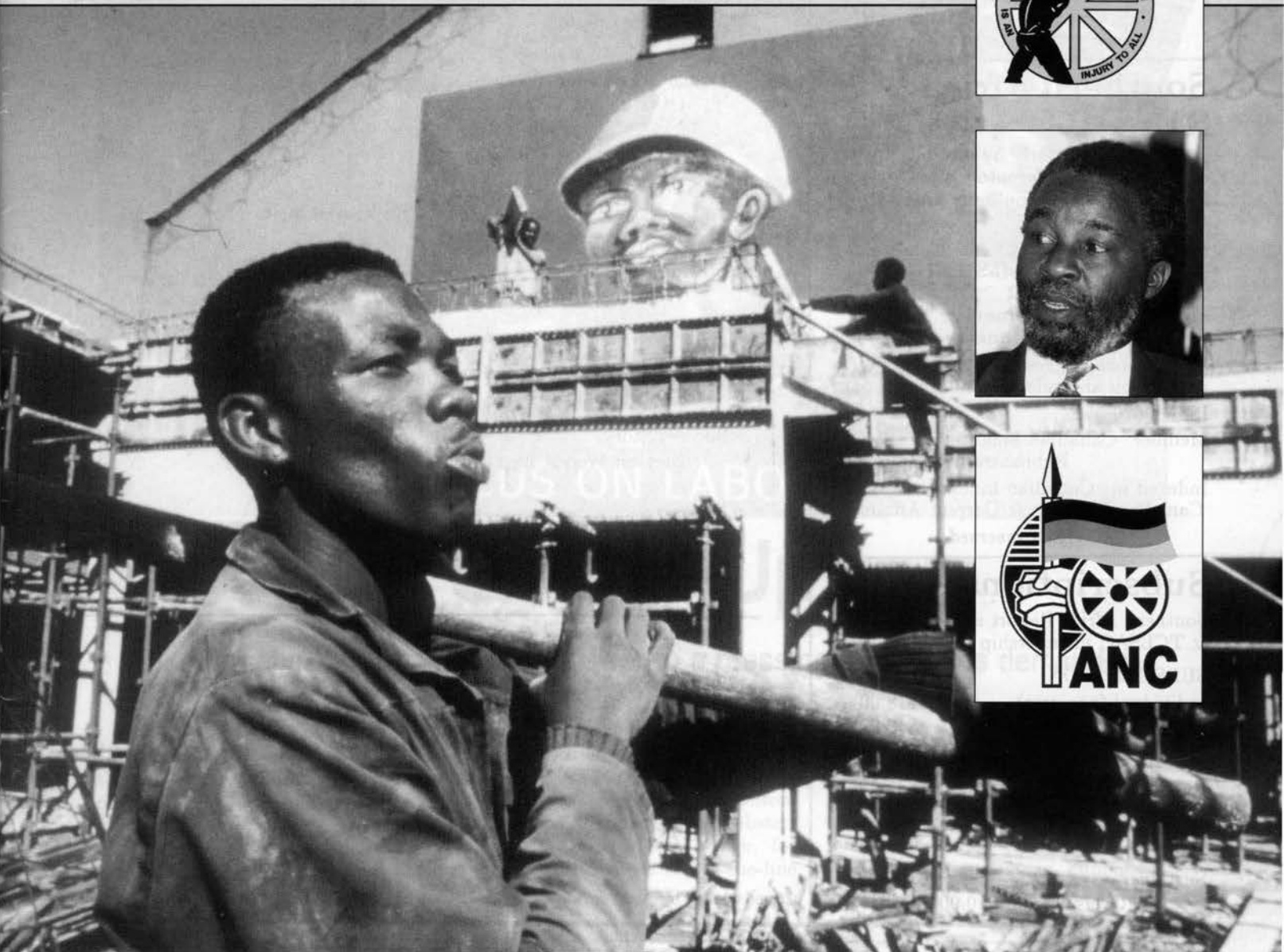


# Southern Africa REPORT

Vol. 13 No. 1  
November 1997

## South Africa Now:

Cosatu, Thabo Mbeki  
and the ANC Conference



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## Southern Africa REPORT

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427 Bloor St. West  
Toronto, Ontario M5S 1X7  
Tel. (416) 967-5562

email: [tclsac@web.net](mailto:tclsac@web.net)

web site: [www.web.net/~tclsac/](http://www.web.net/~tclsac/)

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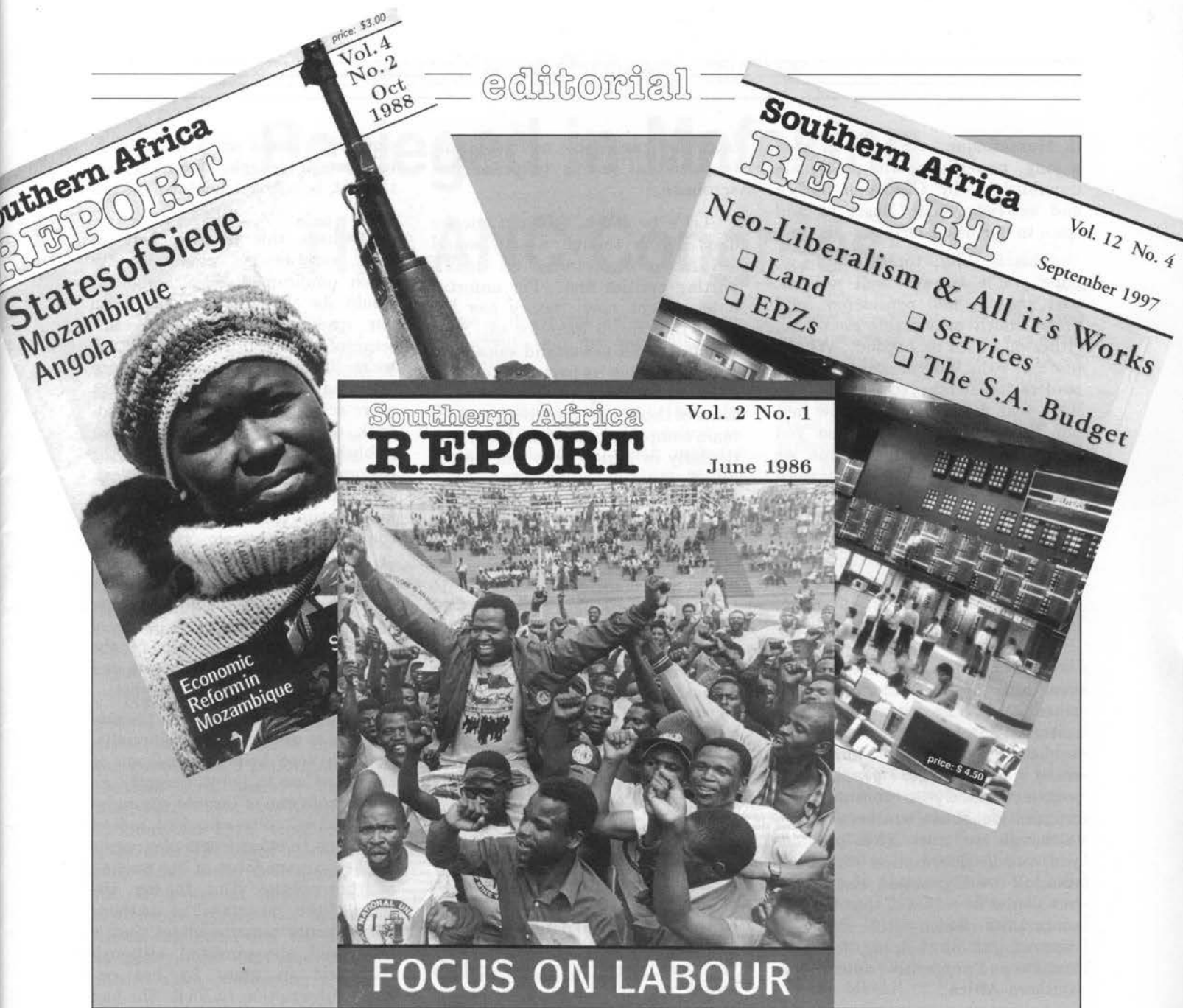
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# Cheque Up

**An editorial in which an honest answer to a pressing question is demanded from SAR's loyal readers**

"South Africa Now." We think the table of contents for this issue of *Southern Africa Report* speaks for itself. And so does the roster of authors we've assembled to help us through the maze of issues -

"COSATU, Thabo Mbeki and the ANC Congress" - evoked by such a title: knowledgeable contributors like Glenn Adler and Eddie Webster, Hein Marais and Tom Lodge, for starters. Plus more top-of-the-line

reportage and analysis later in the issue from such SAR regulars as Lauren Dobell, Richard Saunders and Joseph Hanlon, commenting on developments elsewhere in the region: in Namibia, in Zimbabwe,



in Mozambique. And there's even a long, powerful poem, previously unpublished, by Ghanaian author and activist Abena Busia to add spice to our usual recipe.

This is solid, topical stuff, we hope you'll agree - well written, well argued, well considered, and pretty much unavailable elsewhere, either in Africa or beyond. What's more, it's the kind of coverage loyal readers have come to expect from SAR year after year (and now into our thirteenth year) - or so you tell us when, from time to time, we hear from you, by e-mail or by word of mouth. Moreover, so strong is the present issue that we've decided, for once, to leave you, our gentle readers, on your own recognizance, without benefit of our customary editorial dash of bitters, to savour its contents to your mind's delight.

Fact is, too, that we have something of even more pressing urgency to share with you in this editorial space. We begin with a question. *Just how important, really, is SAR to you?* To you, not merely as consumers of information about southern Africa (although we trust SAR provides you much information that you couldn't readily obtain elsewhere), but also as members of that broader community which still shares a commitment to helping facilitate humane and progressive outcomes in southern Africa?

We ask you because we've had to ask ourselves this question a number of times in recent months. Where is the energy to come from to sustain us in the challenging work of keeping a magazine of this quality afloat: beating the bushes for articles of high standard and finding the endless volunteer hours - we have no paid staff - that go into editing, printing and pasting, servicing newsstands and subscribers, keeping the books? And where, of at least equal importance, is the money to come

from that can enable us to continue to turn that energy to productive account?

Let's be frank, and put money first - even though we all would feel more comfortable, no doubt, putting politics first. For unfortunately, right now, money has become the crunch issue for us. Subscriptions and newsstand sales have only ever taken us part way towards financial solvency (in part because some of those subs have been and remain complementaries to those, particularly in Africa, who can't readily afford to receive this magazine). We have had other sources of financial support in the past, much of it from our own pockets here at SAR (and from those of members of our home organization, the Toronto Committee for Links between Southern Africa and Canada [TCLSAC]). We've also received funding, over the years, from a number of other organizations and agencies dedicated to the southern African struggle. Now, however, many such organizations and agencies have, in the post-apartheid epoch, either moved on to other fronts or have merely folded their tents, satisfied with a job well done.

