

**Southern Africa**

Vol. 5 No. 1

**REPORT**

July 1989

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# Liberating Theology?

## The Churches & the Struggle in S. A.

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STRUGGLING FOR  
ITS SOUL:  
The Church  
in South Africa

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PARTNERS IN  
PROPHECY:  
Canadian Churches  
in Solidarity

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TREACHEROUS  
CROSSING:  
Namibian  
Independence Debacle

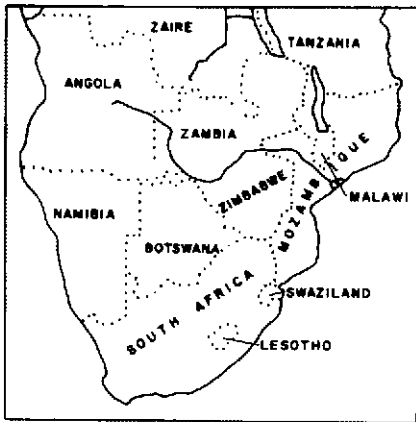
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# Southern Africa REPORT

Vol. 5 No. 1

July 1989



## Southern Africa REPORT

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## Liberating Theology?

The media image was an indelible one: eminent representatives of the churches, in the full regalia of their office, being hosed down by water cannon on the elegant streets of central Cape Town. That moment was February 1988, when anti-apartheid church leaders led a protest against the harsh restrictions the South African state had just imposed on a wide range of popular oppositional organizations. That moment captured symbolically the new and more central role within the broad democratic movement that some of the churches have found thrust upon them and, more positively, have come to assume in the context of the State of Emergency.

The more visible and vocal presence of the churches in the popular resistance prompts a number of questions: What is the influence of religion in South Africa at this point? What is the extent and na-

ture of the churches' current links to the struggle there?

The role of the churches, both historically and contemporarily, is riddled with ambiguity, contradiction and irony. That role has its roots in the well-known (but far from simple) relationship of the missionaries to the colonial project. Later, in the 1940s, the white Afrikaner Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) provided the spiritual sanction for the policy of apartheid, earning its reputation as "the Nationalist Party at prayer." Religious invocation remained an important aspect of the ruling party's legitimization process throughout the period of "Grand Apartheid."

Yet, not even the Dutch Reformed Church has been able to escape the recent ferment in South Africa. Given the moral credibility of the struggle against apart-

heid, as well as pressure from the DRC's religious counterparts around the world, it too has been stirred to some measure of soul-searching.

How much more this is the case of other churches is discussed by Jim Kirkwood and Gary Kenny in our lead article. They argue that there has begun to emerge in the past decade or so signs of a new and liberating gospel. Redefining concepts of "sin, salvation, grace, temptation, the work of God, and the powers of evil" that once kept people immobilized, this new gospel seeks to empower people to force change.

In further elaborating on the possibilities of such empowerment, Kirkwood and Kenny focus, in particular, on a range of "para-church" organizations set up by the institutionalized church to respond more flexibly and creatively to South African reality. But such initiatives to involve the church more di-

rectly in popular organization do not go unhampered or unchallenged. The state is increasingly adding the churches (and certainly their more outspoken leaders) to the list of those social agents it seeks to suppress. But equally significant is the fact that not all church-goers and church leaders are linked in common cause.

Certainly racial divisions between churches and congregations qualify the possibilities of unity – if not always in predictable ways. The leaders of some African independent churches, for example, have urged their vast memberships to adopt a quiescent stance towards the apartheid regime. Class divisions, too, are reflected in the passivity and conservatism of some churches compared to the challenging, socially involved positions of others. Thus Harold Wells, in his review of a powerful recent book by South African theologian Charles Villa-Vicencio entitled *Trapped in Apartheid*, wonders aloud (with Villa-Vicencio) whether “the churches are ‘trapped’ in their ambiguous social location, prevented from seriously resisting social evil because a large and influential part of their membership benefits from it”!

Yet, like Kirkwood and Kenny, Villa-Vicencio also hears the voice of “an alternative church,” a liberating voice within the South African churches that springs directly from an identification with the poor and oppressed of South African society. At present, it is church leaders like Frank Chikane, Allan Boesak and Desmond Tutu who articulate this voice. But how do they, and other prominent anti-apartheid leaders within the churches, integrate their activities within the broader democratic movement? (Chikane, for example, has embedded himself within the UDF, whereas Tutu can often seem a dangerously individualistic and even idiosyncratic figure in political terms.) And how do they and others answer the tough questions

that increasingly circle around matters such as the issue of revolutionary violence? The current *SAR* can merely scratch the surface of these and other questions.

One of the significant current issues that has not been given nearly enough attention is that of the role of women within the churches. In a familiar pattern, women in southern Africa constitute the majority of the congregations in all the churches. Yet they are hardly represented in the very male-dominated church leadership, and continue to be depicted in subordinate terms in prevailing theology. The informal reports we have received from visiting Southern African church women indicate that this situation is not going unchallenged. The Ecumenical Decade for Women (declared by the World Council of Churches) has provided a focussed opportunity for women in the affiliated churches to take up some of these concerns. The gathering strength of women’s voices (in particularly the more progressive churches) is beginning to be reflected organizationally in the establishment of women’s programmes within regional church bodies, in conferences on “Women and the Church,” in discussions of feminist theology, and in the recent creation of a Women’s Division in the South African Council of Churches. The past few years have also seen a more concerted attempt on the part of the women’s organizations in the democratic movement to work more closely with women in the churches.

Gary Kenny’s second lead article, that on the Canadian churches themselves, reminds us usefully of the important role such established churches have come to play within the anti-apartheid movement in this country. It is perhaps not surprising that, at a 1987 ecumenical conference of church leaders from southern Africa that took place in Harare, Canadian churches were praised for their “courage, sensitivity and unbiased opinion and approach” to South Africa and its problems. For

theirs is, indeed, a strong record, achieved despite the backlash of some vocal members and vested interests within the churches and despite the constant challenge of educating the broad membership to share the advanced positions being articulated by various church leaders.

At the end of Kenny’s article, redemptorist Father Paul Hansen raises the question that was posed of South African churches: Are Canadian churches, too, “trapped” by the social location of their influential membership? Hansen worries about the ability of Canadian churches to resist pressures to conform to the rightward drift of our own society. Will advanced positions regarding South Africa (like related positions on other issues) be eroded in such a context?

\* \* \*

Beyond the debates that have taken shape around the role of churches in the liberation struggle, the current issue of *SAR* reflects on two other important current questions: the transition to majority rule in Namibia, and the present mood of the labour movement in South Africa. There are also reports on two recent local events: the presentation of diplomatic credentials by the new ANC representative to Canada, Peter Mahlangu, to a gathering of representative Canadians, and the recent visit of Mozambique’s Marcelino dos Santos to this country. Not so coincidentally, these latter two incidents also reveal much about the weaknesses of the Canadian government’s current South African policy. Will there be equally depressing news – this time as regards our further backsliding on the sanctions initiative – from August’s meeting of the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers in Australia? To this possibility, too, we alert our readers in the pages that follow (see “Canberra Watch”). A pretty full agenda, in other words, with which to begin our fifth year of publication.

# Struggling for its Soul

## The Church in South Africa

BY JIM KIRKWOOD AND GARY KENNY

*Jim Kirkwood works on the Africa Desk of the Division of World Outreach of the United Church of Canada. Gary Kenny is a staff member with the Inter-Church Coalition on Africa.*

*"Something new is groaning to emerge which will challenge the whole Church in South Africa to the depths of its being." (Beyers Naudé, 1986)*

South Africa's churches actively opposed to apartheid have never been high on the Pretoria regime's list of favoured friends. When Pretoria banned 18 anti-apartheid organizations in February 1988, however, the level of conflict that has existed between church and state was raised sharply. The move effectively made the churches one of the most central forces still offering resistance to the police-state policies of the racist regime. Most other opposition groups had been banned or muzzled, and their leaders either jailed or driven underground.

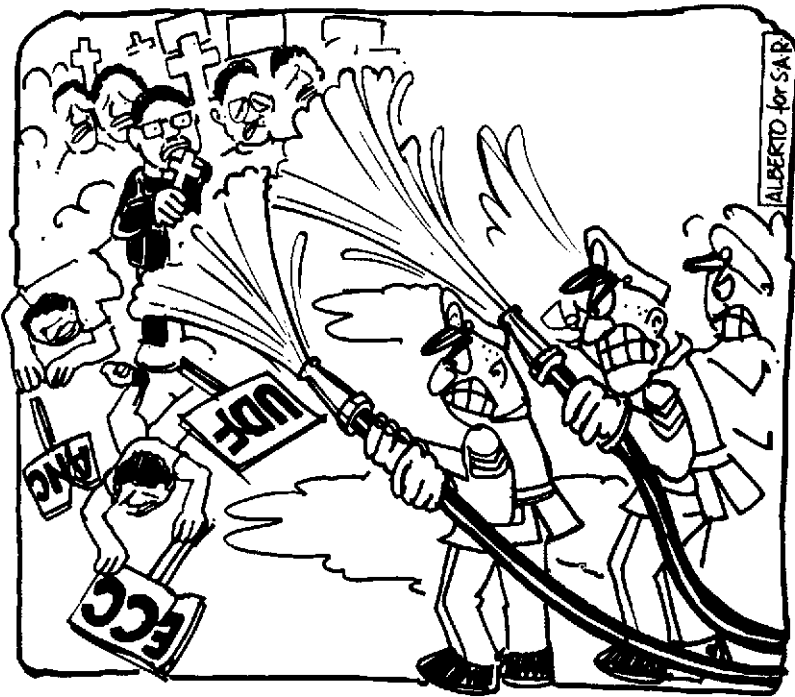
Prominent anti-apartheid church leaders quickly rallied to meet the new challenge. Just five days after the banning order was issued, more than 150 clerics, led by 25 church leaders including Desmond Tutu, Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, Rev. Allan Boesak, president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and Rev. Frank Chikane, secretary-general of the South African Council of Churches (SACC), converged on Cape Town to march in protest to the Parliament buildings. They didn't make it. Police quickly descended, arrested the "ringleaders," and dispersed those who remained with water cannon and tear gas.

In their coverage of the event Western news media sensationalized the confrontational element. In the grandiloquent words of one publication, a "full-fledged confrontation between church and state" had erupted. The march to Parliament did signal an escalation in the long-



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*Boesak & fellow clergy demonstrate for release of detainees, Cape Town 1989*



standing conflict between churches actively opposed to apartheid and the state. But the Western press overlooked the single most important element of the story: What is happening in South Africa is not just a conflict between "church" on the one hand and "state" on the other. The "church" itself is a site of struggle, divided between those churches which actively (or passively) support apartheid, and those which actively side with the liberation struggle. It is a church struggling for its own soul.

As the march in Cape Town showed, however, a new, potentially unifying force is emerging within the Church in South Africa. Representatives of the broad spectrum of South African churches – mainstream Protestant, Catholic, Dutch Reformed and African Independent – stood together in open defiance of the apartheid regime. Never before in the religious history of South Africa had so many church leaders from so many traditions acted ecumenically and corporately to oppose the state. A jubilant Desmond Tutu called the show of unity "re-

markable." Frank Chikane, who had been worried that the protest might divide the SACC, said the Council "came out of the march more united than ever."

#### The emergence of a new unity

Why have churches in South Africa experienced divisions and why are those divisions narrowing today? The church in South Africa is, and always has been, profoundly divided – socially, ethnically, politically and ideologically – into thousands of different denominations, but also within any one denomination or tradition. Such divisions are deeply rooted in the country's colonial history, and the development of a settler (white) church and a missionary (black) church. This same split still exists today, although the politicization of leaders and constituents on both sides gives hope that the divisions may be narrowing.

