic tranquillity and development. Perhaps, he seems to imply, the spark of humanity and courage that once drove a just war for southern African liberation can yet produce – in Angola, in the Congo, in southern Africa as a whole – a just and democratic peace. **S A R**

Angola

The Client Who Came in from the Cold

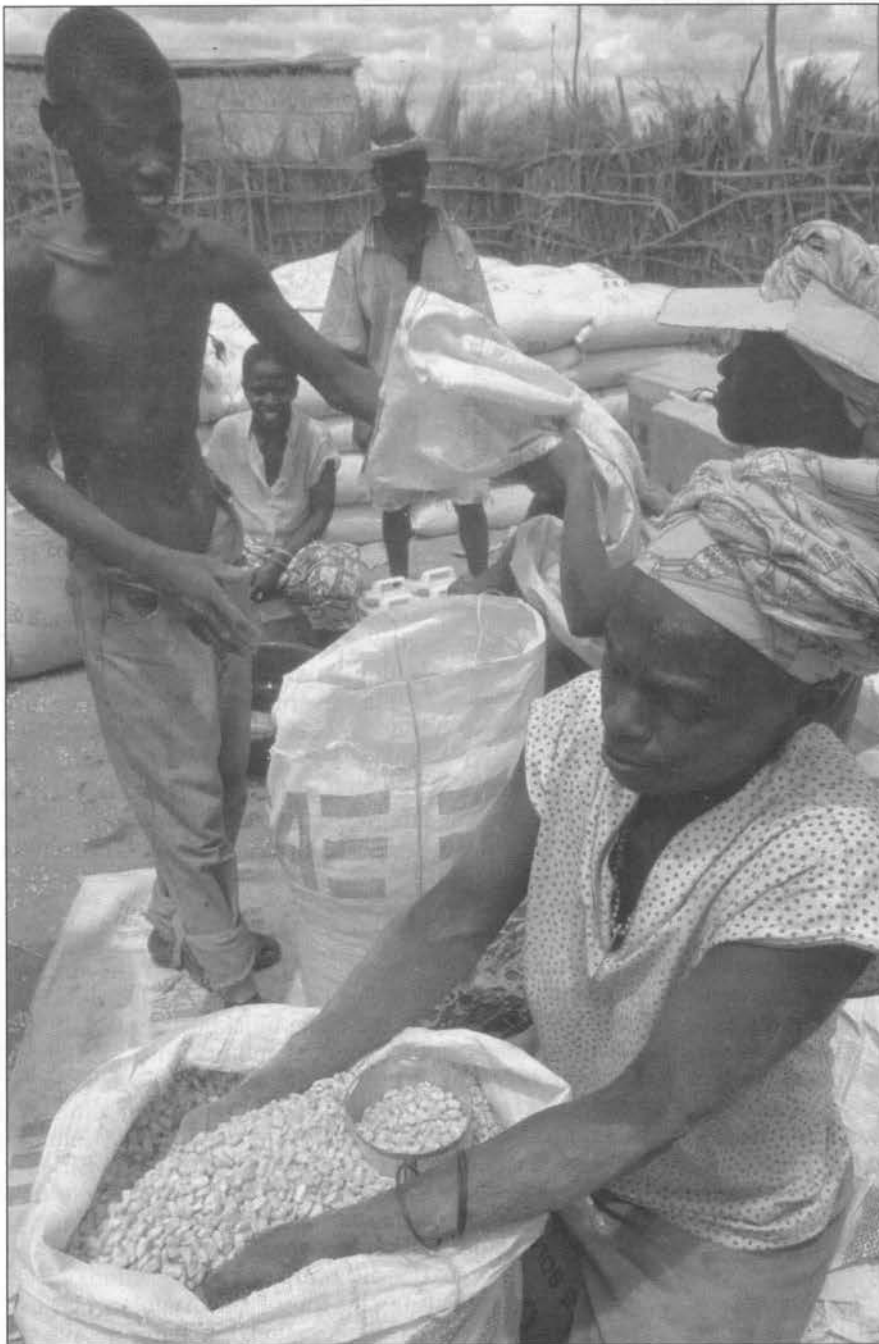
BY DAVID SOGGE

David Sogge is a Fellow of the Transnational Institute in Amsterdam. Since 1985 he has been a regular visitor to Angola, mainly at the request of aid agencies.

Imagine a poor land, broken by decades of organized greed and violence. Imagine that in March of this year, Coca Cola begins operations in the country; in April the IMF gets a hammerlock on management of state finances; in May a visiting American viceroy applauds, with few ifs or buts, the client government's aim to smash its internal opposition with force of arms; finally, in June a Godfather among corporate bagmen testifies that foreign firms have for decades paid many millions in kickbacks to senior government figures.

Normally, if the country in question were, say, Guatemala, Indonesia or Burma, such facts would be raw meat for progressive commentators and activists in the West. But here the response was subdued, for the country is Angola. Normal responses aren't what they used to be. In Angola, there are always mitigating circumstances. Senior figures are perhaps more sinned against than sinning. And there's a war on.

Inside Angola, however, it's been anything but subdued. Journalists, church people and independent politicians are standing up and "speaking truth to power." By way of Angola's threatened independent media and in such events as the Peace Congress convened by church leaders in Luanda in July, they are trying to set a new agenda. In August a new political movement, encouraged by Lopo do Nascimento,



Food distribution at camp for "Internally Displace Persons," refugees from the fighting, Cazito, Angola, November 1999

Eric Miller - Impact Visuals

who had signalled his readiness to abandon the ruling party, held its first public meeting. Do Nascimento – the country's first Prime Minister under President Neto, later Planning Minister and, for most of the 1990s, General Secretary of the MPLA – represents the party's older, emancipatory wing that stood for progressive values of democracy and social justice. In September, however, do Nascimento announced his refusal to accept widespread appeals that he run for the presidency backed by a new centre-left coalition. Meanwhile, in the face of police rifle butts, telephone wiretaps, unsolved break-ins and assassinations, many Angolans who would otherwise be active have been sidelined or cowed into passivity.

Rumbles in the jungle

The conflicted, murky politics of Angola's elites are not well-mapped. Local sociological wisdom holds that there are thirteen families atop the pyramid of power and wealth. The most important political schism is said to be *within* the ruling MPLA: the rivalry between the sidelined "Colossi" and the powerful clique based in the presidential grounds at Futungo de Belas – the "Futunguistas."

In external affairs the murk is also hard to penetrate, in part

because a lot of money and effort is spent on muddying the waters and directing our attention to the pretty corners of the swamp. But in the past twelve months a series of powerful reports and testimony have cut through this morass, exposing hitherto obscure circuits of money and goods (see box).

If these revelations have a common sub-text, it is this: global regulation of markets in high-value commodities is a joke, and colluding African elites and their Northern conferees are laughing all the way to their offshore banks.

But some important people are not amused. At the top of Northern establishments, officials are worried about spreading fallout from meltdowns like Angola's. Disorder in Africa, from Sierra Leone to Nigeria to the Congos, is proving much more intractable, contagious and dangerous than previously imagined.

For those keen to promote the Anglo-Saxon brand of deregulation, such trends carry a further unpleasantness: they put the urgent matter of democratic control back on public agendas. Such concessions to the democratic principle are unwelcome, given decades of careful effort to confine economic management to the plush backrooms of policy-making, where

neo-liberal regulatory laws such as the Maastricht Treaty and the MAI are prepared.

The international dimensions of Angola's crisis are many and complex. What dilemmas and tensions do they pose, especially for the United States, Angola's main partner in trade, investment and politics? This article considers the question, and concludes with remarks on spaces emerging for the pursuit of emancipatory agendas.

New client, old patron

Since the 1960s, when Angola's crude oil began flowing, corporate enthusiasm for Angola has never flagged. Despite the violent bullying of the Cold War, when Kissinger and later Reagan set out "in search of enemies" in Angola, key Western corporations and business leaders have stood by the MPLA-led government. Patrician banker David Rockefeller was one of Luanda's stoutest defenders in the courts of establishment opinion. In the face of the heavy anti-communist Rollback propaganda of the Reagan years, the public relations machine of the Gulf Oil Corporation provided the Luanda government with covering fire on the U.S. front. During the 1980s the U.S. began providing food aid via NGOs, thus penetrating yet one more African food market. The Export-Import Bank eased business

Human Rights Watch Report

In September 1999 came the Human Rights Watch report, *Angola Unravels*, by the indefatigable and well-informed Alex Vines; along with solid chapters on human rights abuses and civil society, a central chapter tells how both the government and Unita obtain arms. In December another London-based NGO, Global Witness, published a bombshell exposé, *A Crude Awakening: The Role of the Oil and Banking Industries in Angola's Civil War and the Plunder of State Assets*. The Angolan government is taking a Lisbon newspaper to court for having given this report extensive coverage. In mid-March 2000 came the report for the UN Security Council by United Nations Sanctions Committee Chairman, Canadian Ambassador Robert Fowler about sanctions-busting on behalf of Unita. Diplomatic feathers flew on its release, as it named several African presi-

dents and a host of companies as conspirators in contravening UN anti-Unita sanctions, some of them dating from 1993. In July, there came blockbuster revelations out of a long running judicial inquiry into "l'Affaire Elf," the biggest corruption scandal in postwar French history (extending through the French foreign ministry to François Mitterand and on to ex-chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany). The source: a former top Elf executive, known as "Monsieur Afrique" for his role for three decades as the main French liaison (and bagman) to African leaders whose "cooperation" was needed in the face of fierce US oil company competition. His testimony, implicating the top of the Angolan hierarchy (who hotly deny the allegations) includes details of bribes totalling in the tens of millions every year for twenty years.

terms for Boeing and other U.S. corporations. With the consent of the U.S. Treasury Secretary, the IMF and World Bank granted Angola membership in 1989, five years after the MPLA first expressed interest in joining the Bretton Woods club. Civil society was not to be left behind: in 1990, a number of oil and related firms set up the U.S.-Angola Chamber of Commerce, whose membership today numbers 75, including a few U.S. private aid agencies like PACT and Africare.

Today in corporate and diplomatic circles almost everyone's outlook on Angola is bullish. Its deepwater oilfields have become "the world's hottest exploration prospect." Executives talk about a "world class oil province," representing "a North Sea scale opportunity." Mere hype to boost share prices? It appears not. In late 1999 some \$18 billion in foreign investment deals had been lined up for the coming four years in the petroleum sector. In November 2000, direct flights between Luanda and Houston will begin (seat configuration: 138 economy, 91 business class).

Production is on a roll. From 617 thousand bpd (barrels per day) in 1995, Angola's crude oil output may approach 1 million bpd this year, and 1.4 million bpd in 2003. With massive new offshore reserves discovered regularly, Angola's output could surpass the current 2 million bpd of oil giant Nigeria, whose population is about ten times larger than Angola's. Since 1973, the United States has bought the lion's share of Angola's crude oil. As state revenues come overwhelmingly from the oil sector, a significant, but seldom-noticed fact becomes clear: American motorists, via U.S. oil companies, have effectively bankrolled the Angolan government, war and all, from the beginning.

Against those tens of billions of U.S. petrodollars to the Luanda government, the estimated \$250 million of CIA funding to Unita looks

like peanuts. Together, those two streams of money created a hugely destructive mix. U.S. covert resources and overt encouragement for Savimbi provoked Luanda into pouring its petrodollars into the sinkhole of a war economy. Those warbucks helped drive, and also camouflage, the many rackets that unite military and political elites and their foreign accomplices in common pursuit of



João Silva - PictureNET Africa

gain, and of war. Peace is unwelcome for them since it would mean loss of privilege and power. For the many "conflict entrepreneurs" on both sides, peace would mean sharing the loot with others including - unthinkable sacrifice - the Angolan citizenry at large. For Washington, entanglement with Angola has until recently required discretion and enough distance to maintain "plausible deniability." Indeed, it took no responsibility for the flow of petrodollars for Luanda.

Risk aversion

With the U.S. currently getting close to half its oil from abroad, the international risks are evident. Certainly the domestic political risks attached to the oil economy have been concentrating politicians' minds in recent months. Cheap gas at the pump has become a *de facto* human right in the West. Threats to that entitlement evoke motorists' wrath. Politicians rarely fail to recall the sheer political and financial muscle of the oil industry and the ways it lubricates and massages the U.S. political system - not to mention the Lilliputian political systems in Africa.

Angola may be a way of mitigating those risks. In Washington DC, several facts stand out: In 1999, Angola supplied about 7 percent of crude oil imports to the U.S. - a dependence much greater than that on Kuwaiti oil at the time of the Iraqi invasion. By 2008, it is projected to account for 10 percent of U.S. oil imports. Angola is the largest non-OPEC supplier outside the Western Hemisphere.

Since 1993, when the Clinton administration recognized the MPLA government officially, the frequency and scope of contact between Luanda and Washington have grown apace, with stepped-up exchanges of top-level government, military and business visits. In mid-1999 the U.S. and Angola set up a Bilateral Consultative Commission to keep on track and add momentum to the growing traffic in business, aid, security and financial relations. Last year, in the month of December alone, two State Department heavyweights, Under Secretary of State Thomas Pickering and Ambassador to the UN Richard Holbrooke, made separate visits to Luanda. Their rhetoric was bullish and firmly pro-government: "The United States will stand with you, politically and economically, as well as through assistance." Visiting Luanda in May 2000, Assistant Secretary of State

for African Affairs Susan Rice told reporters that "... the military response [to Unita] is a necessary part of government efforts to reach peace."

The growing patron-client relationship has been sealed by a new agreement with the IMF, ratified in April. Details were kept secret, but eventually some leaked out. Angola's first task is to pay off debts to the multilateral banks, then negotiate repayment of bilateral debts, also in arrears. It will have to stop printing so much money, and curb inflation through standard austerity measures. These include politically risky cuts in military spending and higher taxes combined with actual collection of taxes.