Much of this is understandable, of course. But freedom, of a sort, for southern Africa has come to mean financial crunch time for us, and this is a particularly unwelcome reality in light of our own strong conviction that there is still much work to be done on southern African issues, work that can make some contribution to the struggle of people there truly to liberate themselves. Solidarity with people in that region remains of fundamental importance, we feel, and there's even the thought around here that such solidarity may well be more meaningful now than ever. After all, within the context of increased "globalization," mutual recognition - North and South - of our shared vulnerability in the face of a rootless and uncontrolled

capitalism seems much more likely to draw our struggles closer together than it is to stretch them further apart!

Perhaps this is why, here at SAR, our energy remains pretty much undimmed - although it would be helpful to hear from our readers that you share this sense of the importance of the task we're undertaking and are even prepared to involve yourself in it more actively: giving us more feedback, sending us articles and other publishable materials, touting the magazine to other potential readers, subscribers and distributors, be they institutions (libraries, book shops, conferences, political organizations) or friends. SAR is nothing if not a collective endeavour, not least to those closest to it. But we're eager and willing to expand the sense of your own joint ownership of the enterprise by incorporating any and all of you who are ready to enlist.

But, ah yes, funds. Our pockets are only so deep and here, especially, we both need help and welcome it eagerly. Case in point: recently we heard from one of our old comrades in TCLSAC, one who had indeed moved on to other fronts of struggle as the primary focus of her reading and her politics. But, for her, the sense of the importance of southern Africa issues remains intact, just a bit lapsed, she admitted, although still held in place by her ongoing subscription to SAR. She had steady employment now, she said, and wanted to help in some kind of sustained, and sustaining, way. Could she send us a set of post-dated cheques, \$60 a month, and for the foreseeable future? Yes, please, and thank you.

So, not to put too fine a point upon it, we return to the question with which we began: how important is SAR to you? We trust it's important enough for many of you that you, too, will feel moved to, as it were, cheque it out: "Dare to struggle, dare to sign."



# Besieged in Mafeking

## The ANC Congress

BY TOM LODGE

*Tom Lodge is Professor and Chair of the department of Political Science at the University of the Witwatersrand.*

South Africa's best prospects for democracy probably depend as much on the ANC's internal vitality as on any of the carefully scripted clauses of its hundred page liberal constitution. So, for African democracy watchers, the ANC's 50th national conference in Mafeking in mid-December should prove to be a compelling spectacle. Certainly, the 3,000 delegates will have plenty to argue about.

For a start, this is the first general meeting of the ANC that can deliver a rank and file verdict on the government's performance over the last three years. The 49th conference, held in Bloemfontein in December 1994, took place too soon after the April elections; on that occasion the participants voted for a series of fairly anodyne resolutions giving the leadership liberal discretion over the adoption of policy, and only showed their mettle when confronting a clumsy attempt to impose a quota system on the national executive elections.

Next month should be different. Certainly, the government can claim considerable achievements: a primary health care program that has already significantly reduced infant mortality, three million people supplied with piped water, half a million electrical connections a year, the significant spread of home ownership among the relatively poor, and wage rises that have beaten the (declining) inflation rate. But unless people are the direct beneficiaries of such gains, the greatest visibility of such

gains is in official statistics and, in any event, they are regionally concentrated.

### The GEAR

More visible is the fact that the assembly is being held against an historical backdrop that includes the government's adoption of the Growth Economic and Redistribution programme (GEAR). This programme, to many people, implies a prioritization of growth before redistribution, and is seen to include a suspect mix of tariff reductions, public expenditure cut-backs to reduce the deficit, privatization of parastatals, and the acceptance of a stratified labour market. GEAR was written in secret and was presented to a discomfited ANC national executive as "non-negotiable" in June last year.

An outraged Cosatu promptly produced its own "Programme for the Alliance" and threatened to make its acceptance a condition of the federation's support in the 1999 election. Indeed, NUMSA (National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa) militants actually favoured a more immediate rupture, a course narrowly averted as a consequence of a more cautious stand taken by the National Union of Mineworkers, customarily more loyal to ANC leadership. In any case, Cosatu's alternative, Keynesian programme advocates an expansion of the social wage through mass state housing financed through public borrowing, a national health programme, all-embracing social security and public job creation, as well as an enlarged public sector.

Still, the debate on macroeconomic policy will only be one of the hot topics likely to be broached

at the Congress. The ANC has held a series of workshops and seminars on a range of issues, generating a succession of "discussion papers," and encouraging various notables to stake out positions in speeches and statements. For example, the current National Executive will probably support a set of constitutional revisions that call for a longer term for executive members and seek to strengthen leadership authority by prohibiting ANC members from contesting public office and internal organizational elections without official sponsorship.

Notwithstanding Kader Asmal's protestations that this restriction is merely to ensure procedural orderliness, many delegates will probably interpret the measure as a high-handed effort by leadership to ensure positions are held by cooperative functionaries. Such delegates will certainly note that this move comes after a bruising provincial election in Gauteng when so-called "Africanist" Mathole Motshekga triumphed in the poll for regional chairman (and implicitly premier) over Frank Chikane, an associate of Thabo Mbeki!

### Regional tensions

Regional tensions are also evident in Northern Provincial premier Ngoaka Ramatholdi's recommendations for a non-partisan civil service. Ironically, his complaints do not arise from the behaviour of left-over conservatives from the old bureaucracy but rather the partisan - and in the case of his province, often mutinous - disposition of ANC political appointees to the administration. The government's habit of "redeploying" inconvenient people across positions in the political organization, legisla-



Ansell Horn - Impact Visuals

*Squatter's camp on vacant land next to suburban houses*

tures, public service and parastatals has also raised hackles: victims of this strategy included Terror Lekota who was moved out of the Free State premiership after he attempted to clean up corruption in his administration, and a sequence of ambassadorial appointments which have taken some of the most effective left-wingers out of parliament and the ANC's own bureaucracy.

Feelings will be running particularly high amongst Mpumalanga delegates who have witnessed an unseemly bit of bullying from the presidential office compelling provincial premier Matthews Phosa to stand down from the race for the deputy presidency to allow Natal ANC chairman Jacob Zuma a clear run against Winnie Madikizela-Mandela. Phosa has barely concealed his resentment and a bitter speech this month attacked the ANC's leaders for failing to keep in touch with the organization's social base.

Phosa will have plenty of sympathy: Jacob Zuma's ascendancy within the hierarchy confirms the continuing predisposition at the top

towards a pecking order based on generational seniority and an exile track record. Zuma is almost invisible publicly; highly reticent, he has hardly appeared on television and does little to court public opinion. Insiders suggest he is man of high integrity with good negotiation skills, and an impressive liberation pedigree.

But that may not be good enough. As ANC members showed in the Gauteng provincial elections, "struggle records" seem to matter less and less nowadays. Motshekga's membership of the ANC dates only from 1991; before then his public life was mainly confined to running legal aid clinics in Pretoria. His popularity stems from assiduous networking among ANC local councils (he heads the local government portfolio committee in the Gauteng legislature), from the resentment among East Rand and Pretoria branches at what they view as Soweto dominance of the regional executive, and from his strong line in tough street-wise rhetoric, evident for example in his calls for a revival of "people's courts" to deal with neighbourhood crime.

### The Winnie Factor

Winnie Madikizela-Mandela can take heart from Motshekga's elevation, for she too is busy mobilizing grass roots disaffection, with contemptuous utterances about her husband's niggardliness over her divorce settlement (she jetted off to the United States the day it was meant to be negotiated), condemnations of GEAR, and a call for a referendum on the death penalty - in which she has joined forces with the community vigilante group PAGAD and the National Party's unappetizing new leader, Marthinus van Schalkwyk.

Not that all the populists at the ANC conference will line up with Madikizela-Mandela and the left against GEAR, however. Peter Mokaba, the former Youth League president who used to delight audiences at ANC rallies with his rendering of the Umkhonto anthem, "kill the settlers, kill the boers," has, since his appointment to the deputy ministry of tourism, become almost sedate. Not quite, though. His contribution to the internal ANC policy debate is embodied in a discussion

paper that calls for the NEC (National Executive Committee of the ANC) to be broadened to include all members of the cabinet as well as their deputies; reminds the ANC about what he believes to be the organization's historical commitment to the values of free market capitalism (Mokaba himself is no slouch in this regard; in four years he became a millionaire through his ownership of a string of hairdressing salons); and attacks Cosatu for its "left-wing childishness" in discussing the possible formation of a left-wing party. Mokaba is also sharply critical of the Communist Party, complaining of the propensity of its leaders to agree to one course of action in ANC executive meetings and then subsequently criticize ANC policies when wearing their central committee hats.

Here Mokaba has touched a raw nerve. While not all ANC principals will share his ideological antipathy to the Communist Party, there is plenty of evident irritation about the way in which SACP, notwithstanding the presence of many of its members in government and ANC leadership, has distanced itself from government policies. To be fair, SACP trade unionists have worked hard to keep Cosatu within the Alliance fold, and while its ideologues are corrosively dismissive of recent ANC formulations about the "golden triangle" of labour, state and capital, they themselves have tended to adopt a middle position between Cosatu's advocacy of a full blown welfare state and the government's fiscal conservatism. The SACP Central Committee's list of "strategic priorities" includes intricately qualified language about the need to retain the sympathies of a "patriotic black bourgeoisie" which otherwise might be lost to a new ruling bloc of local monopolists acting in conjunction with international capital, as well as the need for a "developmental state" adopting some of the liberal precepts of "good governance."

#### At the conference

How will all these currents play themselves out at the conference? The Youth League used to be considered a king-maker and agenda setter, but its leadership seems closely aligned with the deputy-president's office, the main centre of ANC and government decision-making. The League was persuaded to switch its support for Mbeki's successor from Phosa to Zuma, and there have been few expressions of dissent from this quarter over GEAR. Its personable president, Malusi Gqaba, with his master's qualification in public policy from Durban-Westville exemplifies the new "African Renaissance" technocratic elite which an ANC under Thabo Mbeki can be expected to promote [see following story]. Meanwhile, the Women's League, torn apart by allegations and counter accusations over the misappropriation of funds, is set to back its president, Madikizela-Mandela, who can summon an impressive bloc of delegate support from the Guateng squatter camps whenever her ascendancy over the League is threatened.

Still, the most important delegate battalions will be from the ANC's provincial organizations, and of these the most powerful are those of the Eastern Cape (703 delegates) and the Northern Province (408). Notwithstanding advance resolutions indicating support for Zuma, the electoral ballots will be secret and the simmering anger of delegates from these two poorest and worst governed provinces may boil over, not just in expressions of support for Madikizela-Mandela (highly popular in the old Transkei) but also in bitter antipathy to government "right-sizing" that has trimmed tens of thousands of jobs off the public payroll in these regions. Moreover, the executive's dispatch of members of the parliamentary caucus to their assigned "constituencies" to bring the branches into line may not be the most effective discipline. MPs themselves are demoralized by overbear-

ing ministers in portfolio committees and an executive intolerance of any expression of back-bencher independence.