Today, those churches not actively involved in the struggle against apartheid are preoccupied with their own theological agendas and tend to function as if they existed in isolation from the

wider socio-economic and political affairs of the time. As the political crisis intensifies, however, many of these "see-no-evil" churches are beginning to view their preoccupations with internal concerns as parochial, anachronistic and irrelevant to the needs of their own members. Church unity, previously interpreted by these churches as "reconciliation" – of all Christian churches to one another irrespective of their differing views on apartheid and how to oppose it – is beginning to take on a different meaning. Increasingly the basis for unity is being understood as the liberation of the black majority from poverty and oppression, and the fundamental eradication of apartheid.

The *Kairos Document*, published by progressive church leaders in 1985 to challenge all churches in South Africa to side with the struggle for liberation, states unequivocally that the evil of apartheid must be destroyed, not reconciled with. To think that divisions within the church can be reconciled (healed) without addressing the fundamental injustice of apartheid, and what is happening in the townships and the squatter camps and the detention centres, is to promote complicity with the system, not unity within the churches. The role of the Church is not to preserve its unity at all costs, but to preach the gospel at all costs – even at the cost of unity.

Preaching the gospel at all costs – and not the cost of preaching the gospel – is the principle that is increasingly motivating, and mobilizing, many churches and their leaders today. But what is the message of this gospel? How is it being preached? What effect is it having on the oppressed people of South Africa? How is it giving birth to a new sense of unity within the churches?

#### The gospel that emerges from below

Over the last 30 or so years churches in South Africa have been slowly but steadily rediscovering and affirming

the radical gospel of Jesus Christ, or what South African theologian Albert Nolan, in his book *God in South Africa*, calls the "gospel that emerges from below." It is the Good News that God seeks justice for the victims and sides with the oppressed against the oppressor. As the march to Parliament proved, churches whose members are suffering more each day under apartheid policies are identifying with this gospel and are being moved to action by it. "What we are experiencing within the life of the church today is an organization, a mobilization, of the church of the poor and oppressed in a way that we've never seen before," says Charles Villa-Vicencio, head of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Cape Town. Churches are discovering "what it means to be a church not only in solidarity with the poor but a church of the poor - allowing, enabling, empowering the poor to take control of the church and to be the church . . .," he adds.

The rise of this radical, liberating gospel can be attributed to two inter-related factors. One is the wanton brutality of a regime that will stop at nothing, even the persecution of churches and their leaders, to silence all opposition to its racist policies. When the system, in its frustration, sends its police and its army into the townships to beat people up, to shoot, maim and kill, to rape, rob and imprison them indiscriminately and ruthlessly, thousands and thousands of people are conscientized and politicized overnight. They rebel, assert their humanity and become determined subjects of their own history and destiny. It is strangely paradoxical that the system is itself creating the conditions for its own demise.

The other factor is the increasing capacity of church leaders, especially young clerics, to make the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ relevant to the poor and oppressed, and the radical new church structures these leaders have fostered. For many Christians

in South Africa, especially youth, the gospel seems at best an irrelevant distraction and at worst an obstacle in the way of genuine liberation and peace.

But South Africa's new breed of church leaders - the Tutus, the Boesaks, and the Chikanes, as well as a growing number of young pastors in the townships - are changing these perceptions. They are articulating a message that is instinctively understood and responded to by the majority of oppressed black Christians. Slowly but surely, South African Christians are recognizing that message to be the gospel of liberation, which for so long has been suppressed within the life of the church. "It's the gospel they read about in the New Testament," says Villa-Vicencio, "even if it's not proclaimed within their pulpits."

### A prophetic church coming of age

The march to Parliament stands today as a sign of a "prophetic" church coming of age. Emphasis on prophetic, because the Biblical prophets are still dismissed by many Christians as mere foretellers of the future. In fact, they were

mostly concerned with the present, and with how the social, political and economic realities of their day affected the lives of their people and their nation. As "prophets" they worked to expose those forces, systems and structures which kept their people in a perpetual state of underdevelopment and oppression. Naming the oppressor in this way is precisely the mission of prophetic churches in South Africa today.

South Africa's modern-day prophets have also fostered new church-centred movements which are able to function less bureaucratically and more responsively to the current political crisis than the institutional churches. These parallel church groupings, or "parachurches," as they are sometimes called, are part of a deliberate strategy, conceived and designed by leaders of the prophetic church, for change in church and society. Any person or group in South Africa who is serious about change knows that signs of hope cannot be found within the present political system itself. Progressive politicians, lawyers and businesspeople have realized this, and have engaged in the practice of extra-



*Churches on commuter trains, Soweto - improvised drums & ringing of bells accompany hymns*

Afrapix

parliamentary politics. Hence the visits by representatives of business to Lusaka in 1987 and by Afrikaner academics to Dakar in 1988.

Progressive church leaders have reached similar conclusions. They have realized that, for change to occur within the institutional Church, new models of *being* church and a new vision of society must be introduced from without. Hence the evolution of the "parachurch" movement.

The development of the parachurch can be traced to the early 1960s, with the formation of the ecumenical Christian Institute (CI). Its founder, Dr. Beyers Naudé, had been a distinguished pastor and leader in the Afrikaner church and a long-time member of the Broederbond. After the Sharpeville massacre, however, Naudé underwent an extraordinary conversion to non-racialism. He is considered today to be one of South Africa's leading Afrikaner opponents of apartheid.

In a sense the CI was the logical outcome of Naudé's conversionary experience. Heavily influenced by the example of the Confessing Church in Nazi Germany, the CI sought to change Christians' awareness of and attitudes towards apartheid through programs of Bible study, reflection, social analysis and service. It preached the gospel of non-racialism, and included in its leadership and ranks clergy and laity from the white and black Dutch Reformed Churches as well as the so-called mainstream Protestant and Catholic churches. It dared to envision life in a free, democratic and non-racial South Africa. Frequent close contact with the suffering victims of apartheid continually sharpened the CI's radical edge.

Because the Institute was not accountable to any particular church, it was often free to function as a catalytic agent. In 1968, for example, it joined with the South African Council of Churches (SACC) to produce "Message to the People of South Africa," which declared that

"apartheid, with its attendant hardships, was a doctrine truly hostile to Christianity." The "Message" marked the beginning of the SACC's sustained opposition to apartheid. The following year the CI and SACC collaborated again to produce the "Study Programme on Christianity in Apartheid Society" (SPROCAS). The goal of SPROCAS was to move beyond the verbal abstractions of the "Message" and seek practical ways of applying it. One of its most significant tactics was the promotion of "black theology" and leadership in Church and society. The endorsement of such leadership, however, was more than the South African regime could bear. It banned the CI, and Naudé along with it, in 1977.

The CI successfully established a network of study groups throughout South Africa, but membership remained largely black, thereby casting some doubt on it as a multi-racial experiment. And, as it increasingly supported black power, its financial support within South Africa dried up, making it almost entirely dependent on overseas churches. Nevertheless, throughout its life the CI remained guided by a vision of a non-racial society reconciled through justice. That message wasn't lost with its demise. Instead, it filtered into other parachurch bodies, such as the SACC, where it was picked up with renewed vigour and given much-needed institutional support.

### Fostering black leadership

By far the best known and most militant parachurch in South Africa is the SACC. It was formed in 1968 and today unites under one umbrella South Africa's so-called "mainstream" (historically the "missionary") churches, and the Catholic Church, which participates in the Council as an official observer. Forty percent of all South African Christians (and 45 percent of whites) belong to such churches. The Catholics, Methodists and Anglicans are the biggest, together accounting for almost 30 percent of

the white population and nearly 25 percent of the total population, giving the Council a strong multi-racial flavour.

Like the CI, the SACC was committed to fostering black leadership in the church and lifted up "black theology" as a way to "free the man of Africa from his inferiority." Unlike the CI, it was able to speak and make pronouncements with a strong political voice, due largely to its ecumenical composition and the support and backing it was given by its member churches.

In addition to its collaborative efforts with the CI, the SACC established itself quickly as a leading church body against apartheid, urging white South Africans to resist compulsory military conscription and oppose foreign investment in South Africa. The election of Desmond Tutu as secretary-general in 1978 added further momentum to the Council's opposition to apartheid. Member churches were encouraged to "withdraw from cooperation with the state as far as possible" and to work out "strategies of resistance." At its 1980 annual general meeting it endorsed the ANC's Freedom Charter as a vision of a just society, and called for the release of Nelson Mandela. Even more controversially, the Council has refused to condemn the use of violence as a means of achieving justice.

Within the Council a number of departments have been established to minister to different groups affected by the political crisis. They include offices in support of detainees, community development projects and women, and serve the SACC's constituency through a network of 24 regional councils established throughout South Africa.

The SACC is also working to include in its membership the African independent churches, which represent some 30 per cent of the black population and about 31 per cent of all Christians in South Africa (or between seven and eight million people in about four thousand





*Candidates to be confirmed at a service in the Anglican Church in Queen's Mercy, Transkei*



*Zionist church service in an hostel in Guguletu, Cape Town*

different churches). The extent to which it has done so, however, remains uncertain. These churches are known for their apolitical stance and their leadership is highly conservative. Few can be described as preaching a "social gospel" in the usual political and prophetic meaning of the term. But, as the political crisis in South Africa intensifies, there are signs that some are developing a social, political and economic critique of apartheid. The march to Parliament, for example, included clergy from the African independent churches.

The Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT) is another parachurch body that is consistently making an impact on South Africa's institutional churches. Formed in the late 1970s, it works with women, youth, workers, political groups and clergy in an attempt to help them understand their victimization and oppression in light of the liberating (prophetic) word of God; helping them to identify the forces working to perpetuate their poverty and oppression and, in the process, empowers them to take control over their own lives.

One of ICT's best known works is the aforementioned *Kairos Document*. Signed by 152 black and white theologians drawn from the Catholic, mainstream Protestant, Evangelical and Pentecostal churches, the *Kairos Document* names the forces in South African society which perpetuate apartheid and appeals to the victims of apartheid through a God who sides with the poor and oppressed. Its prophetic denunciation of injustice and its urgent call to resist the evil of apartheid has also animated churches around the world. For example, it has challenged churches in the First World to acknowledge and come to terms with the racism and economic injustice in their own midst.

In the wake of the *Kairos Document* other confessional statements have also been published. In 1986

the Evangelical Church published *Evangelical Witness in South Africa*, which called Evangelicals to repentance for not having preached a prophetic and radical gospel. Since then the Pentecostal Church has released *A Relevant Pentecostal Witness*, which denounces apartheid and the Pentecostal Church's complicity in it. The release of the document proves that, even in a church as conservative as the Pentecostal, a circle of leaders opposed to apartheid has developed and is increasing in size.

Prophetic parachurch bodies have also emerged with the family of Dutch Reformed Churches (DRCs). In 1974, the *Belydendekring* (Confessing Circle) or *BK* was born. It consists of leaders from the white and black DRC's who have strongly denounced apartheid and its attendant theology, and seeks to promote unity within these churches. Some *BK* leaders, such as Beyers Naudé, have put their words to action by actually becoming members of one of the "non-white" DRCs. These leaders continue to play a powerful, influential and, one hopes, conversionary role within the white community, as well.

As the Afrikaans Reformed mission churches have centred around the *BK*, so the other black churches have found their centre in the Alliance of Black Reformed Churches of Southern Africa (Abreca). Its president, Allan Boesak, has managed to broaden the reform movement even to the point of including several mainstream churches. There are signs that Abreca may unite in some capacity with the *BK*, which could create a powerful and influential confessing church movement.

#### The future

What lies ahead for the parachurch? After the now-famous march to Parliament, church leaders from all over South Africa called a Special Convocation in May to consider their options in the face of increasing State repression. Descriptive and moralis-

tic statements denouncing apartheid in all its forms alone won't touch, let alone dismantle, the apartheid system, they agreed. What the churches need to do is develop a catalogue of "effective non-violent actions." "We've got to get down to the business of training as many people as possible in non-violent action . . ." said Tutu following the meeting. "[Churches] must be quite prepared to take the consequences of standing up on behalf of God's people."

And so the "Standing for the Truth Campaign" was born. Existing even outside the SACC, it is by far the most militant parachurch in South Africa today. A list of possible campaign actions reads like an activist's handbook - intervention strategies in crisis situations, acts of non-cooperation with the State, and defying State of Emergency laws by reporting incidents of unrest. Its first act, and undoubtedly not its last, was to condemn last October's municipal elections as a front for the white minority government.