But the measure most likely to upset applecarts is the tracking of oil revenues. The aim is to ensure that oil company payments are duly deposited in Angola's central bank, and duly registered in national accounts, rather than disappear in the "Bermuda Triangle" between the state oil company (which has functioned as a shadow finance ministry and central bank), the central bank itself, and the political leadership at Futungo. If carried out, this shift of power would shake up the way the Angolan elite, and their oil company partners, do business. Indeed, Washington's approach in Angola could betoken a new-found interest in pruning back the wilder growths of de-regulated, privatized life on the planet. For things can get out of hand. If the state can't provide law and order (for enforcement of business contracts) and if fiscal management has broken down (how will those debts get repaid on time?) then mercantile foreign policy aims will be frustrated. Unless Angola can somehow quickly get back to normal, doubt will be cast on the purposes and legitimacy of key institutions like the IMF and World Bank, as well as instruments of convenience to the United States like UN blue helmets and the service-delivery NGOs.

But is "reform" in Angola merely a matter of returning to "normal"? That assumption seems to guide most aid and relief efforts. Yet a return to a status quo ante looks about as likely as the advent of democratic socialism. For three decades the centre of gravity of Angola's political economy has inexorably moved offshore, and below the surface - both figuratively and literally. New oil wells are a hundred-plus kilometres from the coast, often at depths of a kilometre or more. Circuits of money and power also flow offshore, mainly among foreign oil companies, Angola's national oil company, and the elite in high-walled enclaves in Luanda. Private security services, local riot police, imported foodstuffs and a couple of new sewer systems will keep the lid on trouble and disease in cities; foreign law firms and accountants will keep the watch abroad over corporate contracts. Most Angolan labour, food and other commodities are at best of secondary importance. Indeed "onshore" life in Angola is largely irrelevant to the system as it is now.

Offshore control, onshore hopes

The projects of hollowing-out and marginalizing the "developmental state" and of re-channelling political and economic resources upward and outward, are virtually complete in Angola. What the Lancaster University Africanist Christopher Clapham terms "the project of external governance" is at hand. True, the current Washington-led projects to re-engineer government (more powers to the Central Bank and Finance Ministry, a fuss every now and then about multi-party elections, etc.) and civil society (promotion of local business associations and independent media) are important and could nudge things in democratic directions. And yes, something must be seen to be done about poverty onshore. Preferably anti-poverty measures should bypass the public sector. Whatever their scope and content, they should never

be construed as citizen rights or entitlements. Whether it is about water or transport infrastructure, health care, security or rural development, the strategy of choice is via foreign for-profit or nonprofit agents, such as under the BOT formula: Build, Operate, after a certain number of years Transfer the investment in question to local hands. Charitable investments are no longer the exclusive domain of the non-profits; in 1998, the Chevron oil company made 28 grants, mainly for school and health services, totalling more than \$1 million, thus making it one of the larger private aid agencies operating in Angola.

What space and opportunities exist to support Angolans pursuing an emancipatory national project? In the short to middle run, the best prospects are in the towns and cities. That is where more than half, perhaps two-thirds, of Angola's population live, albeit largely as displaced people. And that is where armed combat least occurs. In 2001, some city dwellers will be facing a new spectacle, that of politicians competing for votes in municipal elections. That means added space for debate, and agenda-setting potentially with real consequences. Second, across Africa the World Bank and African Development Bank have said they will begin drawing up their annual spending plans, hitherto negotiated only with Finance Ministry technocrats, in ways that allow "consultation" with local "civil society." There are no known immediate plans for such things in Angola, but sooner or later they will appear. These are occasions created from the top down, and carry all the dangers of the hollow, choice-less, "low intensity" democracy that is an emerging hallmark of globalized governance in Africa today. But they could provide moments, and training grounds, for Angolans to pursue deeper, emancipatory politics and to influence agendas on terms meaningful to them.

S A R

“This War Must End”

Jacques Depelchin on the Congo

Jacques Depelchin, a leader of the Rally for Congolese Democracy, was interviewed by SAR's Congo correspondent David Moore in August, just as the Democratic Republic of the Congo's latest round of peace negotiations under the rubric of the Lusaka Accord was, once again, being pronounced a failure. Readers will recall that, in August 1998, the RCD was the first rebel group to mount a challenge to Laurent Desire Kabila, at much the same point as Rwanda and Uganda also turned against their ally of 1996 and 1997. Led by University of Dar es Salaam History professor Ernest Wamba dia Wamba, the RCD articulated the most progressive and democratic policies of all the Congolese rebel groups that mushroomed up during this period. More recently, however, the RCD has been plagued by a major split: a more militarist faction led by Emile Ilunga and backed by Rwanda has forced the Wamba dia Wamba group into the Bunia region of north-east DRC and away from the more newsworthy centres such as Kisangani where the Ilunga forces are currently in a situation of stalemate vis-à-vis Kabila's forces.

While such a situation might seem at first to suggest a weakening of Wamba dia Wamba's group, this repositioning may also be having positive effects. Certainly, it appears to have influenced Jacques Depelchin's own thinking about peace and reconstruction, encouraging him to shift away from the state (and rebel-group) centred approach of the Lusaka Accords and towards a more “people-oriented” stance. This position is articulated clearly in the course of the following interview. The positive aspects of this shift are clear to see. At the same time, when one also takes into account the entrenched state-centredness of international relations and of peace-keeping discourse what can it mean in practice to say that “global civil society” has to work with the popular forces for peace? Needless to say, there are some tough issues for SAR readers to consider here.

For their part, Jacques Depelchin and his group continue to negotiate the conflicts that emerge over such issues as land tenure relations and the like – even as, in doing so, they brush up against the com-

plexities of the interface of “tribe” and class and the difficulties offered up by colonially imposed boundaries and by the various state-driven armies and bureaucracies that swirl around them. Yet they have seen enough and done enough to eschew any notion of the “end of history” that the post-Cold War “world order” was supposed to have delivered. In their corner of Congo, Depelchin seems to suggest, it's more like history is restarting.

Before assuming a leadership role in the Rally for Congolese Democracy Jacques Depelchin worked as a professor of economic history at the Universities of Dar es Salaam, of California-Berkeley, and of Eduardo Mondlane (in Maputo, Mozambique). Most recently he taught at the Protestant University in Kinshasa where, from 1996 to 1998, he also worked on the transformation of the DRC's educational system. He is the author of *From The Congo Free State To Zaire (1885-1974)*; *Towards a Demystification of Economic and Political History* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1992).

SAR: Why do you think the Lusaka Accord talks have failed?

Depelchin: The primary factor is President Kabila himself. He has refused to go along with the agreement. Ever since he signed, he has been complaining about one thing or the other while at the same time violating the Lusaka Agreement.

Of course, the agreement has faults. Some go back to what we would call the state of the rebellion against the state. After all, the people in the Congo

were rebelling because Kabila was turning his back against the process of democratization, so the peace everybody was expecting did not occur.

The Accord's timetable is another example of why these things don't work. Given the Congolese situation it was clear that it couldn't. The concept of the timetable itself is flawed: unless this or that happens nothing can be done. So the UN says it cannot deploy troops unless the treaty conditions are realized. With that kind of situation Kabila has room to create the kind

of problems that in effect allow him to prevent deployment.

Yet we have always said that the issue is not one of peacekeeping troops. You can't have peacekeeping troops on the ground when the conditions for actually building and making peace aren't there. The framing of the Lusaka agreement has not taken this into account.

SAR: What might be some conditions for reinvigorating discussions at a different level and towards building peace? You have been involved in negotiating a peace pro-

cess between the pastoralists and the agriculturalists – the Hema and the Lendu – in Ituri province near Bunia. Perhaps some of the experience you've gained there could be built on more broadly.

Depelchin: This is not just from our own experience, but from that of others as well. But, as an example, when we went to Bunia we had to bring under control a conflict involving, fundamentally, the Hema and the Lendu. (Although it's an oversimplification to reduce it to a matter of these two ethnic groups, they were in fact the two main protagonists.) We simply went to those who were most interested in seeing that peace should return. We discovered that the majority of the people wanted the war to end. We felt that the question of who was responsible for the war and where the blame should be put should be handled later, because you will never reach an agreement if you get

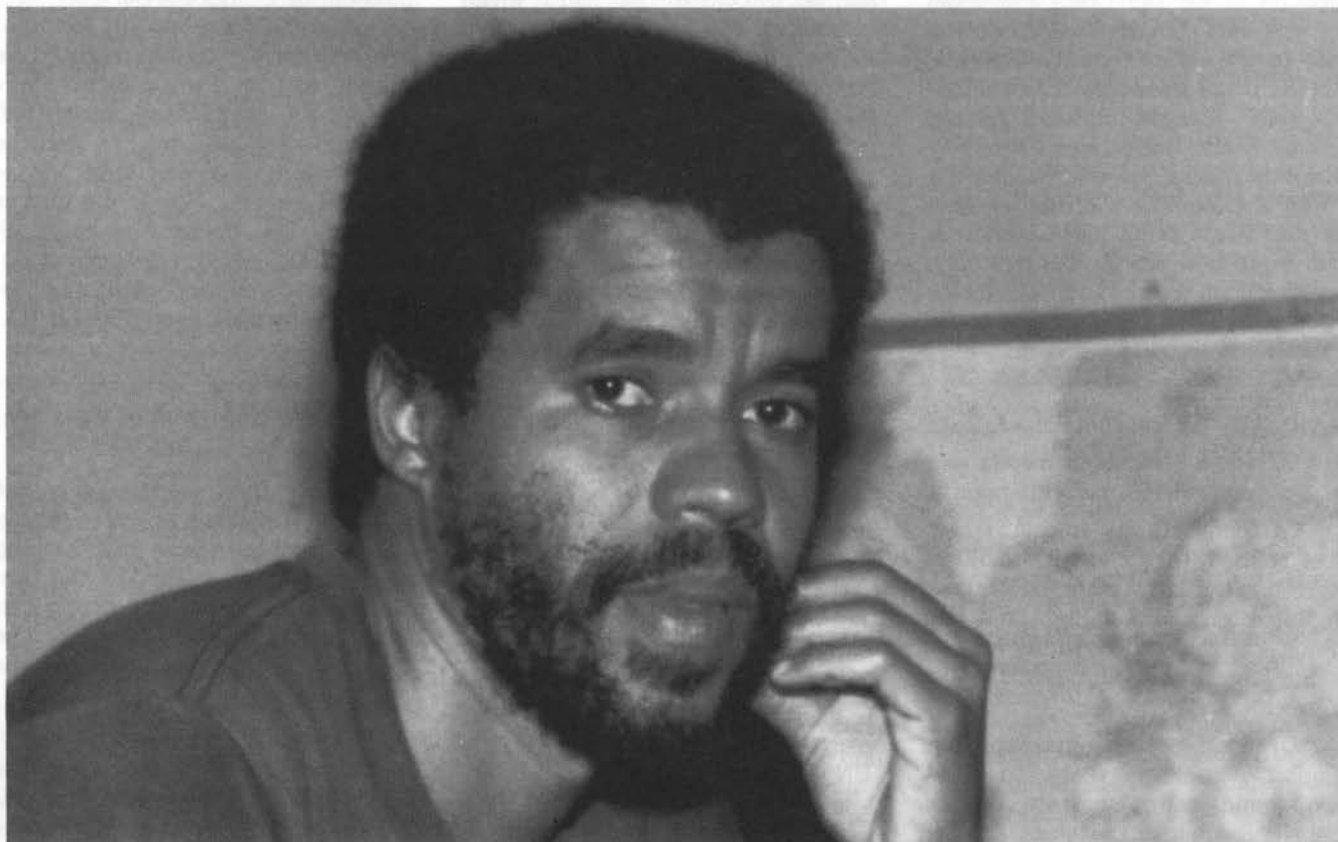
bogged down on figuring out who is to blame. We combatted that way of thinking about it. Also, the emphasis was on engaging the people most likely to gain from the peaceful resolution.

During the conflict's height there was a great deal of news coverage, but nobody talked about the success of such a process. Sure, there are still people being killed, unnecessarily, here and there – there are sellouts – but in the end we can say that the conflict has died down.

In Angola, to take another example, there is a process involving initiatives from religious groups. The notion is anchored in the idea that people really wanting peace should get together. It is hoped that all protagonists – including UNITA and government representatives – would come on board eventually but it is interesting that, in the first instance, the process takes place in

line with the population's own logic as opposed to a logic rooted in state-to-state, party-to-party negotiation which is then delivered downwards to the people.

To look beyond the UN – not to put down all the efforts it undertook to bring about the Lusaka Agreement, of course – and the difficulties it has had over the last few years with regard to the Lusaka Agreement, to the DRC or to Angola, and then compare those stumbling failures to the Mozambican case, one can distinguish between processes with a logic rooted in the state and another rooted in ensuring that the people most likely to benefit from the agreement were made central to the process. This difference even affects how the representatives organize the discussions. Sure, in Mozambique government representatives were essential to the process, but what was central was the government's concern to make sure



A younger Jacques Depelchin in Maputo, 1981

Linzi Manicom

it responded to wishes of the majority of the population.

SAR: *A state logic involving Rwanda, Uganda and other states is seen by many Congolese as being a main factor in perpetrating the war. There is an internal logic of rebellion but many Congolese see the rebels as other states' proxies. Can one get beyond that dichotomy? Can armed opposition groups talk to unarmed groups, as the Accord proposes?*

Depelchin: True: in this case regional states involved make that process more difficult. But if you really look – whether in Rwanda, whether in Uganda, in Angola, whether in Zimbabwe, in Congo – you find that the majority want to see an end to this war. This majority is very, very, very tired of war. People just want to see it end. If these countries were led by peoples' governments they would follow the route taken by Mugabe at the end of the Mozambican civil war. That is to say, "let's make sure that you really respond to the wishes of the majority of the population." So while that interstate logic is true, that difficulty is primarily one of appearance. Those state signatories should really make an effort to satisfy the wishes of the majority.

In that sense, today's Angolan internal process is leading to a national dialogue. It's a new initiative based simply on people saying: "Listen, let's get all the protagonists together to discuss fundamental issues keeping us at war and let's put an end to this war."

It is what we ourselves have tried to do. During our work of social reconstruction and peace-building, we are working to establish processes, not advance individual interests. Moreover, these processes are fundamentally Congolese. We do this on the basis of democratic prescriptions for the state. This is fundamental.

In contrast, the state-logic which continues to wreak havoc on the

people is a colonial inheritance, a fact often overlooked. Regardless of the accommodations we have made to them subsequently, the present states are colonial and conquest states organized in order to divide and rule people. They have created the very conditions we see today. The Great Lakes Region crisis is an exacerbation of that kind of rule. The leaders in the region must now take stock and decide that conducting low-intensity warfare against their own population must end. For whom? For the benefit of their own population.