Predicting the outcome to any contests at Mafeking is at best an uncertain undertaking and there is plenty of evidence of ANC principals hedging their bets: the resurfacing of the ANC's visceral anti-Americanism in the recent spat over the Libyan state visit was a case in point. But if the awkward combination of the labour left and the street populists make inroads into the ANC executive, as seems quite likely, then we should expect a swift declutching on the government's commitment to GEAR macroeconomics. That will be good news for the promoters of the new "non racial" Holomisa/Meyer UDM consortium for they can expect to pick up support from the one group which is least likely to be strongly represented amongst grass roots delegates: that is, the people who have been to date the prime beneficiaries of ANC policies, the rapidly expanding African managerial and business class. (Their interests are also still in the balance in the debates over the Basic Conditions of Employment Bill, for example.)

ANC leaders may be willing to reconsider the wisdom of "neo-liberal" economic policies which are set to deliver only a paltry 2.7 per cent growth rate next year, but a discernible swing to the left might well alienate the kinds of people to whom Peter Mokaba's views seem to be directed. As the proceedings of this conference will indicate, sustaining a middle class alliance with the world's fastest growing labour movement is a tall order. In December, traditional considerations of unity and discipline will probably win out, if narrowly; Nelson Mandela's charismatic authority will be on tap to ensure that. But after his departure charisma will be in shorter supply.



# The Mbeki Enigma



African National Congress

## BY HEIN MARAIS

Hein Marais is a Johannesburg-based journalist and researcher. His book "South Africa: Limits to Change - The Political Economy of Transition" will be published by Zed Books in December.

What awaits South Africa with deputy president Thabo Mbeki at the helm when he officially takes over from Nelson Mandela in 1999? Assessments and forecasts that stray from sycophancy seem constantly to run up against some Law of Imponderability, prompting the

liberal deployment of words like "enigma," "mystery" and "riddle."

Thus, to some, Thabo Mbeki is a shrewd, potentially ruthless politician, a master of intrigue who has grown adept at neutralizing opponents. To others he's a leader of vision, perhaps even a closet leftist, a person propelled by grand ideals of an African renaissance and of realizing the historical goals of the ANC as a liberation organization. Figuring out which image fits him most accurately is a bit like pinning the tail on the donkey.

Acting ANC secretary-general Cheryl Carolus (soon to take the post of high commissioner in Britain) describes him as "very intelligent, very committed" and declares that perceptions of him as a ruthless and opportunistic politician "are not true." IFP leader and Home Affairs Minister Mangosuthu Buthelezi praises him as "one of the finest brains we have," someone who "listens very patiently and then deals with the issue with impressive precision." The intellectual point-man of "Africanism" in South Africa, academic William Makgoba, finds himself grasping at hyperboles when judging Mbeki. "I doubt that there's a politician as shrewd and experienced as Thabo Mbeki anywhere on the planet," he declares, before descending back to terra firma with what might be a back-handed compliment: "Even U.S. president Bill Clinton and the British prime minister Tony Blair are nowhere near Thabo in the art of politics."

In the opposite corner, Bantu Holomisa (now heading the United Democratic Movement with fallen National Party golden boy Roelf Meyer) knows him as "a manipulator" who "uses the media and manipulates people to get to the top." Vengefully, he accuses Mbeki of "always crushing his opposition as he did with me." Mike Muendane, leader of the PAC, says he "tends to set up little cabals within the party." "He appears warm, a gentleman when talking to him, but behind the scenes he is said to be an arch-manipulator," he says.

## Off-the-record

My own enquiries among ANC officials have drawn unflattering pen-sketches that, without fail, are shared on a strictly off-the-record basis - a yardstick of the power already wielded by South Africa's next president.

Nelson Mandela's dark side is his autocratic bearing and occasional obstinacy. Yet, as an NEC (National Executive Committee of the ANC) member once put it to me, "in a debate he'd listen to the arguments, then announce his decision and that's that - you know where you stand." Mbeki, according to a top ANC member, operates quite differently: "His tactic is to sidestep debate and collective decision-making. His standard line is that the matter at hand is very complex and needs more thought - then, when the meeting's over he swings into action, him and the little bureaucratic clique he's surrounded himself with. They're not up-front, they won't debate you on an issue, but they'll move behind the scenes."

"Thabo not vindictive?" another ANC official asks back, "What about Terror (Lekota)?" The former Free State premier was, of course, removed last year by an ANC National Working Committee meeting chaired by Mbeki. In Carolus' version of events, nothing untoward occurred. "If we didn't intervene there would never have been a provincial conference - they had postponed it three times already. We did interfere and we had to. The infighting had been dragging on for two and a half years."

The run-up to Lekota's axing was messy. Slop buckets of allegations, scandals and worse were hurled about. But according to the ANC official, the debacle "could have been dealt with earlier but they (national leadership) allowed it to fester and then they moved in." The alleged reason? Lekota was seen as a potential challenger to Mbeki, someone who emerged from the 1980s with a robust if imperfect reputation, who'd pulled off a good job preparing the ANC for the elections, who understood mass movements and who stood beyond Mbeki's reach.

"In many ways the same happened to Holomisa - maybe he was

foolish to make those accusations about Stella (Sigcau) but again they let him dig a hole for himself and then threw him into it," says the official. (Holomisa was expelled from the ANC a year ago for bringing the ANC "into disrepute" by reviving allegations that Public Enterprises



Sasa Kralj/i-Afrika - Impact Visuals

Minister Stella Sigcau had accepted a bribe from hotel and casino magnate Sol Kerzner during her stint as "president" of the Transkei homeland. Kerzner recently lent strong credence to Holomisa's accusations.) Mbeki, by the way, has reacted curtly to such claims by urging "people who want to be commentators ... to make an effort to increase their levels of understanding," as he told the *Sowetan* newspaper recently. "The ANC does not have a gauleiter ... Our decisions are arrived at through the processes of discussion and debate."

## The GEAR

Understandably, the left observes him with shifty, troubled eyes. As the political midwife of the controversial Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) macro-economic plan, Mbeki has not endeared himself to Cosatu or the S.A. Communist Party. Tellingly, he left Mandela with the unenviable task of facing Cosatu delegates at the federation's annual congress in September. Running a gauntlet of anti-GEAR songs from the floor, Mandela admitted that even top ANC leaders had not been privy to the plan before its release and told delegates that the strategy was no longer "non-negotiable." But he reaffirmed his support for the plan. Mbeki, meanwhile, has curiously refrained from public comment on GEAR - a savvy decision given the woeful economic indicators of the past year and the mounting opposition to the plan.

In October, however, he broke cover with a strident defense of GEAR. "Anyone who is rational can't come to any conclusion other than our (economic) policies," he told a prostrate interviewing team from the *Financial Mail*. "I don't believe, if you look at the totality of economic policy, that we will have anything to worry about," he said. "We are determined to stick to what we have said. It is painful."

Painful indeed. The economy lost 113,000 jobs since GEAR's introduction (the plan had promised 126,000 new jobs in 1996 and forecasts 252,000 this year) and the gross domestic product growth rate is expected to plunge well below the two per cent mark in 1997. Nevertheless, Mbeki's resolve to stay the course is highly suggestive of the style and trajectory of political management he will pursue once Mandela completes his handover in 1999.

## From statesman to politician

South Africa is passing from the era of the statesman (personified

by Mandela) to the era of the politician, from the cultivation of a rickety bedrock of conciliation and stability to the arduous and turbulent business of governance, from a dependency on the personal charisma of a leader to a reliance on public institutions and democratized political culture. Mandela achieved his historic mission thanks to his ability to traverse many of the contradictions at play in South African society and the ANC – the “modern” and the “traditional,” black and white, privilege and deprivation – a feat made possible by personal attributes and by the assiduously constructed mythos that surrounds him. He is a consummate anomaly – a politician who rose above politics, a kind of Charles de Gaulle. Mbeki will wield authority in more conventional ways, by building and fortifying a core base and a secure platform of authority, by constantly nourishing and buttressing support among divergent interest groups, and by accumulating the power and the consent necessary to stave off contrary demands. In short, his business is to govern.

How he goes about that task will be decided by three factors: his personal disposition, the strength and vitality of the ANC as a liberation organization, and the combative capacities of its key allies, Cosatu and the SACP. On all counts, the jury is still out. But some indicators are at hand.

Mbeki’s commitment to consolidating the ANC as a broad and inclusive political organization is beyond dispute. Some ANC officials have, *sotto voce*, accused him of preferring an ANC that is organizationally too weak to act as an effective activist force but strong enough to harvest votes at elections. The reason, they alleged, was that this would enable government to get on with the business of governing, freed from the possibly disruptive demands and activities emanating from within the organization. The

model being aped was essentially that of conventional western democracies.

And yet Mbeki has backed restructuring efforts aimed at putting the ANC on a surer organizational footing. These include the creation of a series of teams such as one headed by Labour Minister Tito Mboweni which is trying to boost the organization’s policy and research capacities. It is unclear whether Mbeki’s stance here is principled or conjunctural. As a



politician who runs a tight ship, he is unlikely to harbour a principled desire to bolster the ANC’s ability to “complicate” the tasks of governance. At the same time, unhappiness at rank-and-file level about the organizational decay that has set in since 1994 (candidly captured in critiques by the ANC Youth League and in provincial conference reports of the past two years) and the approach of the 1999 elections has emphasized the need to repair the damage.

### Domesticating the left

Yet, the goal of putting the ANC on a “fighting footing” may not fit easily with an agenda of governance that, otherwise, pivots on a remarkably uncritical acquiescence to the prescriptions of the Washington Consensus – as exemplified by the GEAR strategy and seemingly endorsed by Mbeki’s claim about the “rationality” of current economic policies. But the conundrum runs deeper than that. Thus, the left within the ANC remains wedded to the idea that the organization’s latent “working-class bias” can be revived to serve as the central compass for government policies. The framework for hoisting the ANC government back onto its historical track, these forces argue, already exists – in the form of the so-called “base document” of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). Though roughly sketched, that document bristles with leftist injunctions (many of them perfectly practicable) and represents an elaboration and radicalization of the post-apartheid visions contained in the Freedom Charter. The left, in other words, hopes to regain lost ground by locating its project squarely within the organizational form and the historical discourse of the ANC. At the same time, the rapid distillation of class and other interests occurring within that organization is complicating its inclusive, “broad church” character. Bluntly put, the ANC is no longer (indeed, has for a long time not been) one happy family, a kind of political Brady Bunch. The growing internal turbulence framed by this reality represents a contest over which alliance of interests shall predominate inside the organization.