Following the convocation, and the condemnation of the October elections, attacks on the churches increased. The headquarters of both the SACC and the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference were bombed, and more than 30 SACC staff were detained. For the moment, however, an air of relative calm has set in. Churches united in their opposition to apartheid, however, are not sitting idle, merely waiting for the regime to make its next move. They are busy schooling themselves in the art of effective activism. Whenever the next onslaught of repressive force comes, as it surely will, they will be ready. Further persecution of the churches will only mobilize more Christians, says Chikane. If the government attacks us, "it will have to face a massive upsurge of the members of the churches against the apartheid system. Anything they do besides going to the negotiating table is going to make the situation worse."

# False Confessions: White Reformed Churches in S. A.

*This article is drawn from press reports on the Vereeniging meetings, and also relies heavily on a critique by Charles Villa-Vicencio which appeared in the April issue of The Reformed Journal.*

The contradictions of South African society exist in perhaps their sharpest formation within the life of the Dutch Reformed faith, a theological tradition which counts one out of six South Africans among its members. Numerically, members of the Dutch Reform tradition constitute the most powerful church inside the country but like many South African institutions Dutch Reformed Churches are divided along racial lines. Whites belong to the three so-called "mother churches"; Africans, Asians and "coloured" people worship in respective "daughter churches," traditionally perceived as subordinate. The great irony is that although significant numbers of non-whites belong to the Dutch Reform faith, (ten per cent of the Black population), the white branches of the church have traditionally served as the spiritual home for the apartheid system by providing, over the years, a large array of twisted theological justifications for racist policies.

The largest and most influential of the white reformed churches is the Nederduitse Gerformeerde Kerk, otherwise known as the "Nationalist Party at Prayer." It is true that some NGK leaders have taken issue with apartheid support, most notably Dr. Beyers Naudé, former moderator of the Transvaal Synod and now director of the Christian Institute. But, on the whole, NGK leadership continues as a force working against progressive change in South Africa. Even as late as 1974 the NGK was still looking to the scriptures to support apartheid, with the publication of *Human Re-*

*lations and the South African Scene in Light of Scripture*, a document which provided explicit biblical and theological legitimation for the system. Ultimately, this move resulted in the 1982 expulsion of the NGK from the ranks of the World Alliance of Reformed and Presbyterian Churches. Anti-apartheid activist Dr. Alan Boesak, moderator of the "coloured" "Mission Church" was chosen as president of the world

own isolation in the world family of churches. In 1986 the General Synod responded with the publication of *Church and Society*, a document which turned away from overt theological support of apartheid, declared racism "a serious sin" but then failed to identify apartheid with racism or challenge the government to dismantle the system.

In recent months the NGK was in the news again. On



David Hartman

*Delegates at Dutch Reformed "coloured" Mission Church, Cape Town 1986*

body. This elevation of a "daughter" church over what had traditionally been perceived as the "mother" of all Reformed churches was a serious loss of international prestige for the NGK.

Since its dismissal from WARC the NGK has been grappling with ways to come to terms with racial division in South Africa and its

March 10 newspapers, television and radio in North America announced that the "church of State President Botha," the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerke (NGK) had renounced apartheid during long-awaited consultation meetings with other white, black and coloured churches in the Dutch Reformed family. These meetings, held in Vereeniging near Johannesburg,



David Hartman

Delegates at the Dutch Reformed "white" Mission Church, Cape Town 1986

took place under the auspices of the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC), a world-wide ecumenical body, and were designed to begin a process of reconciliation between the NGK and non-white reformed churches. Also in attendance were delegates from the black NGK in Africa (NGKA), the "coloured" NG Sendingkerk, and the Reformed

Church in Africa, consisting mainly of Indians.

Initial optimism emerging from the Vereeniging meeting was based on statements made by NGK delegates on the first day, with delegates not only admitting that apartheid was a sin, but also confessing the white Afrikaaner Reformed churches had helped create and sup-

port the system. But on the second day, these confessions were undone when the white delegation refused to move beyond abstract principles and take decisive action. In their statements the black churches insisted that "apartheid (in whatever form) ... must be totally eradicated from the life of the South African nation," with Christians being obliged to commit themselves "to work together towards the dismantling of apartheid." But the white church failed to go beyond its 1986 *Church and Society* apolitical position. NGK delegates condemned "discriminatory apartheid" but refused to participate in the debate or vote on a resolution proposed by Dr. Alan Boesak which stated that "all forms of apartheid are sinful and in contradiction to the Gospel. Apartheid cannot be reformed, but must be completely eradicated." In a separately issued statement white delegates "unequivocally disassociated themselves from the view that it is calling the church to prescribe any political model or policy to the government." Instead the white churches would "continue to test every existing and proposed political model against scriptural demand."

Finally, NGK delegates at Vereeniging turned their backs on a commitment to church unity and the eradication of racial division, saying they are "not yet ready to say what the structural model of the one-church-to-be" should look like. All this points to the now fairly obvious conclusion that despite what the NGK would have us believe about the extent of progressive movement within its ranks, the church leadership is still refusing to confront the government it has propped up for so many years. So far the few moves that have been made reveal only a slight discomfort with racial division in South Africa and more significantly a general unhappiness about isolation from the world family of Christian churches. Outside observers should not mistake this restlessness for meaningful action.

# Partners in Prophecy: Canadian Churches in Solidarity

BY GARY KENNY

*Gary Kenny is a staff member with the Inter-Church Coalition on Africa.*

In South Africa, the repressive brutality of the Pretoria regime just keeps intensifying. Successive states of emergency, government crack-downs, massive detentions, uncontrolled police violence, the elimination of a free press, and the banishment of the international media have virtually reduced this tortured land to a military dictatorship and a terrorist state. As other institutions and voices of democratic protest have been silenced, those churches actively opposed to apartheid have felt compelled to develop bold new strategies to resist the regime's increasingly repressive policies. Now, armed with the powerful weapon of non-violent resistance, they are preparing to confront - in the words of a recent Anglican Church of South Africa statement - the "vicious dog" of apartheid.

This new militancy has already exacted a high price - the destruction of church property, attacks on church leaders, and harassment of church staff. Some believe the worst is yet to come. On their return from 40 days in South Africa last year, American journalists Jim Wallis and Joyce Hollyday, of *Sojourners* magazine, spoke of "the real possibility of a martyred church in South Africa."

The increasing level of confrontation between church and state in South Africa places a new responsibility on Canadian churches, as it does on churches worldwide. More than ever before the church must now grapple with the difficult and unsettling question. What, Christians are beginning to ask, is the moral claim of a suffering church on the rest of the body of Christ? As self-professed "partners in mis-

sion" with the oppressed churches of South Africa, how do Canadian churches respond to the disturbing words of Frank Chikane, general secretary of the South African Council of Churches, when he says, "It seems - and this is the painful thing - that the international community does not respond unless we die in great numbers."

More than ever before in their history, Canada's major denominations - the Anglican, United, Presbyterian, Evangelical Lutheran and Catholic Churches - are deeply and intimately involved in the struggle against apartheid in all its forms. While a few of these churches began voicing their opposition to apartheid almost three decades ago, it is only in the last 15 or so years, and especially through the early and mid-1980s, that the core of Canadian church policy on South Africa, both denominationally and ecumenically, has been formed.

An early initiative of the 1970s was the "Black Paper: An Alternative Policy for Canada Towards Southern Africa," produced by a predominantly secular group called the Committee for a Just and Canadian Policy towards South Africa. The authors of the Black Paper were critical of the government policy document, "Foreign Policy for Canadians," calling it a "misleading and rhetorical essay." It left the distinct impression, they said, that Ottawa was more preoccupied with economic gains to be made in South Africa than it was with human rights and basic justice. According to Garth Legge, one of the authors of the Black Paper, it won acceptance throughout the churches and helped to make southern Africa part of "the faithful mission of the church."

Major policy thrusts in the 1980s

Throughout the 1970s, Canada's churches became riveted to what was happening in South Africa as never before. The death of more than 600 students during the Soweto Uprisings of 1976 fixed in the minds of many church leaders an image of South Africa as a ruthless, tyrannical, racist state. However, it wasn't until the early 1980s, a period of increased state repression in South Africa, that a major policy development began to take shape right across the churches. A brief summary of the churches' current policy positions on some of the key issues gives a sense of the broad scope of work done during this period.

From a theological perspective, Canadian churches (essentially Canada's four major Protestant churches and the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace), along with virtually the entire Christian world, have rejected white apartheid theology as heresy. The convening of the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC - a worldwide body of Presbyterian, Reformed and United Churches), in Ottawa in August 1982, was formative to this policy development. The General Council declared apartheid to be a "sin" and its moral justification "a travesty of the Gospel," and it denounced apartheid's persistent disobedience of the Word of God as "a theological heresy."

In the political and economic realm, the churches have grappled with the key issues which continue to animate non-church bodies actively opposed to apartheid. All believe that the Canadian government should impose comprehensive economic sanctions against South Africa without further delay. Increased Canadian government aid to the Frontline states is also urged as a strategy to stimulate development and offset the effects of economic destabilization by South Africa. On other issues, such

as diplomatic relations with South Africa, the churches are split. For example, CCODP has called for the downgrading of Canada's embassy in Pretoria, while the United Church favours a complete break. Consensus on this issue is unlikely until appropriate church leaders in South Africa, themselves divided on the issue, arrive at a common position. All churches recognize the ANC and SWAPO as legitimate voices of the majority of blacks in South Africa and Namibia respectively. They support ANC and SWAPO human-

resolve. In fact, on several issues deep splits exist between an enlightened leadership, concentrated at the national and regional church levels, and the general constituency. Canadians currently see just such a split in the United Church over its General Council's controversial decision in 1988 to continue considering for ordination self-declared homosexuals.

On southern African issues, recognition of the ANC continues to bring such divisions into sharp relief. For example, national church pol-

educational and awareness-building opportunities that have been made available to them. Ross says that it is a fairly typical phenomenon that, after church leaders have been exposed to visiting church leaders from southern Africa, or better yet, are able to travel to the region, they return transformed and intensely politicized and radicalized.

That national and regional offices are often more progressive and radical than their constituencies "is a fact of life that we simply have to accept," Ross says. "Church leaders won't get anywhere if they situate themselves in the middle of the crowd. If they take their prophetic role as leaders seriously, then they have to put themselves out ahead."

#### On the ecumenical front

A great boon to the work of the denominations and progressive church leaders within them was the formation of the ecumenical Taskforce on Churches and Corporate Responsibility (TCCR) in 1975 and the Inter-Church Coalition on Africa in 1980. Like parachurch organizations in South Africa, the coalitions have offered alternative forms of leadership on the issues. They tend to function on the periphery of the institutional church, relatively free of the cumbersome bureaucracies characteristic of their institutional sponsors. Because they operate at arm's length from the churches, and often attract highly politicized staff, the role they have played in shaping both denominational and ecumenical policy on southern Africa has been significant.

A national coalition of Canada's major denominations, TCCR was created to help the churches implement their policies on southern Africa as they relate to Canadian corporations doing business in countries in the region, especially in South Africa and Namibia. Of particular concern has been the disinvestment of Canadian companies in South Africa which supply trucks, computers, oil and certain kinds of



CCODP

*At Christ the King Cathedral in Hamilton Ontario, candles encircled with barbed wire were carried in a vigil marking the walk toward justice in S. A.*

itarian projects through intermediary bodies such as the World Council of Churches. In fact, the United Church supports the ANC directly. All favour negotiations between South Africa's legitimate black leaders and the South African government, but only on condition of the release of Nelson Mandela.

#### Internal tensions

The development of denominational policy on southern Africa has not been without struggle. The breadth and strength of current policy leaves the impression that churches, within their ranks, are unanimous in their

policy calls for recognition of the ANC at the same time that large numbers of church constituents express disdain for the outlawed organization and its so-called "communist" and "terrorist" ways. According to Marjorie Ross of the Taskforce on Churches and Corporate Responsibility (TCCR), such divisions are inevitable in the life of the democratic church: The fact is, says Ross, at national and regional levels where they are concentrated, church leaders, both clergy and lay, are usually more progressive, political and radical than the general constituencies. Often it is because of the

technology which the racist regime can use to finance its repression of the country's black majority.