SAR: *There's much talk about a "global civil society" alternative to an international state logic. What initiatives could global actors other than the United Nations and states play in facilitating a process like that which you advocate? Clearly, there are many Congolese who desire to get together at a level other than states, but lack the means. What international organization of people could facilitate a dialogue?*

Depelchin: One has to be very, very careful here. In the case of Mozambique or that of the inter-ethnic conflict in Ituri which we have discussed, the key to a successful exercise was that it be rooted within the area and the population with most to gain from peace. That is fundamental. Unless that view is taken then we will continue convening peace conferences here and there with nothing happening. In Angola, people on the ground are taking hold of the whole process. Those who have resources and mandates from their organizations can, however, push for such processes and help such Angolans to realize them. In the DRC there are initiatives, too. But the conditions must be created so that the entire local population can come together within their own areas and be at the core of the whole process, thus bringing about what everyone really wants to see happen. That can happen in a national and

global way too, but only if it is anchored and rooted in people in the areas most in need of the desired outcome.

SAR: *Che Guevara's Congo diaries say that the Congolese aren't good fighters. Of course, this could be a very positive thing: many Congolese say, "we are a peace-loving people." You yourself seem to be leaving the military or armed option and moving towards reimagining the possibilities in more peaceful processes. Why have you changed your thinking about these things?*

Depelchin: Our August 1998 political declaration said specifically that we took up arms as a last resort to make Kabila understand the Congolese crisis could only be resolved politically. In our statements regarding Kisangani [where, as noted above, a group in the RCD split from Wamba dia Wamba in mid-1999 and joined the Rwandans, instigating a war between the two RCD groups] we said that the present war was the eleventh in the Congo since 1959. These wars have never resolved the question of getting a sustainable democratic regime in place. This defines, in fact, the crisis of the Congo.

There are two camps or lines regarding the question of militarization. One says the crisis is political. It must be resolved politically. We must not resort to military means to resolve the contradiction. It also says that we do not have to enter Kinshasa to bring about transformation. The process of democratization takes place as the rebellion goes on. That is one reason why many people did not like Professor Wamba's leadership in Goma. People said democratization can not take place during war. But the results of the alternative view can be traced in the careers of Mobutu and Kabila. It leads to rule by coup d'etat following coup d'etat. That process has itself to be transformed.

The Congolese people have learned one thing over these last few

years: they know very well what they no longer want. Yet it is much more difficult to begin building what they actually do want. This is what we are trying to do in the area we control. We involve the population in dialogue. After all, how can one say you are going into the National Dialogue without allowing people to exercise that very method? We are making public the treasury function, and transforming administration into something of the population, for the population, by the population. This requires a series of dialogues day in day out so that people can internalize what we understand by dialogue. Then people can resort to dialogue to resolve any kind of issue – including those too often solved by life-or-death methods in other situations.

SAR: *The outside world only sees the logic of armed force. And yet it is apparent that various movements have different dynamics across the country, however difficult it sometimes seems to get inside such processes.*

Depelchin: I repeat and I emphasize: the central issue is which group responds to peoples' needs not just simply in speeches and declarations but concretely on the ground. Which one helps things to happen that the population wants to see? That is the only way people are mobilized. Sooner or later it is not how many troops you have that counts, but whether the population supports the position and the processes in which your group is engaged.

And we have seen this reality at work, even though misleading propaganda continues as people try to push Professor Wamba aside by alleging all manner of things. But people will eventually ask why the group without military force comparable to the others has withstood those who are trying to eliminate it. We were supposed to be eliminated in Kisangani last year. Over the last few weeks in Bunia all kinds of efforts have been

made to undermine the process of democratization by people who say "first of all let's get to Kinshasa." But this is, to repeat, the mentality of the coup d'etat. We feel that's over, that's something from the past. We must get away from of that mentality. As long as you stick with what the population wants, you are likely to emerge as the leader it wants.

SAR: *Small groups from all sides benefit from the political economy of war. Who benefits in this one? What process makes people aware of who benefits? What can break the cycle?*

Depelchin: I can respond generally. It would require an international investigation to specify the pillaging of the Congo's resources – the names and so on. The UN has proposed

that. It would be a welcome exercise. However, remember that this is not the first time our resources have been pillaged. It was underway during colonial occupation. Adam Hochschild's *King Leopold's Ghost* states that 10 million Congolese disappeared simply because the process of pillaging the country took precedence over their welfare. That can only be genocide, although Hochschild refuses to use the term. Any war situation benefits a "mafia" – people organized to take advantage of the resources of Angola, Congo and the like.

SAR: *Are you making progress?*

Depelchin: I think that if everybody tried to go in the direction of which I have spoken, we would move, however slowly, but we would move forward.

S A R



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The Politics of Land

ZANU vs. the MDC

BY SAMUEL KARIUKI AND
LUCIEN VAN DER WALT

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Something unusual took place in Zimbabwe on Wednesday 2 August, 2000. The umbrella labour body, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions or ZCTU, called a general strike against a series of farm occupations that had begun in March this year. The call for a stay away from work had been initiated by civic groups – including the Commercial Farmers Union (CFU), a business association representing mainly white agribusiness which controls 30% of the best arable land in the country – yet ZCTU acting president Isaac Matongo announced that the unions were now leading the action. The strike action was also endorsed by the new mass opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) – aligned to the labour movement – as well as by the National Constitutional Assembly, a coalition of civil society formations.

Now a general strike is nothing unusual in Zimbabwe: since 1996 the revived labour movement has repeatedly demonstrated its power in this manner. What was unusual was the fact that the ZCTU came out in opposition to a wave of farm occupations affecting more than 1,300 white-owned farms in a country where the issue of land reform has been central to political struggles since the initial colonization of the country by Cecil John Rhodes' British South African Company (BSAC) in 1889.

Also unusual was the fact that the ZCTU aligned itself with the

CFU in this action, despite the fact that there is no love lost between the two bodies. Thus, in October 1997, farm labourers organized by the ZCTU's General Agricultural and Plantation Workers' Union of Zimbabwe (GAPWUZ) launched two weeks of work stoppages and road blockades demanding a US\$70 wage, a 135% increase. In December 1999, GAPWUZ had 84,000 members, representing a considerable portion of the more than 750,000 farmworkers who, with their families, account for rather more than two million of Zimbabwe's twelve million people.

Decolonization

In order to understand this seeming contradiction, it is necessary to examine both the course of Zimbabwe's decolonization process and of its post-Independence land reform programme – as well as the manner in which these strands have intersected, in turn, with growing pressures from the working class – as crucial factors that have created the current impasse in the country.

Like most other African countries Zimbabwe moved to independence in 1980 via a negotiated settlement. In this case, the settlement that was reached – the Lancaster House Agreement of 1979, embodied in the Lancaster House Constitution (LHC) – ended the liberation war, or Chimurenga, but set in place draconian restrictions on land redistribution. The key compromise made in the settlement, and agreed to by all parties involved in the negotiations brokered by Britain – including Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and Joshua Nkomo's Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU) – was the entrenchment of private property rights. The

LHC also included the provision that government could not expropriate land without compensation and that the distribution of land was to take place on the basis of a "willing seller - willing buyer" approach. It was understood that Britain would help finance compensation.

The policy failed dramatically to solve the land question, lending itself to cosmetic changes rather than to any form of genuine agrarian transformation. By the early 1930s, land had been divided into that governed by communal tenure in "native reserves" (22.4% of the land), "native purchase areas" for a black yeomanry (7.1%), and privately owned commercial farms in areas reserved for white ownership (50.8%). Between 1982 and 1985, the Zimbabwe government aimed to re-settle 162,000 families on 9 million hectares (ha) of land. But by 1990 the government had only resettled 51,000 families on 3 million ha of land.

Moreover, resettlement typically involved marginal lands, these being the more readily available on the market; better lands often went to wealthy, well-connected Africans, part of the black bourgeoisie that emerged around the State and the ruling party. Land ownership also remained highly gendered, with wives constituting less than 2% of titleholders in resettlement areas at the end of the 1990s. At the same time, the 4,500, mainly white, commercial farmers represented by the CFU continued to hold 11 million ha, representing close to 70% of arable land, whilst Africans owned around 16 million ha.

This situation proved increasingly unsustainable in the 1990s. High unemployment closed an outlet

for pressure on land: it is estimated that less than 22,000 school-leavers are able to enter waged employment each year. Unemployment may be as high as 40% today. And a neo-liberal Structural Adjustment Programme implemented with vigour by the government (now ruled by ZANU-Patriotic Front [ZANU-PF], a merger of ZANU and ZAPU) from

politicians had plundered its coffers with bogus claims. The matter was only resolved In August 1997, after dramatic protests, Mugabe promised to pay back pension arrears and guaranteed a monthly stipend of Z\$2,000 per head from January 1998, as well free health care and education to the families of such "war vets." This gesture

have enormous implications for subsequent developments, as we shall see below.

Mugabe initially tried to fund the generous packages to the war vets by implementing a special 5% levy on wages (and company profits), a 2.5% hike in sales tax, and higher prices for petrol and electricity. This move outraged



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the start of the 1990s worsened the situation by fostering deindustrialization and mass public sector layoffs. Meanwhile, the former combatants from the liberation war armies of ZANU and ZAPU – the 50,000 war veterans – also came into conflict with government from the mid-1990s.

The "War Vets"

Not only was land not forthcoming to the latter, but payments from the War Victims Compensation Fund were suspended in March 1997 after it was revealed that

certainly won the war vets to government's side, and this volatile constituency – who in 1996 had been already threatening to forcibly occupy both white-owned land and the farms of ZANU-PF politicians – now found that it paid to support the incumbent politicians, rather than to seek to expropriate their land. (Such material considerations doubtless also brought to the ranks those numerous "war vets" who were actually far too youthful to be genuine but who also attached themselves to ZANU-PF in 2000). This shift in alignment would

the ZCTU, which raised demands around this issue in general strikes on the 9 December, 1997, and on the 3/4 March, 1998. Further general strikes against price rises took place in November that year.

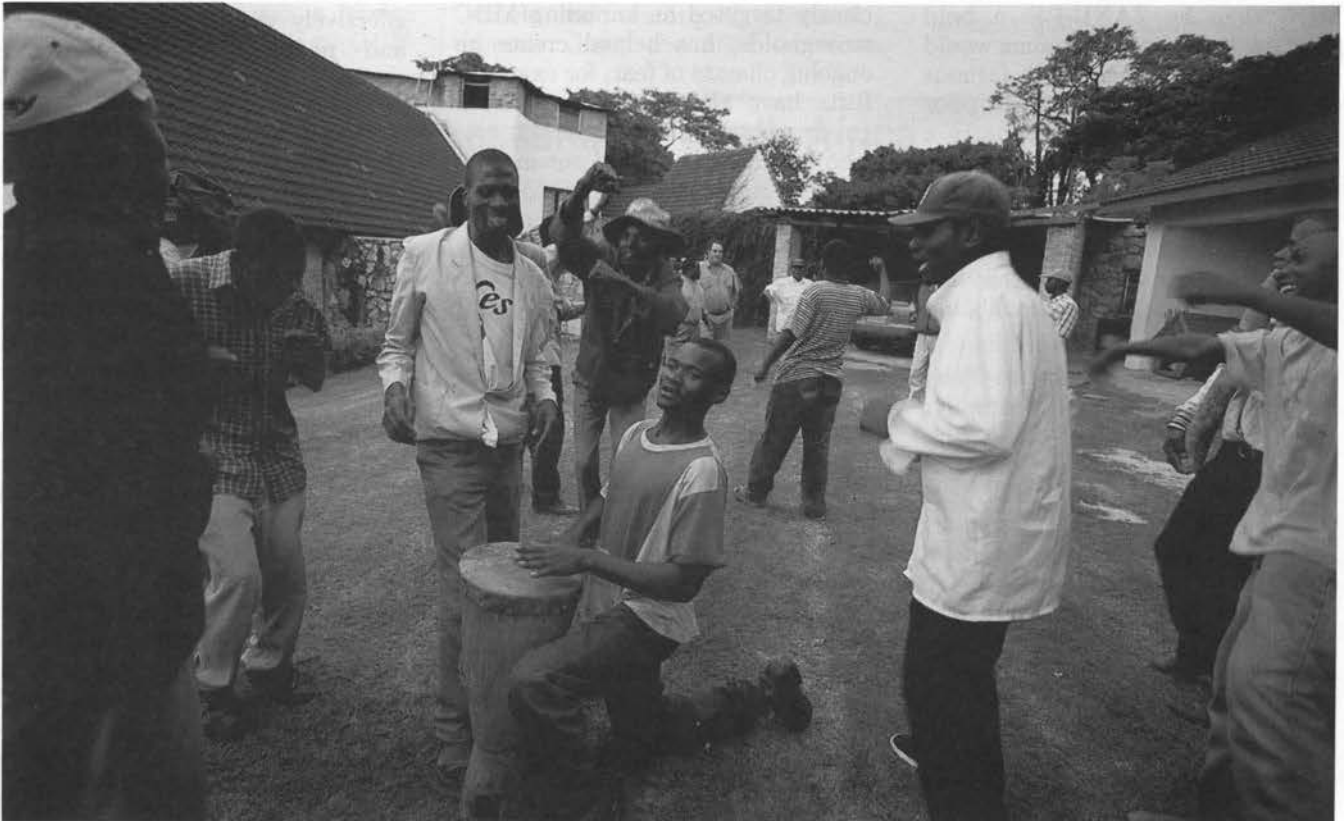
By this point, in any case, the ZCTU and its leadership (notably general-secretary Morgan Tsvangirai) were riding at the crest of a wave of popularity amongst the urban working class and of resistance to government excesses. Not only had the unions reportedly grown from 200,000 members in 1996 to 700,000 by 1998, but they also had the

credibility to call a National Working Peoples Convention in Harare in February 1999 to launch a "mass political movement for change."

This labour upsurge led to the formation of the MDC, although the fledgling organization was from the start disproportionately influenced by the middle class (as well as by business, including white

place, sponsored both tacitly and often more overtly by the state itself. Distinguished from an earlier set of farm occupation movements in 1996 and 1998 which had been marked by their peasant base and open hostility to ZANU-PF, the new occupations aimed to intimidate MDC supporters and restore Mugabe's threadbare credibility on the land issue.