Such a development poses two sets of challenges for Mbeki. His determination to get on with the business of effective governance, reconstruction and development cannot be questioned. What can be questioned, however, is whether the transformation he pursues will





Ansell Horn - Impact Visuals

*Squatter's camp on vacant land next to suburban houses*

conform to or breach the boundaries of permissible change patrolled by domestic and international capital. With a few exceptions (notably in the health sector, where the pharmaceutical industry has been challenged, and the labour sector, where the deregulatory trend is being bucked, for now) the tendency has been not to rock the boat. But against a background of halting progress in social delivery, this has generated restiveness in and around the ANC. The first challenge, then, is to stay the hand of a left which, in the past year, has woken from its post-1994 slumber.

It's against this background, for

example, that deputy minister of environmental affairs Peter Mokaba has circulated a discussion document proudly proclaiming the ANC to be a capitalist organization and urging SACP members to face this reality and leave the ANC. The potency of Mokaba's foray lies not in its intellectual weight (which is wistful and feathery, as befits a joint-the-dots populist of Mokaba's ilk) but in the political intrigue that surrounds it. It is highly unlikely that Mokaba, a person fuelled by immoderate political ambition, would have embarked on his anti-left crusade without a formidable promise of backing inside the organization -

though from whom and from where remains unknown. What is clear is that the kite he has launched is intended to render more visible the relative strengths of the various currents surging through the ANC. Keenly observing its passage are Mbeki and his circle of advisers - for one of their prime challenges is to domesticate the left, hopefully without rupturing the unity of the ANC.

#### **Discursive innovation**

The second challenge lies in the ideological or, more accurately, discursive realm. The disaggregation of interests inside the ANC (and their diverse expression in material, life

style and political terms) threatens the inclusive unity of the organization. Three heterodox reactions are already evident. There's the gravitational pull exerted by populist politicians – inside the ANC, for instance, by Mathole Motshekga who will succeed Tokyo Sexwale as premier of Gauteng province; outside it, the footstomping appeal of Bantu Holomisa. There's the onset of political apathy, apparently confirmed by recent opinion polls. And there's the increasing attraction (particularly at provincial and local levels) of leftish positions which, it must be said, are not always clearly discernible from populist ones.

Alert to this, Mbeki has been revising the discursive canopy that has heretofore been used to envelop the divergent interests and currents contained within the ANC – mainly by spicing the conciliatory discourse of Mandela with more forthright pronouncements on the need to overcome racial inequalities. In Mbeki's words: "So long as the issue of race – racial disparities – remains an outstanding feature of South African society, so long will the ANC remain what it is today." According to him, the principal fault lines that course through the society remain those of "race and colour," a point expounded in an important speech

to parliament in June. Within this discourse, class tensions, for example, become disguised in lofty statements about the need for and the duties of a "patriotic bourgeoisie" and the like. In this way Mbeki's formulations come to resemble a kind of update of the African-nationalism that presaged the ANC's radicalization in the early 1950s (and therefore reflecting a position not really deserving of the "Africanist" label too quickly affixed to Mbeki by the white media in the course of their misreading of his chosen discourse [see accompanying box for an elaboration of this point]).

## The African Renaissance

Inside South Africa, journalists have laboured hard to pin an "Africanist" label on Mbeki, suggesting a tilt away from the rather threadbare tradition of non-racialism and towards more racialist perspectives. The attempt is inaccurate and unfair, and betrays the local media's well-established inability to grasp political nuances.

Continentially, though, Mbeki clearly is an "Africanist" – in the Nkrumah-esque sense of the word. "He takes Africa seriously and he is emotionally, politically and intellectually committed to prove Afro-pessimism wrong," says analyst Vincent Maphai. "He is NOT an "Africanist" in an ethnic or racialist sense." SACP deputy general-secretary Jeremy Cronin agrees, and described Mbeki as an "Africanist" in the sense of "being committed to a continental revival, an African renaissance." That endeavour has become something of a *leitmotif* of Mbeki's and links him philosophically to the first post-liberation generation of African leaders.

In Mbeki's own words: "Greater trade among African countries is very important, as is economic cooperation and the movement of capital within the regions. But that presumes stability, openness. It would be difficult to have economic cooperation of a long-term nature where you had in one country political dictatorship and in another country democracy."

"We have to address the abuse of the notion of national sovereignty, where terrible things would be going on within the borders of a particular country while the rest of the continent stands paralyzed because taking action would be seen as interference," he told the *Sowetan* newspaper recently.

Last April, he brought a meeting of the U.S. Corporate Council on Africa to its feet when he expounded on that

vision, linking it to the imminent fall of Mobutu Sese Seko's regime and to the South African-led mediation efforts in the former Zaire.

His perspective points towards a more interventionist role regionally, for which the mediation efforts in the former Zaire earlier this year served as precedent. Ostensibly, the guiding imperative would be to enable Africans to "solve their own problems."

Few would disagree that it's a laudable and necessary vision. Yet, once scrutinized, his Renaissance speeches do appear shallow. They seem to lack analytical depth, and to fail to identify the material and political well-springs of a revival or to more precisely sketch its character. Questions remain around how such initiatives might become articulated to the forays of other international actors – principally the U.S.A. and France. The apparent overlap between U.S. policy objectives and the failed S.A.-administered mediation bid in Zaire has been detected by analysts abroad (but, strangely, not inside South Africa), while his hosting of a high-powered French government delegation to South Africa in October suggested Mbeki might not be averse to exploiting converging interests between South Africa and western powers in advancing the renaissance dream. Indeed, the central, apparent flaw in the vision relates to Mbeki's failure (or reluctance) to locate this renaissance within the geopolitics of globalization. But is this omission actually a flaw? Perhaps not. For, whether cast onto the national or the continental stage, his thinking appears consistently to be equipped with ambiguities that leave a variety of tactical options at his disposal. Whether inclined towards dread or adulation, one is tempted to agree, for once, with Buthelezi: in Mbeki, South Africa has a very, very shrewd politician.

This discourse is, in any case, primarily aimed at shoring up unity and steeling the organization against centrifugal forces, as divergent interests become more robustly expressed within it. In this respect it has proven to be a shrewd shift, one that has the left looking a little bewildered. For Mbeki is employing an understanding of the relationship between reconciliation and transformation that is much more dialectical than Mandela's. "You can't say there must be reconciliation on the basis of the maintenance of the status quo," he told the Financial Mail. "You'll never have reconciliation [on that basis]. The need is for every sector of South African society to buy into that transformation process. If you predicate transformation on not destabilizing the status quo, you have not addressed the question of reconciliation. You have created the conditions for conflict." So, this discursive shift is aimed at defusing left opposition (corralling it back into the central paradigm of race) but also, ostensibly, at piercing the ramparts of white recalcitrance.

#### In from the cold?

Beyond all this, Mbeki is also supporting procedural and structural changes in the ANC (and tripartite alliance) that could allow the left back in from the cold. These include regular alliance meetings (especially before key policy decisions), a revision of the make-up of the ANC's national executive committee (possibly to include ex-officio status for Cosatu representatives), the boosting of the status of the ANC's parliamentary caucus (for long a cowed confab), and more.

For a variety of reasons, Mbeki prefers an SACP that is strapped into the ANC - held in a kind of hostage situation that severely limits the communist party's combative options. To be sure, an absconding SACP would, in its own right, not pose a dramatic threat. But the reinvigorated courtship currently underway between the party and a host of Cosatu affiliates does

raise the possibility of a more robust popular-left challenge emerging from an SACP/Cosatu nexus - a threat that gives Mbeki all the more reason to want to encourage party members to stay put in the ANC, at least for now.

Not surprisingly, these developments have emboldened those on the left who believe the "heart and soul" of the ANC is still up for grabs. To them, the window of opportunity is being levered open again and Mbeki might even be considered an ally in holding it ajar. More grizzled and pessimistic intellectuals disagree. To them, the ANC's conversion into (or maturation as) a vehicle for the modernization of South African capitalism - however much leavened by a makeshift welfarism targeting the "poorest of the poor" a la World Bank social policy pronouncements - is well-advanced and is likely to be concluded under Mbeki's tutelage. Any window of opportunity, they fear, will be edged shut from 1999 onwards. Still, it's not an easy one to answer: just what kinds of relationships should the left be trying to fashion with(in) the ANC. Ultra-leftists predictably counsel a complete break - a course that mirrors Mokaba's challenge to them. Those attuned to Gramscian thinking argue for a more concerted and cogently strategized war of po-

sition within and around the ANC, a project that would seek to rebuild links with other progressive forces in civil society (development NGOs, churches, interest-based grassroots organisations, etc.). These are important debates to have, needless to say, but the fact is that they are still mainly incipient.

Meanwhile, Mbeki and those currents orbiting around him hold the upper hand. Mbeki's key advantage is that the left cannot yet decide whether and to what extent he is an ally of a popular agenda. He is also alert to a central weakness of Cosatu and the SACP - their failure to devise cogent policy alternatives. He is unlikely to pass up on the opportunities this presents him, and will probably "call their bluff" by encouraging or challenging these forces to propose alternatives, confident that they will not be able to oblige speedily or coherently. His major disadvantage is a lack of experience of the internal dynamics of mass movements like trade unions - which might generate troubling stand-offs and upset the desired social compact with the labour movement. Arrayed around him, however, are a sufficient number of adroit politicians with a firmer grasp of the arcanities of the mass organizations that emerged inside South Africa during the 1970s and 1980s.

The upshot is a complex transition that is poised to slip back into gear after the short, apparently benign, interval of reconciliation and precarious stability that Mandela and Co. helped hold in place. It now befalls Mbeki to raise the curtain for the next act of what must remain a sharp struggle to determine which alliance of social forces will shape the new South Africa. As the slogan says: "a luta continua," the struggle continues. Only, this time around, the battle lines are blurred, the troops are not too certain which side they're on, and everyone seems to be talking out of both sides of their mouths.

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# Which Way Labour? Cosatu's 6th Congress

BY EDDIE WEBSTER AND  
GLENN ADLER

*Eddie Webster and Glenn Adler both teach Industrial Sociology at the University of the Witwatersrand and both are active in trade union-related support work in South Africa. The present article draws on, but significantly develops, arguments first presented in Business Day (by Webster) and The Mail and Guardian (by Adler) during the run-up to Cosatu's recent 6th Congress, a Congress whose subsequent proceedings they also evaluate here.*

The Congress of South African Trade Unions' (Cosatu) 6th National congress – held in September – was its most important deliberation since the federation was founded in 1985. The federation undertook a comprehensive, quite critical review of its affairs while debating innovative strategies for achieving its long-standing goals in a new democracy facing the pressures of a global economy.

At the centre of the discussion was the 234-page report from the Commission on the Future of the Unions chaired by Cosatu's second vice-president Connie September. Yet prior to the conference it had been generally ignored; where it was examined in the media, its political recommendations were largely misunderstood and its economic thinking dismissed.