TCCR, well-known for its polite but persistent style of work, can claim many significant achievements. It helped to decrease the number of Canadian companies in South Africa from about 35 four years ago to nine as of May, 1989. Of those nine, only two - Varsity Corporation and Quebec Iron and Titanium - have significant business interests in South Africa. Perhaps TCCR's best known success was the major role it played to convince Canadian banks to stop making loans to the South African government and its state agencies.

TCCR's Marjorie Ross says that the strong and influential voice of business is heard not only in the corporate boardrooms that Task-force members visit, but also within its own ranks and the ranks of the churches. The business community makes up a major segment of the Canadian church, she says. Whether the issue is economic sanctions against South Africa or environmental pollution controls, you can count on church-going business people to raise a number of issues, but most frequently that of loss of jobs, Ross adds. Jobs are seen as taking a higher priority than imposing sanctions or cleaning up the environment. Countering such positions, which are often argued in a very sophisticated and hard-headed manner, is a constant uphill battle, Ross says.

In 1980, in response to increasing solidarity requests from partner churches throughout Africa, the Inter-Church Coalition on Africa (ICCAF) was born. Like TCCR, its scope was national, but instead of research, ICCAF was intended to help Canadians to learn more about issues of vital concern to the people of Africa. ICCAF's focus sharpened when the black unrest in the townships of South Africa reached crisis proportion in 1985. Partner churches in the country began issu-

ing urgent appeals for solidarity support and ICCAF's Board moved to broaden the scope of the Coalition's work. To keep the issues before the church public, two working groups, one on South Africa and the other on Namibia, were formed to produce educational resources.

Over the next two years, however, the escalation of the crisis in South Africa generated even more solidarity requests. In the spring of 1987, ICCAF's Board approved a proposal for the "Education Project on Southern Africa" (EPSA), a comprehensive educational programme focusing on apartheid, in all its vicious manifestations, as "an obstacle to the development of the people and the countries of southern Africa." According to ICCAF's coordinator, Marg Bacon, EPSA has significantly extended ICCAF's outreach into the broader Canadian church constituency.



But the ecumenical approach has its frustrations, too. Bacon says that as long as the churches stay focused on issues of basic social justice, consensus usually comes with relative ease. But as soon as denominational philosophies or theologies are allowed to enter the picture, the consensus process can very quickly break down. As an example, Bacon cites an attempt by the churches last year to formulate an ecumenical policy statement in support of "collective security aid" for the Frontline States. The statement raised the matter of military (albeit non-lethal) support - a contentious issue at any time in the churches, despite the non-pacifist traditions of most - to countries such as Mozambique, a principal target for South African military aggression. In the end, churches disagreed on the theological rationale and wording of the intended joint statement, and the whole process hogged down.

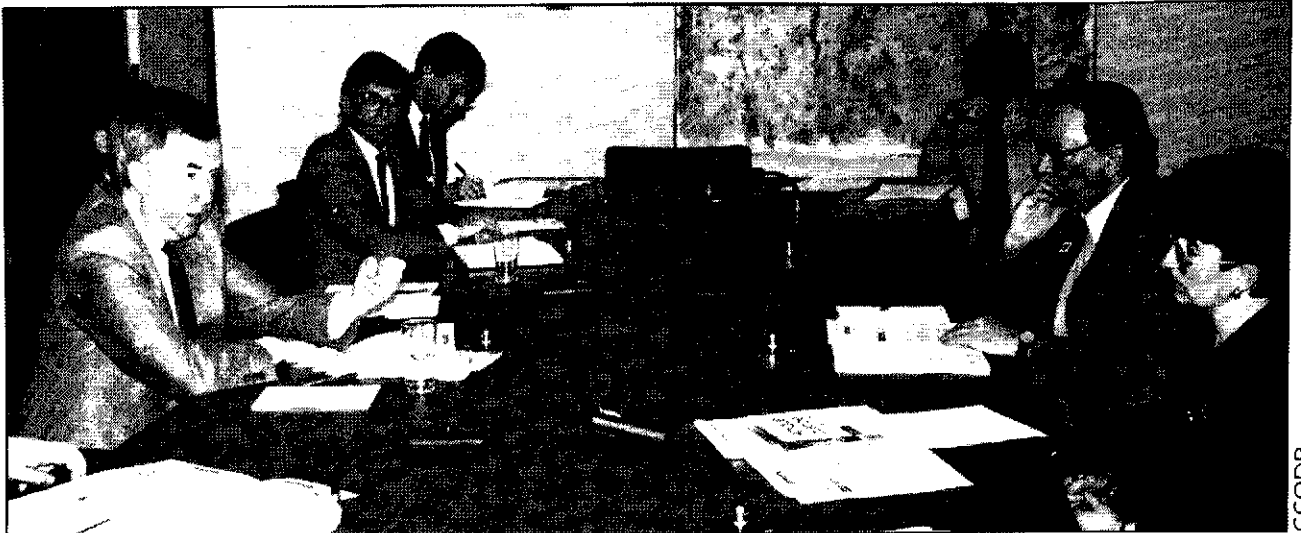
Also on the ecumenical front, Canada's churches have worked within the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC), which through the 1970s and 1980s made many interventions to the Canadian government advocating stronger economic sanctions, increased aid to the Frontline States and, in 1987, Canada's withdrawal from the Namibia Contact Group.

Participation by Canada's Protestant churches in the World Council of Churches (WCC) has also provided an important forum in which Canadian ecumenical action against apartheid has flourished. In 1970 the WCC's Program to Combat Racism (PCR), which is committed to exposing and fighting racism wherever it occurs in the world, set up a Special Fund to support the struggles of liberation movements against repressive regimes. Liberation movements in southern Africa became one of the Fund's major foci. The United Church immediately threw its support behind the PCR, and other churches have since followed suit.

#### Maintaining a prophetic voice

As Canada's churches prepare to enter a new decade, a number of issues are front and centre on the denominational and ecumenical agendas. Perhaps the most significant, and frustrating, of those issues is sanctions, and the now obvious lack of commitment by the Canadian government to make good on earlier promises to impose total sanctions against South Africa if fundamental changes to apartheid weren't made. Among the churches there is a strong feeling that the Canadian government has, to repeat the recent words of Stephen Lewis, former Canadian ambassador to the United Nations, "repudiated and betrayed" its solemn commitments to the people of South Africa and Canada, and by so doing has "washed its hands of the leadership on South Africa."

Earlier this year, as a result of an intensive education/action campaign, CCODP gathered 120,000



CCODP

*CCODP presents 120,000 petitions for comprehensive sanctions to External Affairs Minister Joe Clark*

petitions calling for comprehensive sanctions against South Africa, and delivered them personally to External Affairs Minister Joe Clark. So many individual signatures can't be ignored, says a CCODP spokesperson, but it remains to be seen whether they will induce any significant changes to official government policy. If Canadian churches are to continue pushing sanctions and have any integrity doing so, then they must at least work to keep the issue on the government's foreign policy agenda. And that means at the very least taking more initiatives like those of CCODP.

ICCAF and the Canadian Council hope to gain more ground on the sanctions issue this fall. They have formed the Canada-South Africa Crisis Coordinating Committee (C-SACCC) "to organize a coordinated and sustained ecumenical response in Canada to the crisis facing partner churches in South Africa." Plans call for a meeting between high-level Canadian church leaders and Prime Minister Mulroney in October to present a case for comprehensive economic sanctions against the apartheid regime.

#### **Prophetic voice in danger**

As Canadian churches continue to search for more effective ways to

act in solidarity with their partners in southern Africa, it is essential that they have the freedom to think and act "prophetically" - to be able to step back from the public ideology and mainstream theology to reflect critically on the indirect role even they might play in supporting the apartheid system. But some church representatives feel that the prophetic voice may be under attack. The church, in more ways than many would like to admit, mirrors the society around it. The wave of conservatism that is currently washing over Canadian society has hit the Churches as well.

Among many progressive-thinking church people today, talk invariably turns to the gathering momentum of the conservative ideological and theological right. Fiscal deficits and budget cuts seem the order of the day. Concerns for justice are now rivaled by the challenges of austerity. Institutional survival, it seems, is quickly becoming the new ecclesiastical "bottom line."

Paul Hansen, a redeemptorist priest, sits on the boards of several church coalitions, including ICCAF and TCCR, and has devoted much of his ministry to studying and teaching the effects of consumer-oriented, capitalist culture on Christian community. He fears that the trend

toward conservatism may be having an adverse affect on the coalitions. Some seem to be drifting to the centre of the mainstream church, where they will no longer be able to raise their prophetic voices, he says. Their days of being able to take strong and sometimes unpopular stands on issues such as sanctions, diplomatic relations and military support to the Frontline States, could be numbered.

Hansen believes that Canada's institutional churches have important choices to make. Either they recognize that apartheid, as a racist and economically exploitive system, exists in various forms all over the world, including in Canada, or they capitulate to the dominant conservative and capitalist influences of the day. If they follow the latter course, he says, then their pronouncements against apartheid become little more than "nice liberal noises" rather than prophetic Christian acts. "If we are going to continue to name and act against oppression wherever it exists - in South Africa, Guatemala, the Philippines or Canada - then we have to expose the ugly skeletons of racism and economic exploitation in our own closets," he says, "and challenge those who would keep them there."



# Treacherous Crossing: Namibian Independence Debacle

BY OUR NAMIBIA CORRESPONDENT

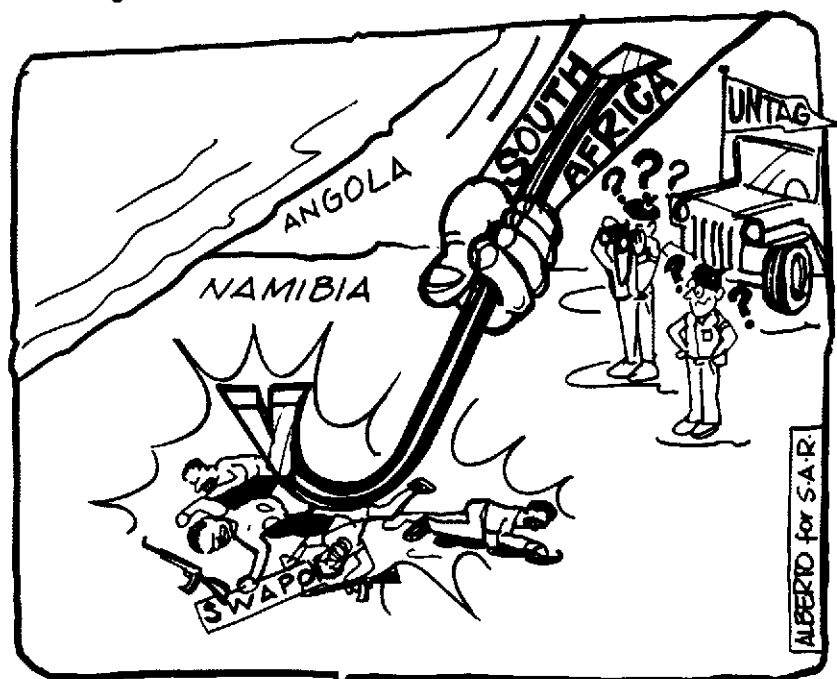
When guerrillas of the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) stepped up their crossings from Angola into Namibia in the days leading up to April 1, the official start of Namibia's transition to independence and to elections in November, most observers were caught off guard.

Not so the notorious police counter-insurgency unit, Koevoet - although they claimed they were taken by surprise. Five hours after the official ceasefire was in place, just before sunrise on April 1, Koevoet attacked the guerrillas, claiming they were acting in self-defence. But it is now clear Koevoet seized what was for them a perfect opportunity for a final fling before being made redundant by peace. Koevoet, or "Crowbar," is the counter-insurgency unit of the South West African Police (SWAPOL - not to be confused with SWAPO).