Mugabe's minions acted violently to prevent the MDC from developing a sustained rural election campaign had a profound impact on the outcome. After all, there were 31 deaths in the run-up to the elections and widespread MDC/ZANU-PF clashes, not to mention many plausible allegations of electoral fraud. We must not forget this fact



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"War vets" celebrate successful raid on a white-owned farm, Zimbabwe, April 2000

farmers), adopting conservative economic policies and appointing business leader, Eddie Cross, as its economic spokesperson. Nonetheless, the new party and its allies in civil society were able to help defeat Mugabe in a referendum on a new constitution (which included provisions for land acquisition) in February 2000.

The land invasions

It was at this point that the war vets, now loyal to Mugabe, and supplemented by ZANU-PF youth, reappeared: following the referendum, a wave of farm occupations took

For his credibility on this front had steadily declined as fiery speeches on land reform repeatedly failed to actually materialize into action, and as donors began, from the mid-1990s, to withdraw such funding as was available for reform, arguing that the funds were being misused.

The result: for all its popular appeal, the MDC still only managed to win 57 out of 120 elected seats, behind ZANU-PF's 62 seats, in the June 2000 elections. Notably, the MDC votes were overwhelmingly concentrated in urban, working class areas. Of course, the fact that

in the paragraphs that follow. At the same time, it also appears to be the case that the intervention of the war vets had, up to a point, helped Mugabe successfully to pose as the champion of land reform.

There is also another dimension to this, however. For the fact remains that the MDC's own lack of any real rural land reform programme or serious drive to build a peasant base in the communal areas must be seen as having played straight into Mugabe's hands. Clearly, the war vets did not create the rural crisis from nothing:

the potential for a rural crisis has existed for years as a result of the unresolved land question.

The MDC's flaws

Given Mugabe's record on land reform, it would not have been too difficult for the MDC to make the land question its own issue. Indeed, it was an issue that should have been even more readily exploitable by the MDC than by ZANU-PF: a bold MDC land reform programme would have undercut Mugabe's fatuous claims to champion the rural poor and helped secure the new party a peasant majority in addition to its undoubted working class support. The irony was that, by default, the MDC effectively surrendered the land issue to the very party that had consistently blocked any real land reform for twenty years.

The MDC is correct to deny that the war vet land occupiers are a genuine peasant movement. But this is not good enough: such an argument helps the MDC avoid the question of how a far more legitimate peasant social movement could be built in Zimbabwe and the question of what role the MDC and ZCTU could play in such an undertaking. In fact, a systematic programme for agrarian transformation is precisely what the MDC lacks. For all its noises about

taking the land issue seriously, the MDC has largely sidestepped the land issue.

This is unfortunate since the current situation seems highly unstable and the need for particularly firm leadership from the MDC in opposition is self-evident. A strong police and army presence, ostensibly to prevent post-election violence but clearly targeted at harassing MDC strongholds, has helped create an ongoing climate of fear, for example. Rifts have also appeared between government officials and the war vets who have now branched out into allocating residential stands in urban areas (charging Z\$1,500 a piece for "survey" and "demarcation" costs). And many of the occupied farms remain under the control of the war vets.

It is in this context, of course, that the ZCTU strike (noted at the outset of this article) against the war vets' actions and calling for a restoration of law and order occurred. Not least important in all of this is the fact that many farmworkers will lose their jobs if the land is allocated to the farm occupiers. Philip Munyanyi of GUPWAZ estimates that farm occupations have driven 5,000 workers from their homes in the past six months, and that a further 10,000 jobs are

in immediate jeopardy on hundreds of farms. Around the town of Bindura, for example, war vets have seized workers' houses for themselves, whilst workers now live in makeshift shelters of plastic sheeting and straw. Up to 350,000 farmworkers could be affected if the occupations are legalized.

Regrettably, the MDC's silence on the land issue, the failure to blend effectively the interests of workers and peasants into an effective strategic plan, is emblematic of larger flaws in its programme. Not only does the MDC lack the alternative land reform programme that would be deserving of peasant (and worker) support but the party also has yet to demonstrate that it has, more broadly, the kind of clear alternative to ZANU-PF's neo-liberal policies that would be deserving of the long-term support of the urban working class.

What is actually required, then, is a programme for social transformation that overcomes divide-and-rule politics by posing demands – around land, around political reform and social welfare restructuring, around popular self-management of services and production – that address the needs of both peasants and workers and thus helps building a class alliance between the two that transcends the urban/rural and



João Silva – PictureNET Africa

commercial farm/communal area divides still mirrored in the June 2000 election results.

Any plans for progressive agrarian reform would have to accommodate both peasants and workers, of course. Specifically, it would have to factor in the vast rural working class, rather than presenting the land issue as simply being one of indigenous peasants versus foreign landlords. For one thing, GUP-

WAZ and its constituency cannot be treated as irrelevant to the land question; for another, the question must also be posed as to whether dividing large-scale commercial farms into tiny peasant holdings necessarily provides a sustainable basis for agrarian transformation.

At the moment the party's dangerous liaison with business should be sending out warning signals about the need to secure

working class control over what is, after all, widely seen to be a "workers' party" and to do so before the MDC is lost to its mass base. This latter is the danger with all centre-left political parties: they tend to look "upwards" towards multi-class alliances from which workers do not benefit and to demobilize grassroots struggles in a race to influence a state that is actually quite hostile to labour.

S A R

Lessons for South Africa

There are lessons to be drawn for South Africa from the Zimbabwean case. Notwithstanding the differences between the two countries, South Africa's land reform programme is strikingly similar to that of Zimbabwe under the LHC. It centres on land reform through the market, to be supplemented by a Land Claims Court (to deal with cases of gross injustice after 1913) and increased security of tenure for labour tenants on farms. Further, South Africa's land reform policy has this year begun to focus explicitly on the creation of a black agrarian bourgeoisie, again reminiscent of Zimbabwe's *de facto* focus on developing black small and medium commercial farming.

There is no reason to suppose that this policy framework will be any more successful in redistributing land than its Zimbabwean counterpart. Indeed, early indications are that matters may even be worse. Less than 5% of land claims have been settled, whilst less than 2% of agricultural land in South Africa has been redistributed to date, far short of the 30% projected to be redistributed by 2000. Given the ANC government's focus on fiscal discipline as part of its overall commitment to neo-liberal macroeconomic policies, funds for reform and for administering land claims and land tenure reform are certain to be inadequate. Indeed, the current Budget allocates a paltry 0.4% to land reform.

So, like Zimbabwe, rural inequality seems set to be an enduring feature of South Africa's social landscape. And with it, the perpetuation of embittered, violent and emotionally charged agrarian relations, expressed in brutal assaults by farmers on their workers and also in periodic spates of the killing of farmers.

Is South Africa also likely to face rural turbulence of the more dramatic sort recently experienced in Zimbabwe? The historic lack of strong rural-based social movements – a sharp contrast with Zimbabwe's rural-based liberation war – may suggest that such an upsurge is unlikely. Yet matters are more complex than that. The Zimbabwe farm occupations, for all their contradictions, certainly struck a chord amongst many

South African progressives. And, in KwaZulu-Natal, reports indicate that up to 200 farms have been invaded by "squatters" who have occupied prime commercial land whilst "farmers have left the land in droves."

Government, anxious to reassure investors, has predictably denied any similarities between these events and the Zimbabwean occupations. One thing is certain, however: in the wake of developments in Zimbabwe, the usually marginalized land question in South Africa has received far more public attention than it has in years. Meanwhile, the continuing failure to resolve the land question must surely be seen as sowing the seeds of future rural rebellion.

Given the power of the South African state and bourgeoisie, the biggest challenge facing an effective land movement in South Africa will be that of survival. A Zimbabwe-type situation, in which an aging despot sponsors land invasions by a paid group of his clients in order to retain power, seems unlikely in the extreme. Direct confrontation with the State will be the far more likely scenario. And in such a situation, political survival will require the striking of deep rural roots.

And these, in turn, will be better provided by a rural movement along the lines of the Landless Workers Movement (MST) in Brazil – popularly-based, democratic, politically astute, well-organized, similar to a labour union in form, allied with other labour movements in practice, and operating with a class agenda – rather than by resort to the kind of political thuggery and anti-trade unionism practiced by the "war vets" in Zimbabwe. Such a movement would also avoid the pitfalls of reliance on a broad MDC-type coalition, which lends itself to class collaboration and statist politics. Further, only a MST-type movement has the potential to move beyond simple land redistribution and towards progressive agrarian reform – actually changing rural social relations in a way that fosters equality and co-operation. Whether the land issue will take twenty years to explode onto the centre-stage in South Africa as it did in Zimbabwe is another question. S A R

Realizing the Promise

Land Restitution in East London

BY LANDISWA MAQASHO

Landiswa Maqasho is at the Institute of Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University, East London.

The question of land is still a very sensitive one in South Africa. The government's land reform programme promised a relaxation of existing tensions by deliberate intervention in land issues. Land restitution is one such interventionist strategy through which the state seeks to redress the imbalances of the past. In the face of higher expectations raised by the land reform programme, the slow pace of delivery seems to be driving land hungry communities into despair and a potentially volatile situation may result. Sharp criticism has been levelled at the government as the settlement of restitution claims almost came to a standstill particularly in the first three years (1995-1998) of the process. In the past few months, the situation in Zimbabwe has served to reinforce these feelings, while simultaneously putting pressure on the government to deliver lest impatience lead to land seizure in the country.

The Commission and the West Bank

In 1994, the Interim Constitution provided a legislative framework for the restitution of land rights. Accordingly, Parliament enacted the Restitution of Land Rights Act, of 1994 and also created the Commission on Restitution of Land Rights (hereafter the Commission) and the Land Claims Court. Through this apparatus, persons and/or communities who were victims of acts of dispossession that took place after 19 June 1913 are entitled to redress through

either restoration of the land that was lost, or alternative "remedies" including monetary compensation. Initially restitution was conceived of as a purely rights based process in which the government's role was to give people their land back or compensate them if they so wished. Claimants were given three years in which to lodge their claims with the relevant Regional Land Claims Commissions starting from 1 May 1995 to 1 May 1998. This period was subsequently extended to 31 December 1998.

By 1998, only 0.4% of the 63,455 claims submitted to the Commission had been settled. This obvious delay and lack of progress in the broader land reform process in general and in land restitution in particular, has since been a cause for concern. Claimants are tired of waiting indefinitely for the settlement of their claims. Consequently the whole process of restitution was subjected to a review in mid-1998. The resulting Restitution Review Process made a number of important recommendations which, in turn, led to the implementation of the Restitution Transformation Program. Much of the progress that has been made since that time has been attributed to the shift away from a court-driven process to a more administrative process using the provisions of Section 42D of the Act. This empowers the Minister to make decisions on restitution claims. Experience from the *Riemvasmaak* claim has also forced the Commission to rethink its approach to restitution by linking the process to development. This means that the Minister actively and openly encourages communities to choose the land option rather

than monetary compensation. To show the government's commitment to this option, the Commission has now established a settlement support and development planning division whose responsibility is to assist claimants in various ways to ensure sustainability of the project. These include settlement grants and negotiations with the Department of Housing and Local Government to secure housing subsidies for those who qualify.

In the early 1960s, more than 88,000 people were forcibly removed from the city of East London and resettled in various places outside of the city according to their 'group areas'. Coloureds were relocated to Buffalo Flats while Africans were destined for Mdantsane, a township that was later incorporated into the Ciskei homeland. A significant percentage of these displaced communities came from the old East and West Bank locations. In the case of West Bank, the land that the ex-residents of this location lost is currently the centre of one of the city's industrial complexes accommodating the production site of the motor manufacturer, Daimler Chrysler South Africa (DCSA, formerly Mercedes Benz South Africa). Today this industry is the pillar of economic growth in the city, employing a large number of people with relatively good incomes. Recently, DCSA's injection of several millions of rands into the city's economy was welcomed by many as an important signpost along the road to further economic development in the city.

In cases like the West Bank, the Act provides for a choice of alternative land within the development plans of the municipality in question. Negotiations to this ef-



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fect around the West Bank claim did take place. On April 16, 2000, in a special ceremony attended by government officials and the wider claimant community, the Minister of Land Affairs Thoko Didiza handed over a piece of land to the West Bank claimants when she signed a historic sale of land agreement. This agreement marked the end of the phase of negotiation and the beginning of the last and final phase in the process of land restitution, which includes settlement, planning and implementation. Without doubt when the ex-residents of West Bank get keys to their houses in the near future, meaningful justice will have been done.

Sense of collective identity

Amid the difficulties and challenges facing the Land Claims Commission, the West Bank claim stands

out as one of the Commission's success stories. Even before the Commission's change of focus, this community was united in its decision to opt for restoration of their lost land. This kind of unity, which is rooted in the history of this community, has been one of the key features for the success of their claim. Former West Bank residents remember the location, affectionately known as Nongqongqo to them, as a unique place – a small face-to-face community with a diverse population of Xhosa, Mfengu, Pondo, Zulu, Sotho and Coloured families. This combination of social proximity and ethnic diversity generated a culture of tolerance and respect among residents. Social and cultural life was organised around the very few schools and churches as well as a range of clubs and societies. The location, which was generally regarded as quiet and peaceful, was solidly working class

with relatively few middle-class families living there. The tranquillity of everyday life in this small seaside location came to an abrupt end in 1965 when the location was demolished. The removals occurred under the supervision of the municipal police and with the support of the city council.

In 1995, exactly 30 years after the municipal bulldozers razed the location to the ground, a group claim by the Nongqongqo Committee on behalf of all the former residents of West Bank location was lodged with the Eastern Cape Regional Land Claims Commission. In terms of the Act, all group claims were to be received as 'special claims' and prioritised because they affect a large number of people. Despite this clause, as with all other claims in the country, very little was done with the claim after its

submission. This was due to a number of institutional and basic structural problems which included lack of capacity, ineffective communications and information-sharing systems and also the nature of the relationship between the Commission and the Department of Land Affairs (DLA). This relationship complicated the process in that while the Commission is an independent statutory body charged with the responsibility to oversee the whole process of restitution, restitution is simultaneously one of the elements of the land reform programme of the DLA.