The report's treatment is indicative of a general shift in attitudes towards the labour movement since the 1994 elections. The unions that gathered in Durban in 1985 to launch Cosatu sought unity in the struggle to end apartheid and to advance a socialist transformation. Twelve years later these goals



Paul Weinberg – Southlight

*Cosatu launching Congress - December 1985*

seem to many a distant memory, and the movement that espoused them an anachronism to be consigned to the past, along with P.W. Botha and the Berlin wall. This is a serious mistake. The report and Congress deliberations are a landmark in labour's history in South Africa, and the policy decisions will have a wide impact on political and economic developments in this country. Indeed, it provides a model for progressive unions elsewhere in the world confronted by the same problems.

## The September Commission

The September Commission report is an unprecedented document. Never before has a movement of black workers in this country survived the economic and political conjuncture in which it was born to be able to chart its fortunes in a new epoch. From the Industrial and

Commercial Workers' Union in the 1920s to the South African Congress of Trade Unions in the 1950s and 1960s the labour movement's future was always decided for it by a repressive state in collaboration with business. Each generation of trade unionists had to build on the remains of those movements that preceded them.

Today's unions avoided this fate. They emerged from the fight against apartheid with their organizations intact, with growing memberships, and having achieved a more progressive political and industrial relations framework under which they may consolidate these advantages.

But economic liberalization poses a new set of problems which defy easy answers. Tariff reduction threatens the integrity of strongly unionized industries; the

easing of exchange controls increases the mobility of capital and its power against less-mobile workers; the aggressive logic of competitiveness pushes capital to intensify production, lower labour costs inside firms while deregulating the labour market more generally; government deficit reduction constrains redistributive programs for redressing apartheid inequalities.

In addition to these problems Cosatu faces two further challenges. First, it must develop responses to these threats while in an alliance with a party in government responsible for many economic policy changes consistent with economic liberalization. Recrafting its relationship with the African National Congress (ANC), means defining a new etiquette of opposition and support. Second, it must remake its own internal structures and practices devised over a decade ago for a smaller opposition movement that abstained from involvement in policymaking.

Responding to these challenges is akin to renovating one's motor vehicle while driving at speed in the fast lane of a motorway. It is not a job for the faint-hearted. Yet it is precisely this task that Cosatu undertook when it initiated the September Commission in early 1996 to develop the "vision, goals and strategies to take Cosatu into the next century."

It is noteworthy that the Commission was composed exclusively of black working class intellectuals who had ultimate control over the research and writing. This should put paid to the commonly heard reports that the labour movement is "brain dead" owing to the departure of many (white) leaders to government. The Commission testifies

current position - warts and all. It makes quite damning statements about organizational weaknesses (particularly in regard to national and regional structures); failure to achieve gender equality; the lack of clarity regarding fundamental policies and vision; and problems in the tripartite alliance with the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP).

## Redistribution . . . and intervention

The Commission takes as its point of departure the extreme contrast of wealth and poverty in South Africa. In the Commission's view, this makes redistribution a necessary condition for economic growth, and requires an interventionist developmental state as a necessary means to achieve this goal. Comparative research cited in the report supports this argument:

- countries which are more equal in terms of wealth distribution tend to have higher growth rates;
- countries which spend a lot on redistribution do better. In contrast, countries whose governments simply spend a lot without a clear redistribution programme tend not to grow;
- higher tax rates (if linked to redistribution) do not adversely effect growth rates.

At the core of the Commission's economic vision is labour as both the major bearer of the public interest in industrial development, and the unified bearer of the majority interest in redistribution and social justice. This vision also involves socializing the investment function through reintroducing prescribed assets - a requirement that enterprises invest in specified developmental areas - and using union investment companies to build "a social sector." The private sector remains the largest sector, but it is to be transformed into a "stakeholder sector" where "no longer only the rights of shareholders prevail, but also the needs of workers, communities and society." The report believes that this

The Report of the September Commission on the future of the unions to the Congress of South African Trade Unions August 1997	
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to the labour movement's continuing intellectual vitality and its current office-bearers' willingness to accept the responsibilities of leadership.

The September Commission conducted a careful analysis of Cosatu's



Launch of the September Commission report - 22 August 1997

S. A. Labour Bulletin

can best be done through "strategic engagement." It recommends that Cosatu seriously examine Swedish and German-style co-determination where employees are given institutional rights to participate at shop-floor and board level.

Many key actors in the transition process have put forward their strategic visions. But few have had the courage to identify openly their organizational weaknesses and recommend radical measures to overcome these weaknesses. This con-

The authors call this ambitious model of unionism "social unionism." The germs of this model exist in present policies and practices. But union leaders have been ambivalent in fully embracing them because of the resources required, but also because of the danger of too close an identification with management.

**Social unionism**

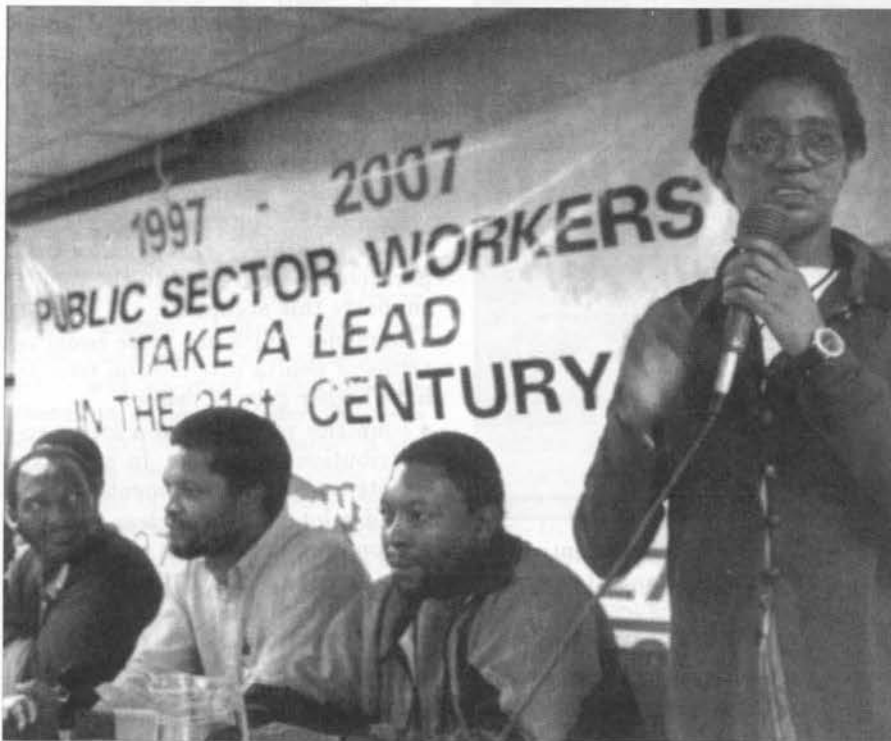
Social unionism requires a commitment to economic growth and wealth creation as well as equitable redistribu-

instead of merely reacting to events, unions become proactive, take the initiative, and seek to set the agenda. This, the report makes clear, will require a major restructuring of the federation from one in which affiliates maintain a high degree of autonomy and where decision-making power is decentralized. The report recommends making Cosatu head office the "engine room" of the federation by increasing the number of full-time office bearers from two to six and by requiring them to meet more regularly. To offset the increased power given to full-time officials the report recommends the creation of a new Central Committee, composed of 300-500 delegates from the affiliates, to meet annually as a mini-congress empowered to make policy decisions. It also recommends bolstering the powers and resources of Cosatu regional and local structures, strengthening Cosatu's own departments, and encouraging the consolidation of unions into fewer, bigger and stronger affiliates. Taken together these changes mean an organization capable - for the first time - of giving force to Cosatu's stated policies.

A crucial part of the report is a recommendation that Cosatu establish greater autonomy within the tripartite alliance. The report's slogan, "flexible independence," means that Cosatu supports the ANC when it adopts progressive policies, seeks to influence ANC policies wherever possible, and opposes the ANC when it adopts "anti-worker" positions. It also recommends a broad alliance with five key sectors of civil society - the trade union movement, the NGO movement, the community constituency within NEDLAC, religious organizations and progressive intellectuals.

**The Congress**

At the Congress the September Commission proposals were debated alongside resolutions from the affiliates and recommendations in the secretariat's report's - an unwieldy



S.A. Labour Bulletin

*Cosatu's 2nd vice-president, Connie September*

stitutes the body of the report; a recommendation that union leaders commit themselves to taking on a central role and responsibility in shaping economic and social development as well as the functioning of the public sector. This latter is seen as "the basic foundation for translating into reality the citizenship rights enshrined in the constitution," through the delivery of services, the stimulation of economic growth, and by advancing significant collective forms of ownership.

It requires the democratization of the workplace, participation in tripartite bodies such as the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC), and a skilled staff inside the organization. In fact, organizational renewal is at the core of the report. Unions will increasingly need to pay attention to their own human resource development, particularly in the face of increased turnover and changed expectations amongst staff.

With social unionism, in essence,



process in which delegates were often flipping between three separate and lengthy documents. Yet this produced less confusion than was expected, in part because the Commission's report was presented at affiliates' congresses and special policy conferences held in the run-up to the Cosatu's Congress; indeed many of its proposals were already incorporated into the affiliates' own positions.

The Congress endorsed the report's view that the federation lacked capacity to drive its policies and accepted the proposals to strengthen the organization's centre – including the recommendation to increase the number of full-time office bearers. Concern was expressed about a possible loss of worker control through these centralizing reforms, a question not fully answered by the agreement to establish a Central Committee and to strengthen Cosatu local office bearers and structures.

The most contentious issues of all – around social and economic policy as well as a clear programme on union investment companies – were generally deferred to a meeting of the new Central Committee structure to be held within the next six months. Nonetheless there were significant decisions in this area. The Congress supported the September Commission's view to

strengthen the role of the state in the productive sector of the economy and its capacity to provide basic services and infrastructure. The Congress rejected co-determination, but accepted the need for strategic engagement with capital at all levels and came out with a strong defense of NEDLAC.

The Congress re-endorsed the tripartite alliance; indeed for the first time at a Cosatu Congress the ANC and SACP were accorded speaking rights from the floor. But Congress rejected a proposal from the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) – which paralleled the September report's recommendation – that Cosatu deploy some of its national office bearers (NOBs) to the ANC's National Working Committee and National Executive Committee. NUMSA proposed that they serve as Cosatu representatives accountable to the federation rather than the ANC itself. Delegates were concerned that the NOBs would be overly stretched as a result of these duties, and stopped short of accepting this more ambitious inside approach to contesting the alliance.