Let's go back a few months.

In February this year, ten weeks before April 1, I spoke with a senior member of the South African security police stationed at Oshakati, the main centre of South African military operations in the Namibian war zones. He said then that the security police were aware that "several hundred" SWAPO guerrillas had entered Namibia and were carrying out what he called "political work." "We know where they are and are keeping tabs on them," he said, adding, "There hasn't been a serious military contact since August last year (inside Namibia) and we don't want to provoke an incident."

Two weeks later, the Windhoek Supreme Court granted an urgent



interdict against Koevoet. The order restrained the unit from harassing or attacking SWAPO members, after hearing evidence from former Koevoet members that they had been instructed to "go back to war if SWAPO wins the (independence) elections." As explained below, it seems clear from Koevoet's actions in April that it had plans to prolong the war by attacking SWAPO.

By April 1, most of the 3500 Koevoet members had been issued with new uniforms, and "integrated" into conventional police units. But as there are only 6,500 SWAPOL members, Koevoet, which claims to have killed over 80 percent of all guerrillas who died in the war, now form the bulk of the police force. Koevoet's sole function in the war was, according to earlier court evidence, the "elimination and interrogation" of guerrillas.

This, then, was the scenario on April 1.

Five hours after the ceasefire was officially in place, a Koevoet unit, claiming it was chasing cattle thieves, initiated the first battle of the day. By sunset more than fifteen battles had taken place over a 350km war front, refuting any claim that it was a spontaneous, localized action.

Eyewitness accounts all insist the first battles were initiated by Koevoet. In terms of UN Resolution 435, the SWAPOL men were supposed to be armed only with sidearms - but despite this, they went into the first battles equipped with heavy-calibre machine guns, grenades, mortars and rocket launchers.

The battles were brutal and bloody. A number of guerrillas' corpses were mutilated beyond

recognition, evidence that they had simply been run over by the heavy Casspir armoured vehicles.

Other bodies, including some I saw, bore evidence of elimination after capture – the only wounds being bullet holes through the forehead. Which is not to say that the guerrillas were innocent victims. They were heavily armed and in several cases fought back strongly – seven armoured vehicles were destroyed, and more than 30 members of the police and military killed.

Over 300 guerrillas died in what seems a futile start to the independence process. Yet eyewitnesses I spoke to, and communications received from the guerrillas, told the same story: those who entered Namibia just before April 1 said they expected to be met by the forces of UNTAG (United Nations

Transitional Assistance Group), and to hand over their arms. "We came not in war but in peace," they claimed. "We came to meet the United Nations."

## SWAPO Misjudgments

However, at all levels SWAPO committed a series of strategic and political errors, partly through not taking available information into account.

- The UN wasn't ready to protect the guerrillas. There were fewer than 1000 of the total 4500 UNTAG members inside Namibia on April 1, and only 100 or so in the war zones.

- Basic ground intelligence gathering would have revealed that Koevoet, despite propaganda to the contrary, had been disbanded in name only and were still a formidable fighting force.

- SWAPO had very little to gain and plenty to lose by coming across the border heavily armed. Although the movement never signed the Geneva Protocols which sought to confine them behind Angola's 16th parallel, the international perception was and is that they had tacitly agreed to those Protocols.

- SWAPO clearly has overwhelming popular support in Namibia and the guerrilla incursion was hence futile, although perhaps SWAPO strategists believed the psychological effect of having armed combatants inside the country would further strengthen its election chances.

- SWAPO's action has lost it considerable international support and prestige. Even Angola, the country which at great cost to itself supported SWAPO through fourteen years of war, expressed its disapproval.



One week late, UN forces arrive in war zone

Afrapix

Ironically, the fighting does appear to have boosted SWAPO's image in northern Namibia. The police and military had in recent months been conducting an intensive anti-SWAPO campaign, and had launched a massive campaign to win over the hearts and minds of the people. But the brutality of their campaign against SWAPO and the destruction of the civilian property during the attacks has had a significant effect in shoring up support for SWAPO. In addition to killing guerrillas ("young boys, who thought they could come home in peace," as a priest at a graveside put it), they destroyed villages, harvests and food stores.

Nevertheless, the loss of face and support suffered by SWAPO has been serious for the movement. It placed the UNTAG forces, already two to four weeks behind schedule, in an invidious position. With South Africa insisting that the entire independence process should be called off, the UN was faced with an impossible situation: either face having Namibian independence called off after decades of negotiations, or allow South Africa to free its forces from bases. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, coincidentally in Namibia, is reported to have delivered an ultimatum to the UN representative, Martti Ahtisaari: lift restrictions on the SADF forces, or lose Namibian independence. The UN lifted the restrictions and let loose the dogs of war, who swiftly resorted to terrorism. "We stood outside a homestead close to Endola with a young man of 25," reported British observers MP Peter Pike and human rights lawyer John Macdonald in early May. "He showed us the hole where he had been buried head first in the sand and beaten by Koevoet." The two observers also met 40 head-

men from villages in the same region, of whom 26 had been beaten, many with the scars to prove it. Pike and Macdonald called for UN police to accompany all South African police on patrol, and appealed for an end to both Koevoet's role and the use of Casspirs.

### Koevoet's Military Strike

It is probably the case that SWAPO's ill-timed decision to send in its troops was taken at the highest level, and that the leadership will have to bear responsibility for the consequences of their actions. Nonetheless, the more important story is the machinations of Koevoet and the military.

The most likely scenario which emerges from the April 1 events is that the security forces, particularly Koevoet, have no desire to see the war end and an inevitable SWAPO victory in the elections. Specula-

tion is that, aware for several days, weeks or even months, of the presence of the sizable force of guerrillas, Koevoet chose April 1 to attack. In less than 24 hours, they launched their brutal assaults over a long front, choosing the military option over the political and diplomatic one.

Pretoria, to give them the benefit of the doubt, probably did not know in advance of Koevoet's intentions. But it was swift to capitalize on what was for them a golden opportunity. They used the incursion as an excuse to deliver one last military blow to SWAPO, re-arming 700 white farmers who had traditionally formed the second line of military defence. And they seized the moment to launch a powerful international propaganda campaign.

The battles have brought into sharp focus the total dependence of UNTAG on the South African military and their considerable disadvantage in attempting to be impartial - in the north, UNTAG bases are often inside South African bases, and much of their intelligence and information comes from SADF and SWAPOL.

The most important effect of the battles, though, has been to give the South Africans the moral high ground in haggling over the finer details of the independence process. This has led to a new aggressiveness in South Africa's dealings with the UN, and will inevitably lead to them exploiting every opportunity they can to undermine the extent of a SWAPO election victory.

Fortunately, the UN does seem to be strengthening its hand over time and to be more firmly in command. Still, the events of April 1 have provided some indication of just how difficult the transition to independence and elections is likely to be.



In Windhoek, police stop march of 10,000 protesting privatization of Namibia's public sector

Afrapix

# The People of Canada Welcome New ANC Representative



David Hartman

"We are prepared to make the sacrifice to attain a non-racial, democratic South Africa," said Peter Mahlangu at a moving and enthusiastic ceremony in Toronto in early May. The public event, held in a packed downtown hall, enabled Mahlangu to present his credentials as the chief representative of the ANC in Canada to "the People of Canada" in place of the Canadian government which does not recognize the ANC.

Chaired by Archbishop Ted Scott, a member of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group to Southern Africa, the gathering heard strong endorsements from a cross-section of social activists, writ-

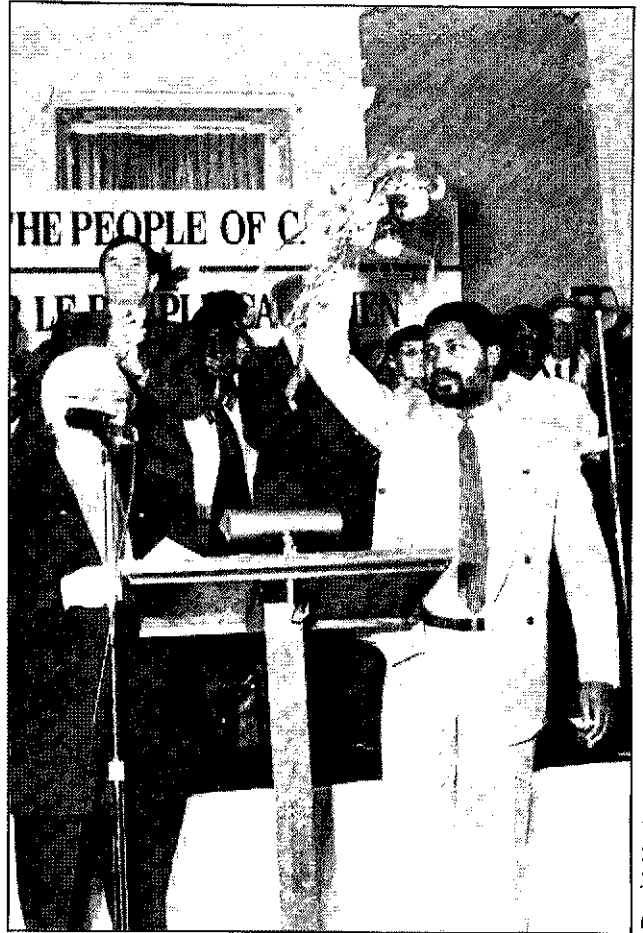
ers, diplomatic representatives and Canadian political leaders. Notably absent was any message from the Canadian government. "How we all wish it was the Government of Canada that was receiving these credentials," noted Stephen Lewis, former Canadian ambassador to the UN.

Lewis was one of five speakers acknowledging receipt of the credentials. One overriding issue of his recent time at the UN, said Lewis, was the struggle against the iniquity of apartheid. In a strong statement which clearly distanced him from the Canadian government, Lewis called on Ottawa to denounce apartheid, impose mandatory economic sanc-

tions and recognize that the ANC represents the majority in South Africa.

One of the groups recognizing Mahlangu and the ANC was the Union of Ontario Indians. "We welcome you to this land," said Gord Peters, "because we are the first people to this territory." We are one people, he went on, and join hands together in the struggle.

Elsewhere, in a *Globe and Mail* report, Mahlangu points out that the Canadian government position on the ANC simply plays into the hands of the South African government, which is busy trying to convince other nations that the ANC is dead or weakening. Meanwhile, as



David Hartman

*Stephen Lewis Ted Scott and Peter Mahlangu at ceremony in Toronto*

the *Globe* adds, the caution of the Canadian government is having effects on non-governmental organizations. CUSO, for instance, known throughout the world for its development projects, has failed to gain federal funding for ANC aid projects proposed for southern Africa. In protest, CUSO has taken a public stand on these decisions, arguing that Canada could increase pressure on South Africa and help build toward the country's future by supporting ANC projects now.

Amid letters, telegrams and speeches, the gathering said farewell to Yusuf Saloojee, the ANC's chief representative for the last eleven years, and greeted Mahlangu, who was introduced in a letter from

Oliver Tambo. Mahlangu comes from Lamontville, a township near Durban in Natal. Because of political activities that included a strike, he was expelled from Zulu Training College, and completed his schooling by correspondence. He went on to help unionize Quebec Iron and Titanium (QIT) in Empangeni, Natal, and again took part in major strikes. This time they cost him his job with QIT in 1981. Then as an organizer for the South African Allied Workers Union, he was persecuted by the authorities until he had to flee to the Frontline States from where he worked as an underground SACTU organizer. In 1986 he was selected to become the permanent SACTU coordinator in Canada.

As the ANC representative, one of his tasks will presumably be to push the Canadian government to live up to previous commitments in support of the anti-apartheid movement, such as Prime Minister Mulroney's statement at the UN in 1985. But as Lewis pointed out, the government has repudiated its UN statements, "and therefore the people of Canada must secure what the government of Canada has abandoned." Echoing a theme introduced in Tambo's letter and heard throughout the event, Lewis saluted "the extraordinary struggle of the ANC for a non-racial, democratic, just and egalitarian South Africa. And by God," he added, "one day you will succeed."