These and other problems retarded progress until 1998 when the process of transformation was implemented. From 1999 onwards there has been a marked increase in the rate of delivery with 3,916 claims settled by the beginning of April 2000 including the West Bank claim. According to W. Mgoqi, Chief Land Claims Commissioner, "there is now clear evidence that the productivity of the machine (Commission) is increasing." The West Bank claim is unique, though, in that it is the only one where members have ignored the question of individual differences and where they will share equally in the proceeds of the claim. (In the old location, people lived either as owners or tenants/lodgers. This situation accorded owners higher status than tenants or lodgers.)

The Nongqongqo Committee has worked tirelessly and enthusiastically to ensure that the process succeeds. Mr. Ntamo, the chairman of the committee, claims that "it has been very tough, especially in the beginning." The first meeting to inform the people was attended by about fifteen people. Subsequent meetings did not show much improvement despite efforts by the committee to spread the word. The only explanation that he could give with respect to the low attendance was disbelief. Many people were very sceptical of the whole idea of restitution and rejected it as



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"one of the ANC's canvassing campaigns." But persistence paid off in the end as the Committee succeeded in mobilising a group of over 800 families. This included both African and Coloured families. As more people came, the committee saw it necessary to split itself into two sub-committees. The Mdantsane sub-committee focused on African families while the Buffalo Flats sub-committee worked with the Coloured families. However, these two sub-committees do work together and meet with all the members of their group at regular intervals.

Interviews with members of the West Bank committee indicated that they sacrificed a lot of their time and financial resources to make sure that the process succeeded. They even went to the extent of instituting collections from the communities to pay for media (radio and newspaper) announcements and other operating expenses. They also went from door to door asking people to come forward. In the beginning their pleas elicited minimal response because "the idea of land restitution sounded too good to be true" to the majority of the people as one member of the committee guessed. However, the col-

lective sense of identity established in West Bank importantly endured. Re-mobilised around the land claim, this sense of community and of collective involvement was re-activated. This served to "reunite" people and made for a coherent and participatory land claim - a model of restitution.

Conclusion

The success of the West Bank land claim should be regarded as an exception rather than the rule. The degree of unity and level of tolerance that had earlier existed had a lot to do with the success of the claim. Even the brutal force of apartheid could not completely crush the spirit of community and belonging shown by the residents of Nongqongqo. It is amazing how this community endeavoured to stick together and re-unite for several decades after relocation. They remained in touch despite the racial divide of apartheid legislation, with Coloureds and Africans attending each other's ceremonies and rituals over the years. As a result, when the Eastern Cape Regional Land Claims Commission shifted from a rights-based to a development approach, West Bank provided a model.

S A R

The Trouble with Democracy

BY STEPHEN BROWN

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For 30 years, "Life President" Hastings Kamuzu Banda held an iron grip on Malawi. No one could have predicted that within a short period of time, between 1992 and 1994, the brutal dictatorship would peacefully transfer power to a democratically elected opposition party in a process often hailed as a model democratic transition. Yet despite the remarkable initial success, there has been very little progress since President Bakili Muluzi and the United Democratic Front (UDF) assumed power.

The June 1999 elections

Malawian electoral campaigns are generally without substance. On economic and social policy, for example, the various parties' platforms are almost identical. All agree on the need for macroeconomic reform, poverty alleviation, improved health care and education, and so on. With little to distinguish them, they essentially fall back on personalities and run very negative campaigns in which regional affiliation gains much importance. Only three parties are represented in parliament and one is dominant in each of the three regions: the Alliance for Democracy (AFORD) in the North, the Malawi Congress Party (MCP, the former single party) in the Centre and the UDF in the South. None can win a parliamentary majority on its own.

Effective rule therefore requires either a stable coalition of two parties or a number of defections to the governing party.

The prelude to the 1999 electoral campaign was not auspicious. In July 1998, President Muluzi unconstitutionally sacked the Electoral Commission (which is ostensibly an independent body) and unilaterally appointed new members. Suspicions of bias were subsequently fuelled when, in February 1999, the new commission announced the creation of 70 new constituencies of which 42 (or 60%) were in the UDF-dominated South. This caused an uproar and earned the scepticism of Western bilateral donors who were financing a large part of the cost of the poll. The commission then backed down, creating only 17 new



Former President Hastings Kamuzu Banda's gold casket at his state funeral, Lilongwe, December 1997

constituencies (nine in the South and eight in the Central Region).

Further worries over the Electoral Commission's partisanship emerged in March 1999 when it refused to allow the MCP and AFORD to present a joint slate - ostensibly their only chance to defeat Muluzi. The High Court overruled the commission, since the constitution was silent on the matter of naming running mates from different parties and there was no law impeding it. The commission appealed, even though it was supposed to be a neutral, disinterested party, but the Supreme Court upheld the lower court's decision in May.

Because of delays in voter registration, the commission postponed the elections from May 18 to May 25, then to June 15. In the presidential poll, the opposition alliance obtained sizable majorities in the Northern and Central regions, while Muluzi obtained over three-quarters of the votes in the South (see Table 1). Significant support for Muluzi in the Central Region allowed him to barely achieve a majority of votes nationally.

Table 1

Results of June 99 presidential election (percentage of popular vote per candidate by region)

Region	Muluzi UDF	Chak- uamba MCP/ AFORD	Other (3)
North	9%	88%	2%
Centre	35%	61%	2%
South	77%	18%	3%
Total	51%	44%	2%

The simultaneous parliamentary vote produced even more regionally concentrated results (see Table 2). As in 1994, the South's large population and therefore the highest number of constituencies gave the UDF a plurality but not a majority in parliament.

Table 2

Results of the June 1999 parliamentary elections (number and percentage of seats by region)

Region	UDF	MCP	AFORD	Indepen- dent	TOTAL
North	1 (3%)	4 (12%)	28 (85%)	0 (0%)	33 (100%)
Centre	16 (22%)	54 (75%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	72 (100%)
South	76 (87%)	8 (9%)	0 (0%)	3 (3%)	87 (100%)
TOTAL	93 (48%)	66 (34%)	29 (15%)	4 (2%)	192 (100%)

Muluzi and the governing party benefited from a number of grossly unfair advantages of incumbency. For instance, the strong pro-UDF bias of the state-run radio network was particularly evident during the electoral campaign. Indeed, one week before the elections, the High Court ordered the Electoral Commission to ensure that fair coverage be provided to all parties, but no change was subsequently observed.

Polling unfairness also facilitated the UDF's re-election. Though large-scale fraud has not been proven, the elections themselves were marred by many technical problems and unexplained irregularities, including insufficient registration materials and faulty ballot papers in the opposition-inclined Central and Northern regions. By the Electoral Commission's own admission, over 100,000 people, mainly in those two regions, were unable to vote due to a lack of registration materials. Had these voters not been disenfranchised, they might have altered the outcome of the presidential election, since Muluzi won a majority of only about 65,000 votes. As a result, four of the nine electoral commissioners would not certify the results. Although some international observers (of which there were few) condemned the elections outright, the main ones declared them "largely free and fair." Western donors remained silent.

The UDF subsequently gained two seats at the MCP's expense,

one when the High Court overturned an MCP victory in a constituency in the Central Region, the other in a by-election. When the four independents defected to the UDF, the speaker of parliament, Sam Mpasu (a top UDF official), refused to rule that they had crossed the floor, which would have triggered by-elections in their constituencies. As a result, the ruling party soon controlled 99 seats to the opposition alliance's 93 (MCP 64, AFORD 29), giving it a legislative majority.

The opposition is currently trying to have the judiciary order a rerun of the presidential elections, based on two grounds: the definition of "the electorate" and alleged fraud. The former is contested because the constitution stipulates that "The President shall be elected by a majority of the electorate," but it is unclear whether this refers to registered voters or people who actually voted. Since Muluzi obtained a majority of the actual votes cast (51%) but only a plurality of registered voters (48%), the legitimacy of Muluzi's presidency is at stake. After long delays on technical grounds, a High Court judge ruled in May 2000 that only a majority of actual votes was required. The opposition alliance indicated that it would appeal to the Supreme Court. The allegations of fraud have not yet been ruled on.

Executive power

There have been many cases where the government - especially the

executive – acts above the law, even unconstitutionally, and there is no body to which it can then be held accountable. For instance, most of Muluzi's cabinet ministers are chosen from parliament. In October 1997, however, a High Court judge ruled that one could not constitutionally hold two public offices at the same time. This clearly implied that those ministers who were also elected to parliament were therefore no longer also MPs. Rather than appeal or comply, the government simply ignored the decision.

The Malawi parliament is officially composed of the National Assembly and the Senate – a rare case of bicameralism in Africa. When implemented, the Senate will be constituted of district-based, indirectly elected representatives of chiefs, women's organizations, trade unions, farming and business interests, the disabled, religious groups and other special groups. The constitution stipulates that the Senate was to have been established in May 1999. However, the government has not yet acted, presumably (and plausibly) fearing that the UDF would not command a majority in the Senate, thereby reducing the ruling party's power.

In another example, the government (illegally) dissolved local government bodies in 1995. In spite of a constitutional obligation to hold local elections that year, the government has repeatedly postponed them. Currently, they are scheduled for November 21, 2000. In the meantime, local government is under executive control. There are no mayors or councillors, only civil servants and the Ministry of Local Government. The government has repeatedly cited economic reasons for not holding elections, but it is really a question of political will, since Western donors have offered to cover the expenses. It is likely that the UDF fears losing control of the local authorities in the Central and Northern regions, thereby giving the

opposition new power bases. To compensate, the government considered holding the elections without the participation of political parties, as is the controversial practice in Uganda. However, it abandoned the proposal after the main opposition parties strongly opposed this unconstitutional measure.

Individual cabinet ministers also act with impunity. Muluzi is indebted to many of his supporters and bound by the politics of pa-



President Bakili Muluzi

trona. For that reason, Muluzi's cabinet is very large (33 ministers). Many powerful members continue to hold their positions despite well-publicized corruption scandals. Donors have protested certain flagrant cases of corruption, notably those involving cabinet minister Brown Mpinganjira, but did nothing when the practices continued. The Anti-Corruption Bureau revealed in early 2000 that it was investigating finance minister Cassim Chilumpha over tender irregularities. Donor pressure led Muluzi to remove him from his position. However, rather than drop him from the cabinet, Muluzi assigned him the education portfolio instead.

The political economy of reform

Despite its fundamental importance, the issue of economic reform has hardly been raised domestically. In fact, the transition from authoritarianism to electoral democracy has not modified the tenor of Malawi's structural adjustment programs, implemented at the behest of the IMF and the World Bank since 1981, with the support of the United States and other bilateral donors.

Overall, the World Bank and the IMF consider the Malawian economy relatively successful, especially for lowering interest rates and bringing down inflation. Indeed, a number of important measures have been taken to liberalize the economy, including the elimination of subsidies and tariffs and the liberalization of business licensing for small traders. However, compliance with other requirements remains erratic, especially the overall reduction of government expenditures. For instance, the government has failed to reduce the size of the cabinet and has even dramatically raised the salaries and allowances of ministers, deputy ministers and permanent secretaries. Instead, it decided in 1998 to end the public funding of 21 institutions, such as the Human Rights Commission, which were already severely resource-deprived. In spite of slow and partial government compliance and the increasingly recognized problem of corruption, the Bretton Woods institutions are reluctant to carry out their threats to cut aid. In August 2000, for example, the IMF granted Malawi a waiver in order to maintain assistance despite the accumulation of arrears in loan repayment.

The Malawian economy has been in continual crisis since the early 1980s, worsening in recent years, despite considerable support from donors. Per capita GNP has dropped from an annual average of US\$233 before the transition (1991-93) to \$190 in 1994-99, while periodic currency devaluations have

stoked inflation. The economy faces colossal challenges. There is a recognized need to move away from tobacco, which provides about 70% of export earnings, yet it is hard to find a lucrative substitute in order to diversify. The elimination of tariffs has hurt local industry since it is not competitive. In

theory, agricultural deregulation – being able to choose which crops to grow and to whom to sell them – will increase incomes. In practice, the benefit to smallholders appears to be marginal; profits seem to accrue mainly to the new middleman.

A number of structural weaknesses plague the Malawian econ-

omy: a very narrow export base (mainly tobacco, tea and coffee, subject to international price fluctuations and local climatological conditions), heavy dependence on imports, stagnant smallholder agricultural production, and inefficient public planning and resource management. Under the new government, food production is actually declining, due to periodic drought, insufficient access to credit, difficulties in repaying past loans and the phasing-out of agricultural subsidies. Certain roads have deteriorated so much they are now impassable, cutting some of the peasantry off from the market and forcing them to return to subsistence agriculture. Indeed, the operation of market forces is highly problematic in Malawi, since there are few large players and poor dissemination of information, allowing tobacco buyers, for instance, to act like a cartel. In addition, most peasants are unable to afford fertilizer and other farm inputs, since IMF pressure persuaded the government to remove remaining farming-related subsidies in 1995. The government has since tried to convince donors that to solve chronic food shortages it is less expensive to subsidize fertilizer than import maize. However, donors have opposed subsidizing agriculture out of principle, preferring to provide food aid when urgently required.

Structural adjustment has also undermined the underpinnings of democratization by cutting (already low) expenditures in education, health care and social services. For example, the government raised hospital fees by up to 400% in September 1997, rendering health care inaccessible to many. In July 2000, the government raised annual tuition fees at the University of Malawi by 3,000%, from \$54 to \$1,672 (about eight times per capita GDP). Social safety-net provisions are vastly insufficient in the amounts and duration of support.