### Rejecting GEAR

They accepted the proposal for an alliance summit to develop a clear transformation programme, and rejected the government's neoliberal

Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) macroeconomic framework, but did not demand that the ANC drop the policy. It was argued that the policy was not cast in stone and could be successfully contested in many ways short of a direct confrontation with the ANC. The Congress also adopted the surprising resolution to build the SACP backed up by the commitment of Cosatu resources to help finance the party and to share some educational programmes. This could be read in two – potentially non-contradictory – ways: as bolstering the left in an ANC in which the interests of business and the state bureaucracy are increasingly accommodated, or as developing the kernel of a genuine labour party.

Indeed, severe criticism of the alliance was made in all Congress documents, from the floor, and – in Mandela's presence – by Cosatu President John Gomomo. But, while solving one problem in the alliance – by re-endorsing it – the Congress postponed the key problem of channelling this discontent into a concrete programme of action to secure its policies inside the alliance. For example, while Congress agreed to support the ANC in the 1999 general elections, the precise nature of their support "still has to be

*continued on page 32*



Rodger Bosch – Impact Visuals

# Testament for the First Accused Nelson Mandela for the Twenty-seven Years

by Abena Busia

*Abena Busia, Ghanaian writer and activist currently teaching at Rutgers University in the United States, wrote this poem in 1990 in the immediate wake of Nelson Mandela's release from prison but it has never been published previously. She read it movingly at a public gathering in Johannesburg in July of this year and at that time graciously agreed to SAR's presenting it in our pages.*

I know Patrice Lumumba had been sometime dead,  
and Sylvanus Olympio only just,  
though I'm not sure why,  
As I try to re-connect myself with my child's mind,  
and the memories of events that jumble there—  
A knowledge of our distant world, pieced together,  
through overheard conversations  
and voices on the radio.

In 1962 the world was a very different place:  
I didn't know where Montgomery was,  
but I'd learnt the meaning of boycott.  
Didn't understand Mau Mau,  
except it taught the impact of lies,  
and what all freedoms cost.

I remember your name, and vague talk of a trial,  
and treason being a serious thing;  
Sisulu and Mbeki, Goldberg and Mahlaba,  
Kathrada, Motsoaledi and Mlangeni, at Rivonia.  
These names I have learnt through the years,  
but at the time, what I recall for sure,  
Is Abebe Bikila's second Olympic Gold,  
And Cassius Clay proving he was the greatest,  
By the time you made your statement,  
And disappeared.

We have not seen you since.  
I didn't mark your fiftieth birthday,  
but in Ghana J.B. Danquah was already dead,  
and we had lived through coups  
and countercoups already,  
at the start of a second republic.  
While Baldwin warned of *The Fire Next Time*,  
the White Rhodesians declared UDI,  
and the Zimbabweans braced for war.  
But we were killing our brothers already in Biafra,

while the whole world watched,  
and a young Christopher Okigbo reminded us  
that even the poets were dying.  
And you were still alive,  
And you were still not free.

Though James Brown danced us off the streets,  
And "Soul came to Soul" in Ghana,  
No one remembered Paul Robeson, and  
Mahalia Jackson sung her last.  
Singing "We Shall Overcome",  
Through frustrated Freedom summers we left  
Mississippi, Watts, and Newark burning—  
And Medgar, Malcolm and Martin dead. All dead.  
And you were still alive,  
And you were still not free.

In an angry and lonely world,  
we marked the passage of your tenth year  
reading *Letters to Martha*, and *Soledad Brother*.  
All "Souls were on Ice"  
As Arthur Nortje killed himself in an Oxford room,  
and an exiled Kabaka died.  
We freed Angela Davis, but, on your desolate island,  
You were still alive,  
And you were still not free.

Your sixtieth birthday reminded us  
"This struggle was your life".  
But by then, your life had become our struggle  
as we buried Hector Petersen,  
and a hundred slaughtered children  
on the scorched streets of Soweto.  
With a jailed Thandi Modisi  
We "Cried Freedom" for a murdered Steven Biko,  
People young enough to be your children,  
And children younger than your children, dead,  
So many of them dead.



Yet you at least were still alive,  
 But you were still not free.  
 We shouted Frelimo and another empire fell,  
 Antonio Jacinto "*Survived Tarrafal*",  
 But Augustinho Neto was dead.  
 Eduardo Mondlane had been many years murdered,  
 And we have since mourned the wreckage  
 of Samora Machel  
 On the South African side of Mozambique's mountains,  
 And you were still alive,  
 And you were still not free.  
 By your twentieth year,  
 Anwar Sadat had sued for peace in the Knesset,  
 And had been later killed for his pains.  
 And Haille Sellassie the Lion of Judah, had disappeared  
 Leaving no memorial, except a three thousand year  
 Imperial kingdom, now decades at war.  
 And in Eritrea, Tigre, the Sudan, the Spanish Sahara,  
 The "Harvest of our Dreams" "Reaped a Whirlwind"  
 of nightmares  
 And we searched for Jannani Luwum  
 amongst Kampla's martyred.  
 Marley, who sang for Manley and Mugabe,  
 was so young dead  
 But you were still alive,  
 And you were still not free.  
 The decades bring the deaths of leaders,  
 the power and the myth that was Nkrumah  
 lie broken, like his shattered statue  
 On the Accra streets.  
 And in the same week that Jomo Kenyatta  
 "Faced his sacred Mount Kenya" for the final time,  
 Kofi Busia's "*Challenge to Africa*"  
*in Search of Democracy*  
 Ended. All your peers dead.  
 But you were still alive,  
 And you were still not free.  
 Yet, on a continent being "liberated" "redeemed",  
 "revolutionised",  
 Proclaiming "Uhuru", the people were marching.  
 Twenty-five years after Sharpeville, we march  
 Ten years after Soweto, we march.  
 And when they killed mothers and babies  
 On their march through Mamelodi,  
 Still, with them, we march,  
 For you were still alive,  
 And you were still not free.  
 By the time we reached your seventieth birthday,  
 Another generation of children  
 Had learned to call your name.  
 We carry old images of your face, in our hearts,  
 And on the T-shirts on our backs,  
 As an icon of a new morning.  
 The Tembu warrior prince, the lawyer-activist,  
 The prisoner.  
 Around the world we marched in our millions,  
 Demanding your return into this troubled world,  
 So sadly bereft of heroes,  
 For you were still alive,  
 And you were still not free.  
 You disappeared from our view,  
 in a world which had taken no small step on the moon  
 for man;  
 no Apollos, no Challengers, no Salyuts.  
 No photographs of the furthest planets,  
 no walks in space.  
 The small steps taken on earth for mankind  
 had included  
 No Flower Power Love concerts in Woodstock,  
 No One Love Peace concerts in Kingston, Jamaica  
 No Art Against Apartheid freedom concerts in Sun City,  
 No Bands in Aid proclaiming "We are the World".  
 That world had known no "Cultural Revolution" in China,  
 No drafted U.S. troops in Vietnam,  
 No "Killing Fields" in Cambodia.  
 No vanished *Prisoner Without a Name*  
 in a *Cell Without a Number*, mourned by the  
 Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo- And through this all  
 You were still alive,  
 And you were still not free.  
 And now it is the Lord's Day,  
 the eleventh of February 1990,  
 And it is five a.m. in Los Angeles, California,  
 It is eight a.m. in New York and Kingston Jamaica,  
 It is one p.m. in Stockholm, London, and Accra Ghana,  
 And half the marching world has paused-  
 To keep vigil,  
 For it is three p.m. in Cape Town, South Africa,  
 And we wait to see your face.  
 After twenty-seven years of fighting, marching  
 and singing  
 We keep a ninety-minute watch;  
 To see you take these next few steps  
 On this, your *No Easy Walk*  
 To our uncertain *Freedom*;  
 To witness your release into this changing world,  
 Unceasingly, the same.  
 For you are still alive,  
 But we are still not free.  
 Amandla Mandela,  
 A Luta Continua.



# Striking Back Worker Militancy in Zimbabwe



Richard Saunders

## BY RICHARD SAUNDERS

*Richard Saunders is, as always, on the move. He is currently editor of Southern African Labour Now, the ILO newsletter on labour and employment for southern Africa.*

Shock waves from Zimbabwe's six year-old economic reform programme continue to rumble across the national political and economic landscape. In the past, government proved adept at softening their impact. But recently the after-shocks of reform have picked up momentum, boosted by a rising tide of worker militancy born of deteriorating living standards and disgust with prevailing labour relations practices.

The past year has been a landmark for Zimbabwean labour relations. Since June the country has been rocked by a series of strikes, some of them violent, involving more than 100,000 workers. Sectors hit include finance, clothing and textile, construction and cement, agriculture, hotel, transport, security, telecommunications, services and municipal employees. According to columnists in Zimbabwe's financial weeklies, the labour actions – the first of which coincided with Zimbabwe's annual mid-year season of collective bargaining – were unprecedented in their militancy, number and overall disruptive impact.

Several months on, labour disturbances have continued to roll through workplaces and sectors across the country, fueled by well-publicized victories in the form of concessions from employers on wage and bonus packages. The cheap-labour policy built into ZANU(PF)'s Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) is now showing signs of cracking under pressure from below. But it is not clear what new order might come to replace it. Currently, none of the parties with an interest in labour market stability – government, national workers organizations and employers associations – have the capacity or credibility to establish a new vi-

sion for labour relations, just when it is needed most. So where is the current round of militancy likely to lead?

### **Labour militancy on the rise**

After several years of struggling to find their feet in a liberalized labour market which included new collective bargaining structures that tended to favour management, Zimbabwean workers are growing increasingly impatient, desperate – and militant. Since early 1996, workers in the public and private sectors have increasingly risen to challenge employers, eschewing negotiations with bosses and walking out in support of demands for higher wages and better work conditions. In addition, public sector workers – who until this year have had no legal means of negotiating binding agreements with their government employer, and for whom all strike actions were labelled “illegal” – made the harmonization of public and private sector labour laws a central issue of concern.

In both sectors strikers have posted important and well-publicized victories. These, in turn, have helped fuel spiralling labour militancy.

The current round of labour unrest first gathered momentum in early 1996, following a series of actions by workers in the private sector and public sector parastatals. Concessions won over wage increases in those early conflicts sparked actions by workers in Zimbabwe’s large public service, to whom government had promised substantial increases and post adjustment bonuses following years of relatively uncompetitive pay scales. When the state delayed and then failed to deliver on these increases in mid-1996, public servants took to the streets in an unprecedented work stoppage.

In August and September last year, as many as 160,000 government employees walked out for two weeks and endured threats of summary dismissal and court cases, in

a successful, direct challenge to government intransigence in the workplace. That strike, organized by many of ZANU(PF)’s own increasingly disillusioned constituent members, shook the party profoundly. For the first time, Zimbabweans witnessed senior party and government officials being denounced and harangued in public by thousands of public servants. As tension grew and the threat of the strike spreading emerged, government backed down. Earlier negotiated increases adding up to 30% were awarded to the public servants – though not without further delays.