# NUMSA Urges Democratic Restructuring

BY Our South African Labour Correspondent

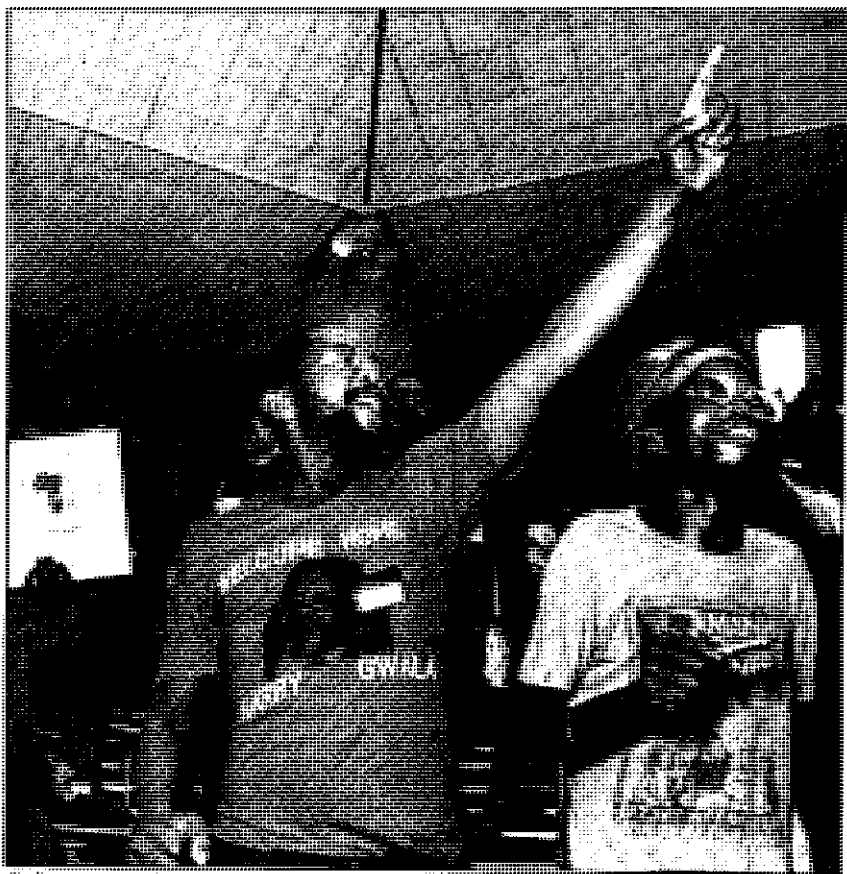
The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) is in the throes of preparations for a critical debate on the restructuring of mass democratic movements. The debate will take place at COSATU's third biennial congress in Johannesburg in mid-July. Its affiliates are going through a round of national meetings and conferences, preparing mandates for the Congress which, because of restrictions imposed on the UDF, the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) and the other key anti-apartheid organizations, greatly enhance the political significance of the meeting.

NUMSA, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa, is clearly set to play a major role at the Congress with a resolution indicating it wants to play a major role in restructuring mass resistance in South Africa. With just under 200,000 members, NUMSA is the second largest COSATU affiliate and arguably the most effective and tightly organized. Its internal organization and general standing within COSATU has been substantially enhanced by its handling of the 1988 strike in the engineering industry. Moses Mayekiso, NUMSA's general secretary just acquitted of treason, enjoys immense respect throughout the Federation.

NUMSA's political resolution combines a number of elements:

Firstly, it reaffirms the union's earlier adoption of the Freedom Charter "as a programme of minimum demands" as well as "the urgent need for a Working Class Political Programme." "NUMSA," the preamble to the resolution states, "wishes to reassert the leadership of the working class in our struggle for national liberation."

Secondly, it commits itself "to consult with COSATU and the mass



Delegate at the second NUMSA congress, Johannesburg 1989

Impact Visuals

democratic movement at large with a view to developing new tactics to rebuild the Mass Democratic Movement in the community."

There is implicit in the NUMSA resolution a powerful critique of the mass democratic movement. It asserts that its organizational structure must move from a federalist amalgam of loosely connected organizations to a centralist body built up from democratically elected local organizations. Street committees will be the basic ground structures of a rebuilt mass democratic movement. (It is for his central role in building street committees in the Johannesburg township of Alexandra that Mayekiso was charged with treason.) This form of organiza-

tion, developed through "campaigns of action" at all levels of factory and community organization, will - in the words of the preamble - "build democratic practices, avoid useless sectarian clashes and divisions and do away with numerous small organizations without any base that only accommodate activist cliques."

Having achieved this restructuring of the mass democratic movement, NUMSA believes that "COSATU should then forge a permanent disciplined alliance with these democratic community structures at local, regional and national levels."

Quite clearly, NUMSA believes that mass political organization should be structured in the image

of the union movement and that, in the style of the union movement, it should evolve action and campaigns from local issues. The resolution states: "The struggle and activities around these local and regional issues should form the priority in rebuilding the Democratic Movement." Equally clearly, it believes that COSATU is the organization that should take the lead in recasting the mass democratic movement.

In the light of this resolution, it would be difficult to claim – as some have attempted to do in the past – that NUMSA eschews the

mass democratic struggle. On the contrary, NUMSA would have the unions, through COSATU, play a highly interventionist role in broader community struggle. Quite clearly though, the price of NUMSA's participations would be an acceptance of the need to restructure community organization, making it and its leadership far more accountable to their constituents than is all too often the case.

It will be interesting to see how this plays at the COSATU Congress. NUMSA is a more powerful organization than it was in 1987; it has been strongly tested in strug-

gle both at factory and community level; its resolution, though critical, evidences a deep commitment to political work. But not all comrades like to be "self-criticized" and there will be many reluctant to accept the diagnosis, let alone the cure. The resolution is the very antithesis of the triumphalist approach that dominated organization in the mid 1980s and that still has a wide following. It is difficult, however, to deny the validity of NUMSA's critical view of the state of the mass democratic movement. Just as it is difficult to find fault with NUMSA's hard-nosed organization-building approach.

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## War and Peace on the Natal Front

**BY Our South African Labour Correspondent**

In late May, Jabu Ndlovu, a longstanding NUMSA shop steward, returned to her family in Imbali township outside Pietermaritzburg. That night, halaclava-clad men, in a highly-professional operation, set fire to her house. When she and her family attempted to flee the fire, Jabu's husband and child were shot dead by the men who started the fire. A second daughter and nephew are badly burned. Jabu herself was admitted to hospital in critical condition, apparently burned beyond recognition. She died a week later.

Prior to the Ndlovu killings, and after an initial attempt at mediation by Natal-based church leaders, COSATU and the UDF wrote a highly conciliatory letter to Buthelezi proposing a meeting in order to agree upon a formula for peace. This was supported in a public statement by the ANC. Buthelezi's preference appears to have been for a meeting with the ANC, with COSATU and the UDF present. This formula would have reinforced Buthelezi's oft-stated claim that the UDF and COSATU are mere ANC fronts. He was persuaded that the three parties – UDF, COSATU and Inkatha

– should meet. He refused, however, to hold the meeting at a neutral venue, insisting that it be held at his headquarters in Ulundi. COSATU and the UDF refused and the peace talks did not take place.

Meanwhile, the killing continues, with the massive Durban townships increasingly engulfed in the violence that has for several years now been associated principally with Pietermaritzburg. Why is Buthelezi so reluctant to participate in peace talks with COSATU and the UDF? There are several possible answers:

1. Buthelezi may reason that violence is Inkatha's strong suit. Although COSATU, in the wake of the Ndlovu killings, warned of the possibility of a "massive cycle of retaliation," where violence is concerned Buthelezi is on far stronger ground than any of his opponents.

2. By contrast, he is politically weaker than the UDF or COSATU and, in a peaceful climate, would be out-organized. The failure of his trade union wing, UWUSA, is testament to that.

3. It is possible that even if Buthelezi wanted peace, he couldn't deliver. His authority and standing would suffer if he agreed to a peace and proved incapable of en-

forcing it. The warlords in the massive shanty towns surrounding Durban are only nominally controlled by Inkatha. They have independent resources from the townships which they control and, it is alleged, have independent links with the police. While the peace initiative was still on, Law and Order Minister Adriaan Vlok loudly proclaimed the UDF and COSATU's alleged responsibility for the Natal violence and made clear his own antipathy to the peace initiative. Indeed Vlok's contribution to peace was a threat of further police action against COSATU and the UDF.

4. It is not necessarily peace that Buthelezi is opposed to, but rather the terms of the truce that are at stake. Buthelezi wants to emerge from these peace talks with a standing and legitimacy equivalent to that of the ANC itself. Hence the initial insistence that the ANC be party to the talks. And hence the current fuss about the venue.

Although each of the others are possibly valid arguments, my bet is that this latter predominates. If that is so, prepare for more Jabu's. And spare her a moment's thought when next the ANC's support for "violence" is contrasted with Inkatha's "peaceful solution."

# Women Organizing Against Detention

BY JANE GURR

*Jane Gurr is a member of Women, Solidarity and Southern Africa Committee (WSSAC) in Toronto. She recently travelled to South Africa.*

In South Africa, the number of women being detained for their commitment to the struggle against apartheid is steadily increasing. As state repression mounts, more women are joining the front-line of the struggle, and the ranks of the detained. Some women are held for agonizingly indefinite periods – as permitted by state of emergency regulations – while others await charges (such as treason), lengthy trials, and jail terms.

South African women's organizations, such as the United Women's Congress (UWCO), the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW) and the Natal Organization of Women (NOW), are organizing for the rights of detainees – against the horrible prison conditions and abuse which many women experience – and they are monitoring detentions. They are also giving legal and material support to detainees and their families.

I met with these groups in South Africa in February to discuss a campaign being proposed and planned by the Toronto based Women, Solidarity and Southern Africa Committee (WSSAC). The campaign will focus on women in detention, a theme which emerged from the Canadian national women's solidarity workshop held in June 1988. My visit presented a timely opportunity to gather information about women in detention and the conditions they are experiencing: 300 detainees were on a hunger strike in Natal, and a major political trial in Cape Town began, which includes several women who are charged with treason.

## Organizing against detention

The trip began in Cape Town where I met with both FEDSAW, the umbrella group uniting women's organizations in the Western Cape, and UWCO. We gathered in the back room of an unidentified house in one of the townships. Time was limited, but we managed to go through the history of the group in Toronto, and to discuss the proposed campaign. The women attending gave me some feedback on which aspects to emphasize. Then, as quickly as we came together, everyone disappeared into the streets of the township.

The current FEDSAW is a revival of the "old" FEDSAW of the 1950s which was central to the mass anti-pass campaigns involving thousands of women. When I was there, FEDSAW was organizing a women's cultural festival and information fair to take place in May, and was producing a series of factsheets on women in prison, with information about prison conditions and profiles of individual detainees and political prisoners.

UWCO is one of the member associations of FEDSAW and has branch groups throughout the Cape area. Their basic purpose is to organize women at the grassroots level. The branches take on campaign and media work around issues in the struggle, and do internal education and practical support work for members. A theme they are currently working on in earnest is detainee support.

Lumka Nyamza and Jenny Schreiner are UWCO members who, along with several others, are presently on trial for treason. The day the trial began, a supportive crowd of about 150 people gathered outside the Supreme Court building in Cape Town and joined with the trialists in freedom songs as the prison vehicle carrying them ar-

rived. At the same moment the police blocked off the entrance to the road leading to the courthouse, each aiming an automatic weapon at the crowd. The image of defiant fists thrust out of the sides of the police van, freedom songs and the heightened tension produced by police control and weaponry is one that I won't forget. The songs seemed to unite the prisoners and the crowd instantly in collective defiance of the police and court.

The humour we so often see and read about as part of the South African struggle was also part of the scene. As the guards at the courthouse entrance ordered the pressing crowd to back off because the public gallery was full and they wanted to close the doors, two of the trialists who were out on bail called out from the back of the crowd that at least *they* should be allowed in. This sent everyone into gales of laughter. A comic moment in an otherwise tense couple of hours.