In sum, the government has failed to meet the expectations for



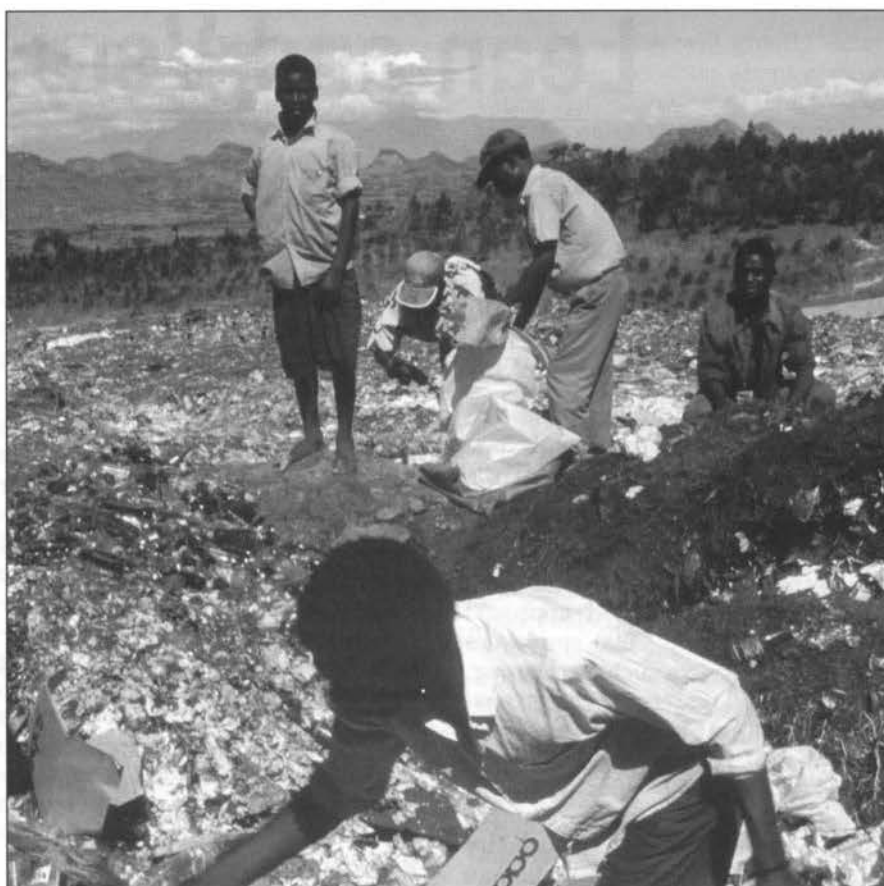
Naashon Zalk – PictureNET Africa

improved living standards that accompanied democratization. Against the nostrums of economic liberalization, which advocate a decreased role for the state, greater political freedom appears to have been accompanied by a demand for *more* public intervention, not less: the poor majority seeks greater assistance from the state, especially in the economic sphere and including wage increases, price controls, job creation and land allocation. Nonetheless, the state cannot and/or will not satisfy these needs. It does not have the financial or organizational resources, government spokespersons argue, while suggesting further that such measures would undermine structural adjustment, thereby displeasing donors and risking a further reduction in aid.

Under such circumstances, it is difficult to be optimistic about the economic future of Malawi. Free trade in the Southern African region could totally de-industrialize the country since it has no comparative advantage in anything: it is landlocked, has the worst transportation system, the least skilled population, and amongst the most malnourished (hunger makes for low productivity) in the region. For Malawi, the future will probably look a lot like the past: growing export crops on a large scale, while its inhabitants provide a market and a pool of wage-starved labour for its neighbours.

A look ahead

Multiparty democracy has transformed the Malawian political scene. Most notably, civil liberties have increased dramatically. Nevertheless, many autocratic practices remain. The 1999 national elections were less than free and fair, while local elections and the establishment of the Senate have been unconstitutionally postponed. The executive retains a very strong hold on power and established checks and balances are not proving effective in restraining it or holding it accountable (mark-



Living on a rubbish dump outside Blantyre

ing continuity with the past rather than a break from it). In many instances, the executive does not respect constitutional provisions and judicial decisions.

It is difficult to develop a party system *ex nihilo*, of course. That Malawi has developed a coherent and reasonably functional party system is an achievement in itself. Moreover, the current three-party structure might seem promising for the development of competitive politics. Nonetheless, the ruling party – as well as the parties in opposition – appear to be motivated more by a desire to benefit from power and the economic opportunities it provided than to implement positive policy reform, including further democratization. In doing so, these parties also have been tempted to seek expansion of their popular bases by relying upon ethno-regional discourses that

merely help deepen the cleavages that already exist.

To conclude, Malawi faces the major challenge of building new democratic institutions and practices and even a democratic culture in a context of enduring neopatrimonialism, widespread poverty (creating such related problems as low levels of literacy, education and health), continued economic stagnation, weak civic organizations, limited participation and accountability, and profit-seeking politicians. Meanwhile, living conditions have not improved in the post-authoritarian era. Already, multipartyism is being associated with higher food and fertilizer prices, maize shortages, deteriorating infrastructure, high inflation and a tumbling exchange rate. All this may make support for democracy increasingly tenuous.

S A R

Lean and Very Mean

Restructuring Wits University

BY FRANCO BARCHIESI

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On 24 February 2000, Professor Colin Bundy, Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand and esteemed intellectual of the left, "regretfully" announced that the University's Council had approved the retrenchment of 600 employees working in services such as cleaning, maintenance, catering and transport. The retrenchment was part of a plan of "fundamental changes" called Wits 2001. Wits 2001 was designed by a 5-person committee that includes Bundy, the deputy vice-chancellors and Wits' human resource manager. The plan seeks to reduce the number of faculties at the university from nine to six and to replace the current 99 departments with approximately 30-40 "academic entities."

The Wits administration argues that restructuring is a necessary response to significant cuts in the tertiary education subsidy, declining student numbers, proliferating numbers of courses and collapsing morale among academic staff. The plan targets three areas: the number and size of academic entities, appropriate staffing levels, and staff-to-student ratios.

A new Academic Restructuring Review Committee (ARRC), appointed by the Council, is making the recommendations. Academic Planning and Restructuring Committees at the faculty level will propose measures to implement the re-

structuring plan. Faculties and executive deans have been given three years to adapt their priorities to the program outlined by the ARRC.

Their only real task, however, is to ensure that scarce resources are used "cost-effectively." The power to define priorities and distribute resources remains highly concentrated in the university's "senior executive team." In other words, the restructuring process follows a typical pattern of technocratic decision-making that confines the debate to how to use the resources allocated from the top to comply with priorities also determined at the top. Staff, students and workers were offered no meaningful input into the decision-making process.

The administration's assessment of Wits' situation deliberately avoids to consider important expenditures other than staffing and employment such as management-related remunerations, costly infrastructures such as "anti-crime" electronic security gates and image-related investments like vehicle access gateways. The administration has not accounted for the University's financial reserves and patterns of investment in exploring ways to cut costs. Since the administration has the power to exclude such data from the restructuring agenda, downsizing seemed to be the only logical option.

University as investment

The reorientation of the state has given rise to the "corporate university:" a business enterprise able to sustain itself with market profits, a powerful economic actor in local eco-

nomically restructuring, an institution thus able to attract staff, students and investment on a global scale. The notion of "academic excellence" thus can be measured across the global academic marketplace. Like business notions of "quality" and "professionalism," "academic excellence" becomes the yardstick against which global capital can measure its "opportunity costs" and profit potentials of investing in specific tertiary institutions.

These radical changes to South Africa's education policy have evolved in a context marked by spiralling unemployment and corporate restructuring, resulting in approximately 100,000 job losses a year in the first five years of ANC rule. New employment is usually casual or contract. Student enrolments at Wits have declined in this context from 19,396 to 17,735 between 1991 and 1998, after 20 years steady increases in student registration.

It can be argued that the combination of the impoverishment among the waged population, rising unemployment, widening social inequalities and increasing employment insecurity is leading families to conclude that they cannot afford a university education for their children, especially when its "marketable skills" are already in question. These processes reflect similar forms of exclusion from other commodified social services such as health care, water, electricity and housing. It indicates the failure of the nascent South African democracy to define a model of university that is accessible to the demand for knowledge coming from marginalized communities.

The 1999 Shaping the Future strategic plan provided a broader intellectual agenda for restructuring at Wits. The plan states that: "In order to compete, universities have had to become most cost-conscious and less reliant upon tradition and externally funded autonomy," intensifying "the trend from 'collegial' to 'managerial' governance of universities." If the rise of the corporate university involves a new emphasis on the institution's capacity to reduce "externally funded autonomy," the consequence is that an increasing share of the university's income will depend on attracting private investment and redefining the university's own role as an investor.

Such changes are emphasized in Wits' Income Generation Programme (IGP). Shaping the Future defines one of Wits priorities as research that is focused on target areas such as socio-economic problems, health (i.e. cooperation with private hospitals), engineering, and technology. At the same time, a "University company" has been proposed for the "optimisation of revenue opportunities from intellectual property and from entrepreneurial activities" and to "promote revenue-generating activities and create approaches for entrepreneurial approaches across the university."

Wits' IGP is funded in part by one million rand provided by the mining corporation Goldfields. More money is being sought from Anglo/De Beers, the Ford Foundation and major financial conglomerates Investec, Coronation and Liberty Life. The program's former director, Robin Lee, describes the program as a step towards redefining Wits as an "enterprising university" or a "business university."

The idea behind the IGP is for staff to relinquish permanent, publicly-funded posts and become dependent on selling courses to wealthy private clients. The IGP seeks to "initiate and drive changes

in the ways in which significant sectors of the university are funded and managed." These include outsourcing and subcontracting catering, residences, and, more ominously, research.

In short, the proposals to downsize and retrench are not just responding to contingent needs for "rationalisation." Rather, they had already been conceived as necessary to foster Wits' economic efficiency in the eyes of investors and to boost the concept of the university-as-corporation. This also means that student recruitment and admissions will have to be run "entrepreneurially, rather than bureaucratically," casting serious doubt on democratizing access to tertiary education in South Africa.

University as investor

The IGP portrays a future in which the University itself becomes an investor in local economic restructuring, for example, by developing new technologies for the mining or telecommunications industries. The University of Manchester Institute for Science and Technology (UMIST), which administers all of that university's research through a wholly-owned, self-sustained private company, is an example for the IGP. The role of such a company is to regulate research contracts and to identify the private funders/customers. Such customers, in turn, ensure the "viability" and profitability of university research. In this model, the university becomes a franchising agency that allows its "brand" to be used only in projects that respond to the needs of economic actors that are powerful enough to guarantee an economic return. This is a far cry from the notion of the university as a public research institution promoting a diversified, general, and critical knowledge. Moreover, there is a danger that departments and faculties will be rated according to their "income generation"

potential, which will greatly determine future decisions about restructuring and downsizing. The market thus becomes the central regulator of intellectual life while at the same time disciplining critical and dissident voices into providing research that meets market needs. Only in this way can university intellectuals avoid carrying the brunt of the next "rationalisation" phase.

Since the vision implies an increasing delegation of funding arrangements and research outcomes to the private sector, this process can best be described as one of privatization even if Wits will remain a nominally public university. All that would be left of the intellectual context of the university would be a notion of "academic excellence" as a way to mobilize the loyalty of academics through emotional, consent-generating buzz words such as "world-class African university" at the service of the "Renaissance" and the "progressive" aim of breaking the domination by "bureaucracy." Left-wing academic support is thus recruited for a project that de facto redefines the main function of higher education as boosting corporate capital's profit-making capacity.

The events at Wits are the culmination of four years of intense restructuring that has affected all major South African tertiary institutions. A common thread, often disguised behind the moral imperative of equalizing the resources allocated to "historically black" and "historically white" institutions, has been a renewed emphasis on the market as a decisive regulator of intellectual life. The 1997 recommendations of the National Commission on Higher Education, for instance, endorsed new university structures geared towards public-funding policies that emphasize "applied" education, cost-effectiveness and partnership with external public and private actors.

The restructuring process has been accompanied by managerial rhetoric aimed at identifying the "market potential" and the income-generation capabilities of programmes, curricula, courses, research and publications. In a situation where increasingly, departments and "entities" will be run as independent business units, corporate investors and top academics teaching "marketable" courses in "marketable" faculties would be liberated from the burden of subsidizing programmes or departments that are not cost-effective. At a June 1999 workshop hosted by the Sociology Department at Wits, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Leila Patel said that in the future, departments will have to raise their own income, including by offering short courses for affluent private clients. This would mean the end of the "age of tenured employment," since the university would provide employment only to its internationally-renowned academics. The latter will be joined by casual or contract lecturers who will depend on marketing their courses for their income. In this way, Bundy has been able to spin his announcement of the creation of 20 junior lectureships (1-3 year contracts) for "previously disadvantaged" population groups as socially responsible.

Nothing sells like "excellence"

The end of apartheid led oppressed and exploited communities to increase their demand for tertiary education, modifying the composition of student bodies in previously segregated institutions. While in principle this has abolished the distinction between "historically black"

and "historically white" institutions, in practice such a distinction remains. It is visible in many aspects of academic life, including staff composition (which at universities like Wits, Natal, UCT and Afrikaans-speaking institutions is still predominantly white), curricula, support programmes and entrance requirements. Black students remain overwhelmingly the target of academic exclusions due to outstanding debts and the inability to pay admission fees. According to the Department of Education, while black students will comprise 73 percent of all university enrolments in 2001, the number of students in need of financial aid also will double by 2010.

Given the rapid increase in the number of students in financial need, the annual increase in government funding for tertiary education between 1995 and 1998 of approximately 9 percent was in fact a decrease in real terms. Then Minister of Education Sibusiso Bhengu underscored the point: "higher education has to be paid by the recipients and not by the state."

As confirmed in the government's 1999 Budget Review, the emphasis on promoting "technological education and training" has meant that state subsidies for institutions with a stronger humanities and social science component have been slashed. The subsidy for Wits has declined by nearly one third in the past five years.

While enrolments at the 21 universities declined by 6 percent between 1997 and 1998, student numbers at the 15 "technikons," which are more oriented to technological professional skills, rose by 20

percent over the same period. In 1988, 272,445 students enrolled at universities and 56,815 registered for technikons. Ten years later these figures were 351,692 and 250,244 respectively.

Fight back

Resistance at Wits, as elsewhere, has been led by the 100,000 strong National Education Health and Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU) until now. NEHAWU is facing the loss of 600 members and plans industrial action in response to the retrenchments. The decisive challenge will be to build a united movement among all university constituencies.

Yet staff members are confused and divided. The progressive-sounding rhetoric of the restructuring is coupled with opportunities offered by the new corporate university to a minority of them. The university administration is able to present restructuring as inevitable. These processes have greatly moderated the opposition of this constituency. Student politics also is weakened by defeats suffered by previous movements, and movements have been contained through a variety of tactics that include student expulsions, criminal charges and police actions. As recent episodes such as the seven-month strike at Mexico City's Autonomous University (UNAM) and the occupations at John's Hopkins University have shown, the unity of all university constituencies is crucial to raise broader popular support for struggles against the marketization and privatization of public education.