In addition, public sector strikers won key concessions from government over the restructuring of labour relations for their sector. In effect, they achieved the right to legally-recognized bargaining and grievance structures – a basic workplace right that had been denied Zimbabwe’s public employees since independence. Until this concession, there were no standardized, legally-binding labour relations structures governing collective bargaining and related activities in the country, and public servants’ representative organizations enjoyed only informal and convoluted relations with the state.

But the civil servants strike in August-September did not mark a complete defeat for the state. In the wake of the strike settlement, a more militant and embattled section of the public service including nurses, junior doctors and health technicians – those whose personal health and safety have been seriously jeopardized by ESAP-inspired cuts in state health budgets – persisted with their own walkout up to December. This brought the public health system crashing to a halt, in a brave attempt to extract promises from government around the improvement of health care delivery and conditions of service. Eventually they were beaten back by the state, which recovered from the earlier setback to play an effective divide-and-rule game with different sections of the public service workforce.

In the end, a two-day general strike called in November by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) in support of the health-workers failed miserably, scuttled by poor union organization and the lack of information and consensus among (non)participating labour structures and workers. While the fiasco of the abortive walk-out led to sharp and constructive debate within the ZCTU about how to re-organize the labour centre for more democratic and effective decision-making, it also had the pronounced effect of undermining the ZCTU’s credibility among shopfloor workers and the general public. The failure of the November strike generally removed the ZCTU as a key player in the ongoing private sector labour unrest of 1997, and opened further space for action by lower-level union structures – and shopfloor militancy.

### **Tension and violence with mixed results**

This year’s labour unrest – often openly echoing the demands of public servants in late 1996 – has been characterized by locally-organized actions seeking significant boosts in incomes, and reform of worker-management relations aimed at levelling the existing heavily-lopsided playing field. The scope and extent of labour actions have been impressive, but the results mixed.

In April, one of the country’s largest banks, Standard Chartered Bank, was shut for a week when workers went out in protest over management’s unilateral changes to bonus allocation measures. In the same month, vehicle assembly workers struck over discrepancies and delays in the payment of productivity bonuses. Salary and bonus disputes spread in May and June, as collective bargaining got underway. When negotiations got bogged down, the strike wave erupted in July.

The government responded with a plea for workers to follow the

route of negotiation and industrial conciliation. When this met with derision from strikers – who cited the uneven and unfavourable terrain of labour relations as a factor in their actions – the state resorted to threats, and then baton-and-tear gas charges by riot police.

Some employers were even less understanding. In one incident, eighteen striking security guards were shot and hospitalized by a company official, as they marched unarmed on management offices demanding increases to their monthly wage packet of only CAD\$85.

The cycle of tension and violence moved up some notches as the result of worker frustration. In May, workers at an Harare transport and removals company locked-in management over a salary dispute and allegations of racism in the workplace, and chased away union sector representatives as “sell-outs” looking for weak compromises with management. A week earlier, in a bitter dispute over injury and death benefits, they had dumped in management offices the coffin of a fellow worker killed on the job.

In July, 2000 striking construction workers smashed company vehicles, and looted and vandalized offices, at a brick-making factory on the outskirts of Harare. The following month, strikers at a Lonrho mine in Arcturus set fire to electricity installations in the course of a protest over company changes to housing benefits, which had been unilaterally effected – and then withdrawn – by Lonrho at eight of its mines across the country. More recently, groups among the 40,000 striking commercial farmworkers vented their frustration by damaging and looting property, and physically threatening employers.

### A reflection of hardship

Government appears to have been taken aback by the wide reach and militancy of labour actions this year. Unionists and employers have not.

“The writing has been on the wall for some time that these strikes were coming, but no action was taken,” noted ZCTU Secretary General Morgan Tsvangirai. “What we see as strikes is just a reflection of the hardships people are facing. This is also a result of lack of interest by employers in taking collective bargaining seriously.”

Business leaders now publicly concede Tsvangirai’s points concerning the hidden hand of ESAP and impoverishment in the current strikes. Privately, many also agree with the unions’ view that poor and inflexible company management has been a complicating factor in labour unrest.

Under ESAP workers real incomes have plummeted by 60%. According to the ZCTU most workers’ real wages are now only one-quarter of what they were at independence in 1980. Worse still, formal sector employment has been stagnant since 1990, if not shrinking – the ZCTU estimates as many as 70,000 have been retrenched under ESAP “rationalization,” and many more positions have been “casualized” and otherwise devalued. Meanwhile, each year approximately 300,000 school graduates come onto the national job market. The combined effect of these factors on the national labour market is sharply negative.

Yet at the same time, the cost of living for ordinary Zimbabweans has headed off in the other direction. The Consumer Council of Zimbabwe estimates that the basic minimum income requirement for a family of three is approximately CAD\$155 – an amount considerably above the minimum wage in most sectors. Most semi-skilled workers now earn about \$100 a month. However, many on the lower end of the scale – for example, farmworkers and security guards who struck for better pay in September – earn as little as CAD\$2 a day for full-time, arduous and dangerous work.

Against this backdrop, this year’s demands by strikers for wage increases of between 30% and 50% – and acceptance of rises of 25% to 30% – were not unreasonable. As even the business press has noted, a 51% wage increase for most workers would have only just returned them to the real wage levels enjoyed in 1990. Yet even that now seems unlikely in the near future. For its part, union bodies like the ZCTU called for salary increases of only 25% this year, a figure designed to keep workers’ wages flat on a par with inflation.

Employers, on the other hand, have pleaded poverty in collective bargaining sessions. They argue that ESAP has adversely affected them as well, in the form of declining markets, stiffer competition and skyrocketing costs exacerbated by continued high real interest rates. And it is true that many businesses have been negatively affected by the reform programme they vociferously demanded barely six years ago. Indeed more than 100 medium and large companies (along with 10,000 jobs) have been liquidated since the start of 1996 – with more than forty firms going under in 1997 alone.

But for most companies the main problem has not been higher wage packets – in real terms, average wage bills have generally declined since 1990 – but rather shrinking markets and poor management.

A stark reflection of poor management has been the continuing inattention given to labour relations by most firms. This has been another key factor in the recent rounds of public and private sector strikes, according to those shopfloor workers and union affiliates who have led the actions. Some conservative business pundits have echoed this view, noting that worker-management relations have steadily deteriorated under liberalized labour market regulations, with management in particular to blame for preferring to react to labour crises – rather than to anticipate and prevent them.





Bruce Paton - Impact Visuals

“Ungrateful bosses,” the ZCTU added, have “refused to address the plight of the almost destitute majority workers” and “kept the colonial mentality of cheap labour.”

### An uncertain future

An important lesson learned by Zimbabwean workers in the past year is that labour militancy frequently pays off, whereas lopsided bargaining with management does not. In the recent past, weaknesses in the collective bargaining process – as well as within national trade union structures – have pushed thousands of workers to look for alternative forms of expressing their demands and grievances. With hard-nosed labour action in the public sector in 1996 having been seen to produce immediate and positive results, labour militancy has become increasingly common in a wide range of other sectors as a means of obtaining goals previously pursued through collective bargaining. In the short term at least, this process has

led to some much needed relief for workers in terms of significant increases in nominal – if not real – incomes.

But where the continuing bouts of worker activism are likely to lead the Zimbabwean labour movement in the future, is another matter.

The current “concessions” by employers around wage packets and bonuses – which nonetheless remain sub-economic for thousands of households – are fragile ones, particularly in the context of Zimbabwe’s continuing high rates of inflation and rising consumer price indices. While wage increases of 25-30% have been achieved, settlements to labour actions this year have not included, for the most part, provisions for indexing, pension and other benefits or job security. Nor have they established stronger structures for workplace democracy, or more transparent and even-handed bargaining procedures in most cases.

In this sense the important gains marked by public sector workers

since last year – for example, the entrenchment of new collective bargaining rights, structures and procedures – were absent from most of the strike actions this year. This is largely due to the wildcat and spontaneous nature of many of these stoppages and strikes, and the absence of union involvement and leadership in these actions. Indeed this absence was so pronounced, as to prompt the director of the Employers Confederation of Zimbabwe, Peter Kunjeko, to claim that union leaders had “lost control of their workers.”

This may have been true. But what Kunjeko did not realize was that the loss of control over the strikers occurred long before the strikes began. And for shopfloor workers, the national labour movement, employers and government alike, this reality will perhaps be more destabilizing for labour relations in the long term, than the current wave of strikes has been in the short.

# Struggle Against Silence Reclaiming History in Namibia

BY LAUREN DOBELL

*Lauren Dobell is a doctoral candidate at Oxford University and a student of Namibian politics.*

The late Moses Garoeb, Swapo's administrative secretary in exile from 1971-89 and the party's first secretary-general following independence, was, for many, the public face of Swapo's "hardline." More at home with confrontational than conciliatory politics, intolerant of dissent, and uncomfortable with democratic freedoms, especially as

exercised by Swapo's opponents, Garoeb personified the autocratic style which many of its critics believe remains the true bent of Namibia's governing party. The unenthusiastic response of the Namibian people to the lavish state funeral held following his death in October must be read in part as a message to the party to which he dedicated his life.

### Party tricks

Although perhaps a natural fit, Garoeb's post-independence role was prescribed by necessity. While

the government got down to business, forging alliances with local entrepreneurs, enticing foreign investors, and wooing the donor community, the party's function was to reassure Swapo supporters that they had not been forgotten. As dissatisfaction at the slow pace of economic reform grew among Namibian youth, labour unions, ex-PLAN fighters and the rural majority from which Swapo draws the bulk of its support, it was Garoeb who identified – and pilloried – scapegoats for their grievances.



Lauren Dobell

Moses Garoeb with cabinet colleague Dr. Libertine Amathila

Constitutional concessions to minority rights and the protection of private property, press freedoms, the composition of the judiciary, protections for civil servants left over from the previous regime – all, since independence, have felt the sting of Garoeb's scathing tongue. While his colleagues consolidated their hold on power, Garoeb ostensibly spoke for the people. The populist role was a balancing act, particularly as he also held a Cabinet position and enjoyed the generous perks of office, including a government-issued Mercedes-Benz, but Garoeb played it with apparent conviction and vast reserves of apoplectic rhetoric. He also played it with some success, at least in the eyes of party loyalists, among whom he was known as "The Chief."

#### A chapter closing

Garoeb's death in October of this year, at the age of 55, marks the beginning of the end of an era in Namibia. Swapo's top leadership has changed little in thirty years (half of the current Cabinet have held executive positions in the party since its Tanga Conference of 1969), and some are now in poor health. Other well-known Swapo figures – John ya Otto, Axel Johannes and Danny Tjongarero among them – have passed away since independence, but none were so integral to the movement's internal workings, nor privy to as many of its secrets as Garoeb.

Based mainly in Angola during the 1980s, Garoeb is known to have been involved in Swapo's darkest moments in exile, and, according to former Swapo detainees, was one of the few Swapo leaders to have personally visited the "dungeons" of Lubango where alleged spies were imprisoned. Former captives, however, generally accuse him only of carrying out orders, shielding the identities of those responsible for launching the spy-hunt. His cousin and political foe, United Democratic Front leader Justus Garoeb, would allude to this at his funeral, saying that those looking for

Swapo's "Gestapo" chief should look elsewhere.