## NOW strikes back

At the time of my visit, the Durban-based secretariat of NOW was preoccupied with responding to the detainees' hunger strike. Many individuals were on two or three-day hunger strikes in solidarity with the detainees, and organizations were making public statements of support for their demands. NOW women contributed by submitting a memorandum to the British and US consulates which demanded that the British and US governments "intervene at the highest possible level to secure the release of detainees and to put an end to the injustice of detention without trial." It was signed by NOW, the Black Sash, the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union, Speak Collective and WSSAC of Toronto.

Fifteen members walked to the consulates to present these de-





Natal Mercury

*NOW women in hallway of British consulate in Durban as backing for meeting with the consul*

mands. At the British Consulate one representative from each organization met with the British Consul, while the remaining women softly sang *Nkosi Sikelele* in the hallway. When we introduced ourselves to the consul he was visibly taken aback by the presence of a Canadian in the delegation. We speculated afterward that my participation showed that knowledge of and support for the hunger strikers extended far beyond organizations within South Africa. While the reason for his reaction is unclear, it was a very satisfying moment for all of us.

US consular officials had obviously been warned that we were coming. After our presentation they handed out photocopies of a recent State Department bulletin, which appealed to the South African state to end detention without trial. We also received copies of a letter which Martin Luther King wrote from his jail cell in Birmingham, Alabama; a rather ironic attempt to show US state support for the striking detainees.

This simple act of delivering a memorandum seemed to generate a lot of nervousness and tension among the consular officials. In part it must have been related to a fear of violence. The British consul repeatedly thanked us for having been a peaceful demonstration; the US officials would not allow us inside their offices.

As well as carrying out solidarity actions of this kind, NOW is busy organizing training and income generation projects, and educational workshops for women. I participated in a small training exercise with the NOW media group. The group was learning about interviewing techniques and interviewed me for an upcoming issue of their newsletter.

NOW is working under constant threat of police repression. Several of their leaders have been in detention, in one instance for as long as a year. Despite difficulties, which include the lack of adequate funding, and the high level of energy and

drive women must maintain in order to organize and fight, hold paying jobs, and care for their families, NOW remains an active and vibrant vehicle for the voices of women in Natal.

The information concerning women detainees, the communication links established, and the personal contact with women in the struggle brought home, in a very concrete way, the realness of the people WSSC is working to support. I felt my commitment and energy were revitalized by this direct contact, and many of the South African women I met reflected that my visit had reminded them of the solidarity work going on outside the country, and of women's struggles in other parts of the world. One woman I interviewed summed it up when she said, "As we stand up and fight for our rights we feel stronger knowing that out there someone else is fighting too, not only on theirs or our cause, but the cause of all of us women. It brings us together."



D'Arcy Martin

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## Cultural Solidarity

The most lasting links between people of different cultures are often made through song and dance. So the African Association for Literacy and Adult Education created an exciting prospect when it invited Los Leones, a group of Mexican "huapangueros," to Africa for a month long tour earlier this year.

Huapangueros are travelling minstrels who sing and dance at weddings, wakes and holidays in rural Mexico. They are part of a long tradition that is being swamped by mass culture in today's Mexico, where even remote villages have television.

The six-member group of Los Leones travelled with two Canadian trade unionists in January through Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The goal of the tour was to contribute to the development of cultural work within the adult education program of the Frontline States. The project was seen as a unique way to bring a global perspective to the work of local and national cultural activists in African and Latin American countries.

The leader of Los Leones is a poet, Guillermo Velazquez, who sees himself and the group as popular ed-

ucators as well as artists. In Mexico, they have been systematically recovering, reclaiming and revaluing the country's endangered culture. They work with young musicians, teaching the traditions and the technical aspects of their music.

Throughout their tour, Los Leones sang their own music in African communities and worked with the people they met to produce songs. They created a whole new repertoire, with songs specific to each location they visited.

The photos presented here represent just a small part of the cultural document that the tour created.



## Los Leones de la Sierra de Xichu in the Frontline States

photos by Catherine Macleod

*OPPOSITE: Three of the six "Los Leones": Inez Suarez, Guillermo Velasquez and Lorenzo Comacho (l to r), visit Dondo, a camp for people displaced by the war, 30km from Beira, Mozambique*

*TOP: Following a Sunday Mass at Igreja Mtendere in Lusaka, parishioners participate in an impromptu concert*

*MIDDLE: "Los Leones" make a guest appearance on "Good Morning Zambia", Lusaka's new early morning talk show*

*BOTTOM: Children, who made up a large part of every event, while initially shy, were soon intrigued enough to join in the music and dance*



# Canberra Watch

## Canada and Commonwealth Sanctions

Canada could well destroy once and for all its reputation as an opponent of apartheid when the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers on Southern Africa (CCFMSA) meets in Canberra, Australia, in August. The Committee will consider an expert study group report which is sure to recommend wider and tighter sanctions against South Africa and a reduction in trade.

It was at last year's meeting of the Committee in Toronto that the Canadian government attempted to deflect attention from the sanctions issue by focussing public attention on South African censorship and propaganda. A secret interim report from the study group on sanctions which was leaked to the press (see excerpts in *SAR*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (December 1988)) argued that sanctions were already having an effect, but that their impact would be limited unless the pressure was increased significantly. Canada reportedly vetoed seven of the ten recommendations of the study group and has apparently indicated privately that it is opposed to any further reductions in trade with South Africa.

The Canberra meeting is key because the Commonwealth foreign ministers could reject the experts' report and advise against new sanctions. The recommendations of the Committee will be considered by the Commonwealth Heads of Government when they discuss widening sanctions against South Africa at their meeting in Kuala Lumpur in October. Will the CCFMSA give in to Britain's continued attempts to block sanctions? Or will it encourage the other Heads of Government at Kuala Lumpur to take practical action against South Africa?

### Why Commonwealth action is important

The Commonwealth marched to the forefront of the international campaign against apartheid when it imposed new sanctions against South Africa at the Heads of Government meeting at Nassau in 1985. That meeting established the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) which visited South Africa in 1986. As a direct result of the recommendations of the EPG, further sanctions were imposed by all Commonwealth members except Britain. The Commonwealth sanctions package was cited as a model by Senators who sponsored the 1986 U.S. sanctions measures.

Regrettably, British opposition to sanctions has halted

further Commonwealth action. Unwilling to offend Britain, Canada and Australia have vetoed tougher measures. At their Vancouver meeting in 1987, the Heads of Government declined to impose new sanctions and instead issued the "Okanagan Statement" in which the Commonwealth (except Britain) called for the "universal adoption of the measures now adopted by most Commonwealth and other countries, including the United States and the Nordic countries." It also set up the CCFMSA and called for the continued evaluation of the application and impact of sanctions.

The Commonwealth, especially without the cooperation of Britain, is not economically important enough to have significant impact on South Africa. But it remains a major moral and political force. The Eminent Persons Group warned that the lack of sanctions, "and Pretoria's belief that they need not be feared, defers change." Indeed, this is just what has happened inside South Africa: the lack of new sanctions in 1988 was coupled with sharply increased repression, including an increase in bannings, detentions, censorship, torture and killing.

The Commonwealth can again take the lead. It can show the way to tighter and more effective sanctions. The EPG asked the key question: "Is the Commonwealth to stand by and allow the cycle of violence to spiral? Or will it take concerted action of an effective kind?"

### And so, Canada ...

Secretary of State for External Affairs Joe Clark is the chair of the CCFMSA and will play an important role at the Canberra meeting. Clark's reported waffling on sanctions at last year's meeting, as well as figures which have shown an increase in trade with South Africa, have tarnished Canada's image as a knight in shining armour in the anti-apartheid battle. Pressure must be brought to bear on the Canadian government now - before the Canberra meeting - to support Commonwealth initiatives for increased sanctions.

Specifically, Clark must be urged (1) to back the major recommendations of the expert study and (2) to pledge further reductions in trade with South Africa, moving toward the near-total bans imposed by the Nordic countries which were praised by Commonwealth Heads of Government in Vancouver.



David Hartman

*Marcelino dos Santos, President of Mozambique's People's Assembly (foreground) and Prakash Ratilal, Minister Responsible for the Emergency (background) discuss difficulties of the Mozambique situation during Toronto visit*

## Frelimo Leader in Canada

Marcelino dos Santos, noted revolutionary and one of his country's leading poets, became a legendary figure during Mozambique's struggle for independence from Portuguese colonial rule; currently he is President of the People's Assembly of a liberated Mozambique and a senior member of the Frelimo Party Political Bureau. In April-May of this year he led a high level delegation from his country on a visit to Canada. The delegation came under the auspices of Cooperation Canada Mozambique (COCAMO), a consortium of twenty Canadian non-governmental organizations currently carrying out an integrated development and emer-

gency relief programme in Nampula Province in northern Mozambique. The visit offered the opportunity for the delegation to brief COCAMO consortium members, in a number of different Canadian cities, on the current situation in Mozambique. There was a chance, too, to discuss with Canadian government officials and parliamentarians the nature of the conflict in the southern African region as well as the possibilities for expanded cooperation between Canada and Mozambique.

The reception of the Mozambican delegation by Canadian solidarity groups and the NGO community was warm, and at a wide range of

meetings - large and small - sympathetic Canadians learned a great deal from their visitors. The reception from official Canada was much more mixed. Yet this, too, provided lessons, lessons about the actual content of Canada's southern Africa policy and its likely future direction.

To begin with, despite Mr. dos Santos' very senior political rank, he was not received by either Prime Minister Brian Mulroney or External Affairs Minister Joe Clark, ostensibly because both were too preoccupied with the brouhaha over the federal budget leak which coincided with the delegation arrival. How-



*Marcelino dos Santos addressing May Day rally in Toronto*

ever, even before the budget leak, it had been made clear to the Mozambicans that neither Mulroney nor Clark were prepared to meet them. Instead, the delegation was formally received by Marc Peron, the Assistant Minister for External Affairs for Africa and the Middle East, and briefly also by External Relations Minister Monique Landry.

And what of the substance of these and other meetings with Canadian officials? Dos Santos and other members of the Mozambican delegation made much the same points to government officials as they made in meetings with the NGOs and in public forums. Thus they called on Canada and other Western countries to take stronger measures against South Africa and to give greater support to the Frontline States and to the ANC. As dos Santos pointed out, such countries had to "put an end to apartheid, or accept the consequences of a generalization of the war in southern Africa." More specifically, dos Santos urged Canada to impose further economic sanctions against South Africa and to meet officially with ANC president, Oliver Tambo. He also asked that existing Canadian aid to Mozambique be complemented by more direct military assistance, on the obvious grounds that many other forms of aid are effectively neutralized as long as Mozambique has difficulty in defending its development efforts against the depredations of South Africa's Renamo agents.

The response of "official Canada"? On the positive side, the Canadian government is reported to have informed the Mozambican delegation that Canadian development aid would not be affected by recent budget cuts to Canada's foreign aid programmes. In fact, it was said, government aid channelled through NGOs would likely increase by seven or eight percent. The government is also thought to have told the Mozambicans that Canada would

David Hartman

maintain its commitment to furnish Mozambique with non-lethal security assistance (in the form of transport, uniforms and the like); it also held out the possibility of providing some military training for Mozambican troops. Unfortunate, then, that any more dramatic form of military assistance was clearly ruled out.

Even less satisfactory was the response to the question, raised by the delegation, as to why the Canadian government had given political asylum to Francisco Nota Moises, notorious spokesperson for Renamo. Here the Canadian representatives retreated into legalisms, stating that Canada is a country that respects the "rule of law." Since, they argued, there is no evidence that Nota Moises misled Canadian authorities in his immigration application or has broken any Canadian law since obtaining landed immigrant status, he enjoys the full protection of Canadian law and cannot be deported. More ominous still was the attitude of some of the Canadian parliamentarians with whom the Mozambicans also met in Ottawa. Not only were dos Santos and his colleagues subjected to various lectures about the virtues of political pluralism, but they were also asked why Frelimo didn't enter into "discussions" with its "political opposition" - defined, apparently, not as the "terrorists" operating inside the country but as some "non-terrorist opposition" said to reside outside the country.