S A R



University Workers Exclude them Out

**BY BRIDGET KENNY AND
MARLEA CLARKE**

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Universities across South Africa are undergoing a process of restructuring. Parallel to this process has been a national review of tertiary education. Recommendations from this process are extensive, including mergers between different universities, and between universities and technikons. It has often been stated that one of the key objectives of restructuring is "to facilitate access to learners previously disadvantaged." Indeed the University of Cape Town (UCT) highlights this as being central to its mission: "to be flexible on access, active in redress, and rigorous on success." This emphasis on redress has had some success, with some groups of students (mostly the growing black middle class) benefiting from improved access. However, recent restructuring initiatives on many campuses appear to be narrowly focusing on access for some students while facilitating the 'exit' of many workers on campuses through retrenchments and outsourcing.

Restructuring and outsourcing at UCT

Suraya Jawoodeen (the Nehawu Western Cape Tertiary Education Branch Secretary) argues that there are two general patterns emerging in terms of restructuring, with similar consequences from each. His-

torically disadvantaged institutions (HDI) justify retrenchments and outsourcing with financial arguments, arguing that financial constraints necessitate a reduction in staff. Fort Hare, Venda, the University of the North, and the University of the Western Cape (UWC) have all initiated restructuring (leading to retrenchments) due to financial difficulties. For example, last year, after a bitter battle with the university management (with violent confrontation between striking staff, students and management), 400 workers accepted voluntary retrenchment packages and another 25 were retrenched at UWC. Historically advantaged institutions (HAI) such as Wits and the University of Cape Town are in a different position. Although both universities also use cost saving arguments to support restructuring moves, plans to retrench workers and outsource work are primarily justified by non-financial arguments. HAI universities argue that they must focus on "core business needs" and outsource those functions and activities that are defined as non-core. Core activities are those that are part of the "academic mission": teaching, learning and research. Despite different motivations behind recent restructuring initiatives at HDIs and HAIs, the result is similar: full-time permanent staff in non-core services are retrenched and their work outsourced to outside companies paying lower wages.

HAI such as Wits and UCT see their 'core business' in a narrow manner. Both universities are currently implementing changes aimed at outsourcing most "non-core functions", with fairly similar processes underway. Restructuring began first

in 1998 at UCT, with some security services outsourced to an outside company on a "trial basis" for 18 months. This approach was packaged as a compromise – the university's initial proposal to outsource all security on campus had been rejected by National Health and Allied Workers Union (Nehawu) but university management argued that the proposal was in line with UCT's Strategic Planning Framework 1996 to 2001, a planning document accepted by both the union and University Council in 1997. Thus, agreement was reached that initial outsourcing would be limited to some areas of campus and would be evaluated after 18 months before additional outsourcing of security took place. Workers employed by the outsourced company (Armourguard) are reported to earn the minimum wage provided by the Wage Determination (R7.00 per hour [\$1.50 Cdn]) in comparison to the minimum wage of R15.00 per hour UCT security staff receive. If benefits are included, the average wage package for all security operations (including all security staff – guards, supervisors and senior security staff) amounts to R32.96 per hour per UCT employee. In contrast, the average wage cost for the same service is only R18.56 per hour per Armourguard employee.

Despite continued opposition from Nehawu, additional services were outsourced the following year. On 31 August 1999, 267 UCT employees were informed that they were being retrenched as of 30 September. Tasks performed by these workers (such as gardening, maintenance, cleaning) were outsourced. Some retrenched workers were then employed by the compa-

nies awarded the contracts to supply these services. Similar to the large disparities between wages and benefits paid to UCT security staff versus Armourguard employees, workers have reported a significant drop in pay when re-employed after cleaning services were outsourced. For example, Supercare Cleaning hired staff (many of them retrenched UCT staff) at the minimum wage (R6.00 per hour) set out in the Sectoral Determination for the Contract Cleaning Sector, with no additional provision made for a retirement fund or a medical fund. UCT staff, in comparison, were paid a monthly package made up of a basic salary component, a bonus cheque (pro-rata of a thirteenth cheque), a housing allowance, and UCT's contribution to the provident fund and medical aid. Employees who did not own a house or belong to a medical aid scheme were paid an allowance in lieu of the subsidy or employers' contribution. Converted into an hourly rate, UCT cleaning staff received between R11.00 and R14.00 per hour. Thus, UCT staff earned approximately double what sub-contracted workers employed by Supercare are now being paid.

Nehawu and opposition

Although workers opposed outsourcing, the union was in an extremely weak position to fight the changes. The previous year a strike had been called when negotiations over wages broke down. However, union structures were weak, and shop stewards were ill-prepared for the university's intimidation tactics. Police were called in on the first day, striking workers were harassed, and before the end of the week, Nehawu was forced to call off the strike. Soon after, a number of strategic blunders on the part of Nehawu shop stewards resulted in the university cancelling the union's recognition agreement. Consequently, the union office on campus was shut down and the union's right to a full-time shop steward and to access other resources was withdrawn. Nehawu

then took the case to the Labour Court, arguing that the outsourcing be treated as "a transfer as a going concern" (using the Labour Relations Act to support this argument) or, alternatively, that the retrenchments were not fair in that UCT had not considered alternatives to outsourcing. The Court ruled in UCT's favour.

Having lost the court case, and too politically weak and disorganized on campus to resist further outsourcing proposals, Nehawu structures at UCT were effectively sidelined as the university moved forward with restructuring. The campus once had one of the sharpest and strongest recognition agreements in the country as well as strong union structures. Now, the union has been almost completely wiped out at UCT. How did this happen? Nehawu was in a politically weak position when negotiations around restructuring came to a head, both because of strategic manoeuvring on the part of the management and because shop steward structures were weak and key shop stewards not accountable to the union membership. Now, without a recognition agreement, without full-time shop stewards, and with internal squabbles consuming the energy of the union on campus, workers are dependent on regional Nehawu structures to advance alternative proposals to outsourcing and to rebuild the union on campus.

Interestingly, opposition to current proposals has largely come from some members of the UCT Council. Substantive questions raised in Council meetings about the process slowed it down. As a result, the outsourcing proposal Council will consider at the November meeting is a more moderate one than what was initially supported by University management. Council is likely to vote on a "gradual outsourcing process." It is proposed that remaining security services be outsourced. Wages and benefits will likely be similar to those currently

paid by Armourguard – about half the wages paid by UCT for the same job. Current staff will be offered voluntary retrenchment packages or early "incentive retirement." Staff that don't take either package will be put on re-deployment lists and placed in suitable jobs on campus.

However, weak evaluations of the services provided by the outsourced security company, and concerns expressed by workers about lower wages and benefits paid to outsourced workers, don't seem to concern university administrators. Leila Patel, Deputy Vice Chancellor of Wits, referring to experiences like those of UCT, was quoted as saying: "It is worth noting that all the functions identified for service partnerships have already been outsourced at quite a number of South African higher education institutions who have in fact been enjoying the benefits for a number of years." Clearly it is the university, not workers, who 'benefits'.

Restructuring of Wits support staff

Meanwhile, the story from Wits demonstrates that strong, well-organised and militant union structures on campuses don't appear to be enough to stop current restructuring processes. In late August of this year, 613 support services workers at Wits University were retrenched. Over 90% were black workers. Most have not found jobs, and like workers at UCT, those 'lucky' enough to be hired by private contractors (a reported 250 out of the 600) now earn, on average, a third less in basic wages and have no benefits. Not surprisingly, the decision to retrench the support staff workers has drawn fire from unions, student organisations, academics and international activists. Like UCT, management at Wits has attempted to sideline opposition. Previous employees of Wits have been called into meetings with contract management and told in no uncertain terms that they are "no longer Wits employees" (accord-

ing to one cleaner). Wits University has traditionally been one of the strongest branches of Nehawu. In 1989, Nehawu won a recognition agreement with Wits after a long and protracted struggle for recognition set against a history of management efforts to establish a black staff association. These workers, including cleaning and maintenance staff, technical staff assistants, clerical staff, catering and bus drivers, some higher skilled technical staff and employed security guards have been Nehawu's power base. While Nehawu has had membership beyond these lower grades, the bulk of its membership has come from these groups of workers.

After years of struggle against apartheid administrations fighting racism and hypocrisy in Johannesburg's seat of 'liberal education', Nehawu's 800 strong signed up membership at Wits has been levelled in one blow by Wits' new administration, ironically an administration which Nehawu helped to appoint. Union membership stands at 351 – down from 800 before retrenchments. The support service 'restructuring' is only the beginning in the university's restructuring plan called Wits 2001. Academic personnel are now facing retrenchments and already 24 job cuts have been announced for the Arts faculty alone. The plan seems to leave aside noble goals of institutional democratic transformation.

Transforming Wits?

In the early 1990s on Wits campus there was a concerted struggle waged by workers and students to effect transformation. Nehawu shop steward Thabiso Motaung says of those days: "They were not happy with Nehawu being on campus. The very same people who were there at that time, the apartheid minded administrators, are here now." He adds, "Management has never been in the forefront of transformation. The adversarial relations [with Nehawu] are not likely to go away now." Nehawu argues quite clearly

that Wits 2001 is an attempt to derail the process that was set up as the outcome of the earlier bitter struggle: "The Wits 2001 concept contradicts ideas and aims that people had around the transformation process. It brings in other dynamics, like profit generation." Indeed, Wits' enthusiasm to restructure boasts the neo-liberal prescriptions of downsizing employment and marketizing education, to say nothing of privatizing public institutions [see Barchiesi, this issue].

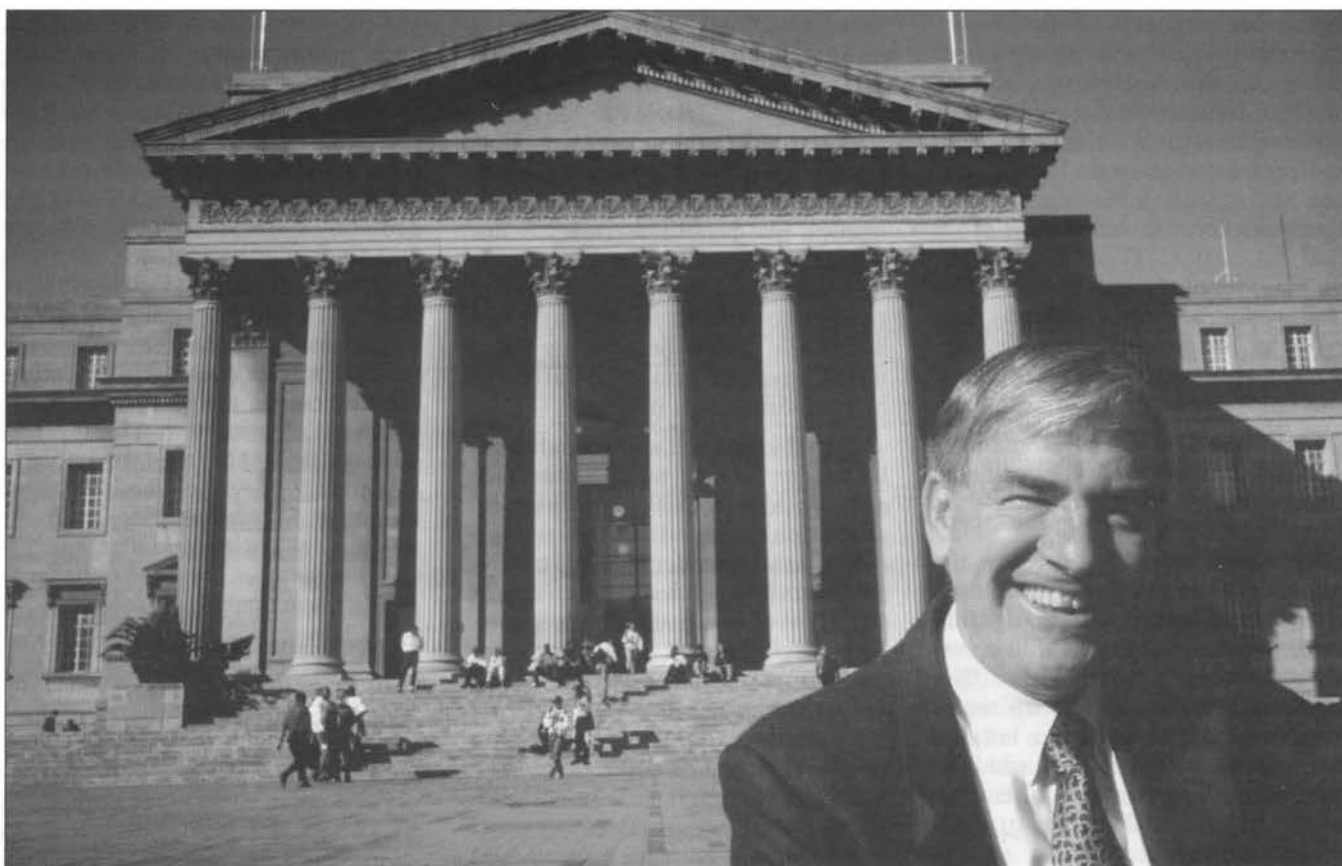
Transformation and consultation have been pushed aside in the process. In March 1999, the university announced a broad process of consultation to consider changes to support services. Its aim was meant to "achieve increased service quality and efficiency." A private company (apparently handpicked by the University) was hired and paid over R4 million to develop 'in consultation' a restructuring plan. The consultants conducted surveys with different constituencies assessing existing services, cost comparisons with other university and industry norms, and facilitated a review process in which they formulated options for restructuring. Stakeholders 'participating' in this process included academic staff, student representatives, support service staff, unions, staff associations, and managers.

Throughout this process, unions and middle managers repeatedly pointed out flaws in the consultants understanding of operations and costs. However, these and other criticisms and amendments offered within the review process were rarely incorporated into the final models. The review process recommended serious alternatives to outsourcing, including internal restructuring and building managerial capacity, and these models were costed and came out lower than the straight outsourcing recommended by the consultants. A group established on campus to oppose the process, "Concerned Academics," critiqued the review. They argued that the

consultants' report was based on a poor understanding of outsourcing and its costs, careless research, and a "pseudo-consultative" process. Nevertheless, the University's Council accepted the recommendation to retrench and outsource, and have repeatedly claimed that the process was 'highly consultative'. Deputy Vice Chancellor Leila Patel says that "compelling reasons emerged to set up service partnerships with specialised service providers" and that "these reasons primarily concerned the cost of service (and potential cost savings), the need to improve the quality of services and the need for university management to focus its time, attention and strategic effort on its core function (the academic mission)."

Protest and pain

Protest and lunch-time pickets by Nehawu and other groups opposing the outsourcing have been met with hostility on the part of university management. It responded by submitting two applications to prohibit future protest on campus, one of them lodged at the Labour Court against Nehawu. If the University wins the interdict, forms of protest, including 'noise-making and singing' which disrupt university activities, would become criminal offenses. This, of course doesn't sit well with unionists, a wide range of staff and political activists. Reforms to the Labour Court and new labour legislation passed under the ANC government (such as the Labour Relations Act) were intended to extend more protection to vulnerable workers. Instead, Labour Court judgments (like the UCT Nehawu case) interpret section 197 of the LRA in a way that allows outsourcing to continue. Rather than tightening up problems in existing legislation, recent amendments proposed to labour legislation will facilitate retrenchments and outsourcing. Indeed, proposed amendments are a retreat from the ANC election manifesto. Instead of stopping massive job losses, as was promised,



Henner Frankenfeld - PictureNET Africa

Wits Vice-Chancellor Colin Bundy:

"Tighten your seat belts, we're in for a bumpy ride; but at the end there will be exhilaration"

proposed amendments will actually speed up retrenchments.

Not surprisingly, debate raging on campus underlines a sense that under the new economic order, opposition to restructuring, its material impact on South African workers, and its reracialization of access to basic rights of citizenry is unacceptable. Indeed such action is characterised as 'ultra leftist', anti-nationalist, and a betrayal of loyalty to one's own institution.

A letter written to *The Mail and Guardian* defending the decision to retrench 600 workers argues that "we spend more than we earn" and, thus, restructuring is inevitable. "We also acknowledge that the process is uncomfortable and disruptive. This is a characteristic of change." Once through the pain, however, they say the university and the community will reap great ben-

efits. A new cultural precinct will be created with art galleries, coffee shops, a cinema and a theatre. And they offer, "We hope that as people start to visit the cultural precinct next year they will feel that restructuring in the faculty of arts at Wits has in fact been worthwhile not only for the university but for the city, too." Outgoing Vice-Chancellor Bundy says hopefully, "Tighten your seat belts: we're in for a bumpy ride, but at the end there will be exhilaration."

With all this euphoria of reconstructing a 'profitable' institution, one forgets that 600 workers become a seemingly easy sacrifice. Not to mention that most black students on campus cannot now afford to eat lunch in surrounding Braamfontein restaurants. Instead of bringing workers' and students' needs into plans for a new Wits, we are left

with a shopping mall built on the backs of retrenched workers. The racial division of labour in South African institutions, including Wits, means that black workers bear the brunt of change. And, now they are threatened with not being able to protest that fact. Nehawu is struggling to find ways of responding to this crisis facing many of their members. As they acknowledge, they must quickly find a way of saying 'enough is enough', and moving to a position where they can rebuild the union, service members, and engage constructively with management to make universities a better place for workers and students. Until then, they are left firefighting: negotiating voluntary retrenchment packages and struggling to protect a few jobs at some universities while hundreds of jobs on other campuses are lost.

S A R

Tough Choices

Trade Unions and Swapo

BY HERBERT JAUCH

Herbert Jauch is with the Labour Resource and Research Institute (LaRRI).

At first sight, Namibia seems to be a rather insignificant player in the SADC region. It has a small population of about 1.8 million people and its economy is linked to and dependent on its former colonial power, South Africa. Due to the large rural population and the under-developed manufacturing sector, trade unions might seem to represent only a small minority of the population and, consequently, be an insignificant player in the country's economic and political life. Neo-liberal economists in Namibia went as far as describing Namibian workers as a privileged 'labour aristocracy'. Such views not only ignore Namibia's social realities but also fail to recognize the role of the labour movement as a key player among Namibia's civil society organizations. In particular, those unions affiliated to the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW) understood their role as that of a social movement in the final years of the liberation struggle. However, the achievement of independence had a tremendous impact on the labour movement and required a re-definition of the role that trade unions wanted (and were able) to play. This article sketches some of the challenges for the Namibian labour movement and, particularly, NUNW.

The context

According to the 1997 Labour Force Survey, 225,000 workers (41% of the economically active population) are employed in the formal sector, and their wages make up 45% of national household incomes. Although few reliable data exist, indications are that an average of 5 to 8 dependants rely on each worker's wage for their survival. The dominant sectors in terms of employment are the public sector with about 70,000 workers, the farming sector (35,000 workers), the retail sector (19,000 workers), domestic workers' sector (18,000 workers), as well as the manufacturing and construction sectors with about 12,000 workers each. The mining industry which employed about 14,000 workers at independence, accounts for only about 7,000 workers today.

Namibian trade unions organize in all sectors including domestic and farm workers. The overall unionization rate achieved (according to the figures supplied by trade unions) stands at 58% - which is high by international standards. However, unionization rates vary greatly between the well-organized public and mining sectors (60 to 80% unionization) and the difficult farming and domestic workers sectors (5 to 20% unionization). The Namibian labour movement is fragmented into almost 30 trade unions, most of which belong to one of the country's three trade union federations: the 70,000 member strong National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW), the 45,000 member Namibia Federation of Trade Unions (NAFTU), and the Namibia People's Social Movement

(NPSM) whose affiliates have about 14,000 members.

The NUNW is not only the biggest federation, but has also played the most prominent role in the public arena. Its history is in many ways similar to that of COSATU, as both played a critical role during the liberation struggle. After decades of intense repression, the NUNW unions emerged from the mid-1980s onwards as key players in the economic and political arena. They linked the struggle at the workplace with the broader struggle for freedom and independence and formed links with other social and political organizations. The NUNW understood its role as that of a social movement which could not address workers issues separately from those affecting the broader community. Exploitation at the workplace was thus linked to the broader questions of apartheid and political oppression.

The NUNW maintained its link with SWAPO after independence through its affiliation to the ruling party. This link has led to heated debates both within and outside the federation. While the majority of NUNW affiliates argue that a continued affiliation helps the federation to influence policies, critics have pointed out that the affiliation undermines the independence of the labour movement and that it wipes out prospects for trade union unity in Namibia.

The rival trade union federations, NAFTU and NPSM, have repeatedly stated that they differ fundamentally from the NUNW over

the question of political affiliation. They charge that the NUNW cannot act independently and play the role of a watchdog over government as long as it is linked to the ruling party. However, neither NAFTU nor NPSM have thus far been able to articulate radical and fundamentally different positions on socio-economic and political issues. Compared with the NUNW, they have played a less prominent role in the public policy debates and concentrated on workplace issues with occasional criticism of government policies and practices.

As there is a growing public perception that the NUNW is merely a workers' wing of the ruling party, the NUNW will have to evaluate the costs and benefits of a continued party-political affiliation. There is no doubt that a progressive labour movement has to be political by nature and deal with socio-economic issues beyond the workplace. But, does its present affiliation help the NUNW to advance the interests of workers? Does it help the federation to influence national policies or does it help SWAPO to force the federation to adhere to party discipline? These are critical questions, particularly in the light of the SWAPO government's conservative economic policies – similar to those pursued under the GEAR programme in South Africa.

Promoting workers' interests?

With every election since independence, several trade unionists from the NUNW and its affiliates have entered parliament, but there is little evidence that their presence has influenced policies in favour of workers. Once in parliament (or cabinet), they are accountable to the party and bound by government policy. Few have dared to publicly oppose government plans – one exception being the former general secretary of the Namibia Public Workers Union (NAPWU), Peter Ilonga, who recently opposed the government's privatization initiatives in parliament.

On the other hand, the NUNW and its affiliates have often been the most vocal critics of government policies, criticising the huge income inequalities, the slow process of land redistribution and education reform, and the self-enrichment by politicians. The NUNW also opposed the introduction of Export Processing Zones (EPZs) in 1995 which initially were designed to 'free' investors from the provisions of the Labour Act. The NUNW saw this as a violation of both the ILO convention and Namibia's constitution and instructed its lawyers to challenge the constitutionality of the EPZ Act in court. However, during a high level meeting between the government, SWAPO and the NUNW, in August 1995, a compromise was reached. It stipulates that the Labour Act will apply in the EPZs, but that strikes and lockouts would be outlawed for a period of five years. Although this compromise was greeted with mixed responses from Namibian unionists, it was formally endorsed by the NUNW and its affiliates.

Five years later, the no-strike clause is now being reviewed. The NUNW still insists that EPZ workers must have the right to strike but did not challenge the broader negative implications of the EPZ policy. A study carried out by the unions' own research institute – the Labour Resource and Research Institute (LaRRI) – found that the EPZ programme has fallen far short of the government's expectations and that the programme's costs by far outweigh its benefits. This study received significant public and media attention but neither the NUNW nor the other trade union federations have taken up the issue and challenged the policy as a whole. They confined themselves narrowly to the debate over the right to strike. Even worse, the new Ongopolo Mining Company – which took over from the TCL mines and in which the NUNW and the Mineworkers Union

of Namibia (MUN) both own 10% of the shares – has recently acquired EPZ status for its processing operations. This might partly explain why the unions are no longer willing to oppose the EPZ programme as a whole.

New challenges

Such conflicts of interest coupled with the question of political affiliation have a direct impact on the militancy and effectiveness of the workers' movement in Namibia. However, there are also other challenges that the labour movement is facing today. Firstly, Namibia is facing the onslaught of neo-liberal ideology, which is usually portrayed as the only practical policy option for the country. IMF and World Bank advisors are regular visitors to Namibia. They have 'assisted' with the country's public expenditure review and with the 'training' of high ranking staff members of economic government institutions. Local economists, by and large, seem to be trapped in the neo-liberal dogma and continue promoting the very policies (e.g. structural adjustment programmes) that have caused severe social hardships in other SADC countries. The Namibian government increasingly slides towards neo-liberal policies as manifested, for example, by the introduction of Export Processing Zones (EPZs) and privatization policies. Labour opposition to such policies is often countered by accusations that trade unions are still living in the (ideological) past and that they are obstacles to economic growth and job creation. As a result, the labour movement was forced on the defensive on several occasions and some unionists now wonder if they will be able to oppose neo-liberal policies or if they have to be content with just fighting their worst consequences. Before independence, the NUNW rallied workers under the slogan 'socialism means freedom' but today the labour movement seems unclear how to respond to the neo-liberal onslaught.

Secondly, after independence the labour movement had to come to terms with the concept of social partnership that was actively promoted by the SWAPO government. The Labour Act of 1992 was drafted in that spirit and tried to create an enabling environment for collective bargaining. Although the new act was a huge improvement compared to colonial labour legislation, it also served to reduce worker militancy by shifting the emphasis away from workplace struggles to negotiations between union leaders and management. Bargaining issues were (and still are) narrowly defined and usually deal with conditions of employment only. The trade unions' main function was thus narrowed to being the representative of workers in a corporatist social partnership arrangement. While trade unions could win improved working conditions in well-organized sectors like mining, fishing and the public service, collective bargaining never affected farm and domestic workers.

Thirdly, the labour movement has experienced a loss of capacity as key leaders left for greener pastures in government and the private sector. This has been a continuous process since independence. Both the government and the private sector have identified and targeted the talents of prominent trade unionists. Their departure left a vacuum that the unions were not always able to fill. In addition, unions experienced a decline in membership participation following independence. Many workers saw union meetings and rallies as less important after the achievement of independence. May Day rallies never managed to attract the huge crowds they had drawn in the late 1980s.

All gloom and doom?

Despite these enormous challenges, the NUNW (and the Namibian labour movement generally) still has the potential to become a key force in the struggle for socio-economic

justice in the years ahead. Trade unions have structures (although sometimes weak) all over the country and a significant membership base. Many unionists are aware that they cannot narrowly pursue the interests of organized labour alone, but that they also have to address the broader socio-economic issues. This requires substantial organizational capacity which trade unions are presently trying to build. Many have intensified their education programmes to train their shop stewards, organizers and leaders on organizational and policy issues. Such



training is also critical for grooming new leadership cadres to take over when others leave.

At the beginning of 1998, the labour movement set up the Labour Resource and Research Institute to service trade unions with policy research and advice as well as to develop education programmes and materials. With LaRRI's assistance, trade unions have now included issues like globalization (and possible responses to it) in their education programmes. For the first time in Namibia, such topics are taken out of the realm of (neoliberal) 'experts' who so far have dominated economic policy debates. Although such programmes are only a beginning, they are critical in preparing the ground for a new

discourse on policy alternatives and development strategies. It will be equally important for Namibian unions to work closely with other progressive unions and NGOs in the region (and beyond) on the question of building alternatives to the neo-liberal agenda.

Furthermore, the labour movement will have to re-dedicate itself to reviving its structures and turn them into fora for debate and active membership participation. As the 1988 NUNW calendar stated: 'Worker control grows out of many, many meetings!' Finally, trade unions need to intensify and concretize their links with other progressive organizations that represent disadvantaged groups. An encouraging step was the alliance formed between the NUNW, the Namibia NGO Forum (NANGOF) and the (communal) Namibia National Farmers Union (NNFU) around the slow process of land reform. The three organizations presented a joint petition to Government on May Day 1999 demanding a faster and more effective programme of land redistribution.

Such initiatives indicate that trade unions have not surrendered to the difficulties they are facing. Provided that they can strengthen their organizational capacity and re-define their role as 'struggle organizations' with a specific class base, they are likely to play a central role in the fight for the interests of the disadvantaged majority. Failure to seize this opportunity might result in Namibian unions gradually losing their mass base through being absorbed with bargaining issues, union investments and corporate participation and not addressing (and challenging) the fundamental socio-economic structures that uphold the continued skewed distribution of wealth and income. At the dawn of the second decade of independence, there are some tough choices to be made by Namibia's trade unions.

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