South Africa itself? To the Mozambican delegation's request that Canada impose more comprehensive sanctions, Canadian government officials responded with its, by now, familiar diversionary tactic, an insistence that the real issue in combatting apartheid is not economic sanctions but rather South African propaganda. Blandly, these officials then urged Marcelino dos Santos to take advantage of his visit to talk to the press as much as possible so as to counter South African disinformation!

And the ANC? As noted above, dos Santos requested that the Canadian government enter into a dialogue with the ANC and that Prime Minister Mulroney meet officially with ANC President Oliver Tambo. The reply? That improved relations with the ANC and the possibility of a Mulroney-Tambo meeting would be contingent on the ANC's renouncing violence. Officials gave the example of the successes that PLO Chairperson Yasser Arafat has had in meeting Mitterand and other Western political leaders since "renouncing terrorism." When dos Santos protested, saying that the ANC was defending the South African people against the violence of apartheid and that the real source of terrorism in southern Africa is the South African government, the Canadian representatives suggested that Tambo might at least try renouncing violence on a trial basis, for a limited period of time!

Of course, Marcelino dos Santos' premises regarding this and other issues were more readily accepted in the other meetings he and his delegation had with the NGO/support group network and with the general public. The reality of the war being waged against Mozambique and of South Africa's role in orchestrating it was front and centre in these forums. Again and again, in a number of Canadian centres and in detailed briefings - like that granted SAR by Prakash Ratilal, former governor of Mozambique's central bank and now senior official in charge of emergency relief - its impact was spelled out with appalling detail. The human costs are enormous and the economy reduced to a shambles. Such facts also prompted questions from concerned Canadians and not merely about the nature of the emergency. What are the costs to the progressive promise of Mozambique's original revolutionary project likely to be, arising from the entanglements with the IMF/World Bank and with western aid networks that the country's war-induced economic vulnera-

bility has now forced upon it?

In a public forum in Toronto, the delegation spoke as frankly as it could to such concerns, although Marcelino dos Santos' joking aside that "we will write later - not now, but in some years - about the relationship between Mozambique and the IMF", could be taken to suggest how little control a weakened and destabilized Mozambique can now have over the terms of its reincorporation into the western capitalist economy. In fact, in the Toronto meeting, Ratilal was quick to identify the IMF as an agent of the increasing globalization of the world economy and as "an important instrument whereby the developed countries exercise their power over different countries." Unfortunately, even when outside the IMF, Mozambique was feeling the same global pressures as it does inside, and now, at least, there is access to some of the financing needed to meet balance of payments problems and the like.

Yet the costs are substantial, the costs, in particular, of the IMF-required "adjustment programme which relates to all of this and the social cost it implies for the population and especially the poor section of the population." As he continued, "we're trying - and its not easy - to manage a programme whereby some of these negative aspects may be reduced or alleviated." Audiences were impressed with the deep sincerity of the Mozambique delegation as manifested in such exchanges, although also impressed with the great difficulties their country faces. Certainly Frelimo's Fifth Congress, scheduled for July, seems likely to be a critical moment in Mozambique's attempt to "reduce ... the negative aspects" of its current plight. Closer to home, such audiences also had an opportunity to learn of the important efforts (documented in earlier issues of SAR) of Canadian NGOs - through COCAMO - to assist Mozambique in that attempt.

# Trapped in Apartheid

BY HAROLD WELLS

*Harold Wells is Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Emmanuel College, Toronto School of Theology*

*Trapped in Apartheid, A Socio-Theological History of the English-Speaking Churches* by Charles Villa-Vicencio, Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1988, 225 pages.

Can mainstream churches consistently take social and political stances that are contrary to the dominant ideology of the society in which they live? It's a live question in Canada right now, and an ever more pressing one in South Africa.

Charles Villa-Vicencio is a white South African, but by perspective and commitment a "black" liberation theologian and social ethicist who teaches at the University of Cape Town. *Trapped in Apartheid* is a devastating critique of the English-speaking churches of South Africa, a critique which Canadian churches need to hear as well. The criticism is especially significant in that it comes from within, the author himself being a minister of the Methodist Church. Its credibility is enhanced also by the author's brief period of imprisonment a few years ago because of civil disobedience to the apartheid state. His analysis of the English-speaking churches' opposition to racism and apartheid may be summed up in the words of the title, or in the words of two of his chapter headings: "Nothing Harsh or Rigorous," and "Protest Without Resistance."

Though acknowledging that he is not an historian, Villa-Vicencio draws upon the works of many historians, telling the story of the oppression of black people by white people from the first arrival of whites in the subcontinent in the seventeenth century. He briefly describes and locates theologically all the ma-

ajor Christian denominations present in South Africa, including the Roman Catholic, the Dutch Reformed churches, and the African indigenous churches, giving information and analysis of how they have all related to the racial struggle. But his particular interest is the English-speaking Protestant churches - by which he means primarily Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregationalist - which have a long and fairly consistent record of protest against racial oppression.

## Ambiguous and faint-hearted opposition

Closer examination of their histories, however, reveals a story of compromise, of theological and ideological confusion, of "moderation and restraint," and of faint-hearted opposition. Villa-Vicencio does not merely condemn this morally, but attempts to account for it sociologically. These English-speaking churches, because of their historical roots and connections in Britain, have never hammered out their identities in relation to the hard realities of the South African context, as the Afrikaner and black churches have. A certain liberal tradition of tolerance has meant that blacks and whites have always remained together in the English-speaking churches. Segregation or apartheid has never been an official policy or practice amongst them, so that the leadership, and the clergy, have had to serve and please both black and white constituencies. From this has come a "calculated sense of ambiguity to ensure maximum unity in matters of theology and church policy" in the belief that beneath all the differences there remains an essential unity. The racial diversity of these churches, including indeed the black majority, is both their weakness and their potential strength.

English-speaking missionaries in South Africa, from the early nineteenth century, displayed an ambivalence in their attitude to the black population. They were there to convert Africans to the Christian truth, and therefore, as they saw it, away from their "heathen" beliefs and practices. In this way they helped to undermine the authority of the African chiefs and the unity of African nations. Africans were seen as lazy and indolent, much in need of the "hard work" British mentality. Even the noblest and most dedicated missionaries, such as John Philip, often a defender of blacks, often protesting their loss of land and privilege, thought that one of the main contributions of the missionary was to teach the African "industrious habits, and create a demand for British manufactures." Yet, during the period of rapid colonization and Christianization, poverty and disease amongst Africans increased rather than diminished. Debates raged then as now about the role of Christians and church leaders. Some, like Philip, thought that the church should strongly take sides politically "to defend the weak against the strong." Others, like Robert Moffatt and William Shaw, saw the church's role as "reconciliation" - standing apart from and above a particular struggle. The pathos of the early missionary movement was that those most dedicated to the defense of the Africans were rejected by their colleagues, and that even these finest of the missionaries were compromised by what we now recognize as imperialist attitudes. While the missionaries sought to be the conscience of ruling governments, they were themselves ideologically trapped within the structures they sought to redeem.

The latter part of the nineteenth century, following the 1886 gold rush, and the early twentieth century, saw the decisive defeat and firm subjugation of the black population, as notorious laws regarding land and taxation forced the blacks



off the land and into the urban areas where their labour was needed in the new mines and industries. English and Afrikaners, longstanding enemies, united to establish a clear economic/political ruling class excluding blacks, who became an unwilling pool of cheap labour for the prosperous white elite. What did the English-speaking churches do about all this? Frequently they provided charitable aid to soften the blows of these harsh measures. They provided comfort and consolation, sometimes they spoke out on behalf of the black population to the authorities. However, says Villa-Vicencio, the churches paid little attention to the fundamental structures of exploitation and control; they ministered to the symptoms rather than essential causes, and, insofar as their response was political at all, it was one of special pleading, and appeals for the liberalization of restrictive legislation. Because they ministered to whites as well as blacks, whose political and economic interests were opposed, they were unable to take sides unequivocally with the oppressed majority.

The story of the English-speaking churches' involvement in black education is also ambiguous. An early missionary tradition aimed to develop a true African black educated elite, equipped with the best classical education, and ready to become leaders of their people. Churches pioneered university education for blacks, and church-founded institutions such as Fort Hare and others produced graduates who actually became the leaders of black liberation movements both in South Africa and beyond. The mission schools provided the educated black leadership, including some black clergy, to the African National Congress. This major contribution of the churches is undeniable (and perhaps Villa-Vicencio has given it too little weight or credit here). However, the churches often fell into the pattern of training blacks for their subjugated role in the system, providing the exploita-

tive white ruling class with a working class educated just sufficiently to function as useful underlings.

The Bantu Education Act of 1953, seen by black leaders as a clear instrument of oppression, brought to an end the churches' role in black education. Prime Minister Verwoerd had made it very clear that the new system presupposed that there was "no place for the Bantu in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour." Bantu education would do the job the churches had done "more efficiently." The English-speaking churches, seeing through the white Afrikaner political and ideological motivation for the move, protested bitterly and vigorously about their schools and educational function being taken over by the apartheid state. However, protest was not accompanied by resistance. Only a few church leaders urged non-cooperation. The Methodists, for example, rejected the racist apartheid policy of Bantu Education as "incompatible with Christian principles," but nevertheless felt compelled to relinquish control of their schools to the government. Their attitude was that, once a thing had become law it was wrong to fight against it. Our author comments, "The English-speaking churches had failed to be more than moderate. Given to verbal protest, they failed to resist. Trapped within their own history, they were predisposed to cautious compromise."

#### ... and found wanting.

In recent years, various forms of radical action have failed to win the support of the English-speaking churches. No doubt the interests of many of their influential members were not served by the World Council of Churches Program to Combat Racism, which they have refused to support, or by the violent guerilla activities of the liberation movements. Perhaps it is significant that these churches have often not condemned ANC guerilla activity; but they have also refused to

take sides amongst those who support and serve in the South African armed forces, those who take a pacifist stance, and those who take up arms to overthrow the state (though they continue to supply chaplains to the armed forces). Thus, the author complains, individuals are left to make their own political choices unaided by their church. Attempting to be moderate and inoffensive to all sides, they abdicate political responsibility, support the privatization of religion, and serve the interests of the existing order. Similarly, the churches have (not surprisingly) refused to endorse the sanctions campaign against South Africa. Despite Archbishop Tutu's public position for sanctions, even the Anglican bishops and general synod have not called for disinvestment.

By contrast, one very important occasion in which the church seriously resisted was prompted by legislation in 1957 that would have prevented inter-racial worship. The Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, Geoffrey Clayton, issued a pastoral letter, saying:

*Before God and with you as my witnesses, I solemnly state that not only shall I not obey any direction of the Minister of Native Affairs in this regard, but I solemnly counsel you, both clergy and people, to do the same.*

The churches won the day on this one. They had refused to cooperate. They had resisted and not merely protested. Yet this moment of theological integrity, while not deprecated, was very limited, and, as Villa-Vicencio points out, witnesses to the limited perception of the political implications of the gospel. Would the churches seriously resist government action only when it pertained to what went on within the walls of their own sanctuaries? A serious challenge to the legitimacy of the apartheid state was avoided when the leadership of these churches refused to endorse the 1985 "Call to Prayer for the End of Unjust Rule."

# NOW IS THE TIME FOR YOU TO ACT!



If you have ever cared about what happens in Southern Africa, Now is the time to act.

We have seen, in the last Canadian elections, how big spending by large corporations helped swing crucial votes in the final weeks. South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) is up against the same kind of situation in Namibia.

SWAPO has been fighting against the illegal South African colonial occupation of Namibia for 29 years.

By all accounts, SWAPO has the support of the vast majority of Namibians, but the South African government has written the election rules for the upcoming November elections, and their favoured "ethnic" parties will get plenty of South African funds and support.

Andimba Toivo ya Toivo, Secretary-General of SWAPO, talked of his party's crucial election needs when he visited Canada in March. In the election period that begins in July, SWAPO needs money to organize its campaign e.g. transport, communications etc.

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