After independence and Swapo's smooth segue into political power, Garoeb continued to serve as a buffer between the Swapo government and the people who put them in power. As Chief Coordinator and subsequently Secretary-General of the party, he harnessed the popular discontent with chronic high unemployment, continuing widespread poverty and rising crime rates, and deflected it from the Swapo leadership towards other targets. At the same time, he was free to articulate Swapo's worst instincts, lashing out at perceived foes on the government's behalf, while his parliamentary colleagues put as much distance between themselves and his bellicose rhetoric as they deemed politic.

#### Historical silences

Rumours fly fast and furiously in Namibia's capital city, and already there are murmurings in Windhoek that Garoeb confessed on his deathbed to none other than Reverend Nakamhela. The Secretary-General of the Council of Churches of Namibia (CCN), Nakamhela was object of some of Garoeb's most virulent attacks over the past 18 months, as he tried to steer a fractious CCN executive towards a controversial conference on national reconciliation. Despite the CCN's demurrals, the conference was seen by some as a first step towards a truth commission for Namibia, a process Garoeb, and those he sheltered, were anxious to avoid.

The reinvigorated detainee issue, to which such a conference would have lent momentum, not only delves into an aspect of Swapo's past Garoeb strove hard to conceal. It represents, in the present, a challenge to Swapo's post-independence definition and practice of national reconciliation – in essence a policy of letting bygones be bygones. Since the English-language release of Siegfried Groth's *Namibia: The*

*Wall of Silence* (reviewed in Vol. 11 No. 4 SAR) in early 1996, and the resultant formation of a "Breaking the Wall of Silence" (BWS) movement comprising mainly former Swapo detainees, the detainee issue has kindled unprecedented debate within Namibia. In the process it has both expanded the parameters of democratic dissent, and thrown the limits to the government's tolerance of expressions of dissent into sharp relief. The BWS' efforts exposed not only the extent of historical silences, but the contemporary boundaries of political space. These ambitions were retroactively made explicit in the group's first annual report, released in April 1997:

- To find a lasting solution to the unresolved problem of the Swapo ex-detainees, the missing people and their families and relatives, including those who died under South African rule,
- To work with other groups and individuals in civil society to help create a culture of democracy, tolerance, openness, truthfulness, and human dignity in Namibia.

#### Sound and fury

Initially, however, the group's efforts were more narrowly focused on creating as wide as possible an audience for Pastor Groth's book through an official launch and homemade translations into the more widely-spoken Afrikaans and Oshivambo – the latter directed at the heartland of Swapo's support.

It was a measure of how close to home the charges struck that it was President Sam Nujoma who spearheaded the attack on Groth's book. It was Garoeb, however, who sustained the assault with a vigour that to many eyes seemed disproportionate to the threat. Subsequent events seem to have borne out his fears however, although the ranting may have been a tactical mistake, drawing the attention of Swapo's supporters and detractors alike to the movement's deepest insecurities and its proclivity for authoritar-



ian measures when cornered. Despite Garoeb's warning that bloodshed could result from attempts to reopen old wounds, several new voices took up the call for Swapo to "come clean." To predictable exhortations from the Legal Assistance Centre, the National Society for Human Rights and the independent press, were added urgings from historical allies such as the branch of the national student organisation (NANSO) officially affiliated to Swapo, and NANGOF, an umbrella body of non-government organisations. Radio phone-in shows and the letters section of newspapers testified to a growing interest in the topic, as well as a general unease, even among sympathetic contributors, with the histrionics of some high-profile Swapo leaders. While these remained defiant, however, there were signs of strain within the broader leadership of the party, whose unified front appeared to be faltering under the weight of a guilt that many are weary of shouldering for the past actions of a few.

### Catching up to the critics

Neither the proportion of the population actively involved in the debate, nor the position the detainee issue occupied in the hierarchy of quotidian concerns of most Namibians should be exaggerated, but Swapo leaders' appalled reaction to the phenomenon of sustained open criticism was a reflection of its novelty. Whether owing primarily to these domestic pressures or evidence of heightened external interest (Nujoma was repeatedly questioned about the detainee issue by reporters during a state visit to Germany in June), Swapo finally took its first constructive step in August 1996. On the national Heroes Day holiday it released a long-promised, though hastily compiled, list of Namibians who "sacrificed" during the struggle against South Africa or died of natural causes in exile while under Swapo's care. Though welcomed as a positive contribution, *Their Blood Waters Our Freedom* (as the bound

volume was called) failed to satisfy former detainees and human rights activists, who pointed to numerous errors of omission and commission, while former detainees demanded that their fellow captives not be included in a list of Namibian patriots without formal exoneration from the accusations of treason which had caused their families so much suffering.

The CCN too has found itself both trailing public opinion and facing fissures, along ethnic and religious lines, within its own organisation. Having declared 1997 The Year of God's Grace, it has repeatedly postponed the series of conferences on reconciliation (the first of which was originally promised in early 1996) that were to have been its centrepiece. The bishops of the major northern churches appear to be under considerable pressure from the President, apart from any discomfort they themselves – and their congregations – feel about appearing to jeopardize a longstanding secular alliance with Swapo.

### Fraying alliances

Though not the sole factor, the detainees issue has also contributed to the fraying of ties between Swapo and other historical allies. The wing of the national student organisation, NANSO, which remained affiliated to Swapo following a split in the organization in 1991, voted to

break from the ruling party at its Congress in August. Its president, Abraham Ndumbu, had earlier been expelled from the party "for not acting according to Party values and norms" following his public call for Swapo to come clean on the detainees issue, accompanied by demands for a tougher approach to government corruption.

Although not without consequences, as the newly-renamed "Mighty NANSO" quickly discovered, such outspokenness set an important precedent, widening the window for more open criticism of the ruling party from within its ranks, as well as from without. It seems to be spreading to other hitherto more pliant structures. In recent months the Swapo government has come under unprecedented fire from its union affiliates, among others, for what is, admittedly, some of its most outrageous behaviour to date. A Cabinet decision to award lavish retirement benefits to senior political and military officials created such a public furore that the government was forced to back down while the President dissociated himself from the decision – implicitly undermining the authority of the Prime Minister and the notion of collective responsibility for government policy in the process.

### Political space

An indignant media kept the pressure on, and eventually forced the additional retraction of a new "domestic workers allowance" for Cabinet members, which had initially bypassed notice, and a retreat from the planned purchase of another new jet for the President. The independent press, led by *The Namibian*, which earned its stripes monitoring abuses of power by the erstwhile South African administration, is running ever more strongly-worded editorials and publishing stories more censorious than it would have contemplated even a year ago. A similar candour has infused the national airwaves. On a recent episode of the popular televised public affairs pro-



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gram, "Talk of the Nation," government spokespersons attempted to justify lucrative allowances for political leaders on the grounds that such measures were needed to counter corruption. In sharp contrast to the usually deferential routine, however – and to the evident surprise and discomfiture of the government representatives – they were raked over the coals by a panel comprising opposition politicians, journalists and trade union representatives.

A measure of the extent to which the government has lost touch with the people may be inferred from the response to the arrangements for Moses Garoeb's state funeral. The government's declaration of a public holiday was sharply criticised by businesses, banks and the media, while annoyance over the cancellation of sporting events and the replacement of the regular NBC schedule with four days of mournful music was more in evidence than sorrow among the general populace. Attendance at the funeral itself – which was modelled in many respects after Princess Diana's – was surprisingly small, in light of the national public holiday and the central venue of the Parliament gardens. This apathetic observance of the passing of the most senior Swapo leader to die since independence may be the most flagrant sign to date that the party's liberation movement glamour has faded. It can no longer simply equate support for Swapo's leadership to patriotism, nor prescribe and choreograph expressions of patriotic sentiment.

Against the evidence that Namibian civil society is at last finding a voice, and carving out an enlarged space for acceptable political discourse, must be weighed continuing efforts by the ruling party to limit that space. In a disturbing reminder of Administrator-General proclamations of the past, the President recently declared that demonstrations and public meetings would require official permission to proceed, in absolute contravention of

constitutional guarantees of freedom of association. A new National Intelligence Service Bill hurried through Parliament in August attaches wide powers to such a body in putative defence of state security. Another motion now before Parliament which appears to give Parliamentary committees the power to subpoena journalists and compel them to reveal their sources, is also a source of concern. Finally, in the wake of the Swapo Congress, it now seems certain that the President will run for a third term in office, a move requiring the ruling party to avail itself of its two-thirds majority in Parliament in order to unilaterally amend its model constitution, and thereby setting another dangerous precedent.

**Conclusion**

For Swapo's leadership, its rapid consolidation of political power since independence has entailed persuading the majority of its

followers that it represents their interests despite growing evidence to the contrary, and effectively marginalizing its critics, including those who seek to recover and expose the truth about the dark side of its history. As government colleagues distanced themselves from both tasks, Moses Garoeb was on the frontline. In the end, however, Garoeb was unable to bury Swapo's past and may even, if the rumours are true, have helped in the end to uncover it. And recent events suggest that it will be more difficult in the future for his successor to protect the government from the consequences of public discontent. Seven years after independence, as it becomes harder to persuade the people that it is in touch with their real concerns, the government's options are to resort to more draconian measures to muffle the criticism, or to pull up its socks and live up to its promises.

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# Success Story?

## Bretton Woods Backlash in Mozambique

BY JOSEPH HANLON

*Joseph Hanlon is a writer on southern Africa and the author of "Peace Without Profit: How the IMF Blocks Rebuilding in Mozambique." (Heinemann, 1996)*

"Existing social inequalities and regional asymmetry could endanger the climate of peace, calm and social harmony that is the basic prerequisite for balanced and self-sustaining socio-economic development," Prime Minister Pascoal Mocumbi warned donors on 17 May 1997 at the Paris Consultative Group meeting.

In an otherwise upbeat and self-congratulatory speech, it was a harsh and undiplomatic warning that all is not well, and was as close as Dr Mocumbi could safely go toward criticizing the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) continued neo-liberal policies in Mozambique.

The meeting showed growing awareness that Mozambique may not be the Bretton Woods success story that is so widely touted. Three interconnected issues were on the table, explicitly or implicitly:

1. IMF stabilization has been squeezing Mozambique too hard, preventing essential reconstruction and encouraging inefficiency and corruption.
2. Adjustment has benefited only the better off in Maputo; the poor and those outside the capital have lost out, as income gaps widen. Thus the threats to peace cited by Mocumbi.
3. The Bretton Woods institutions work in the interests of transnational capital and against domestic capital.

### Loosening the stranglehold

No public statements have been

made, but published and internal documents show that the IMF has responded to donor and World Bank pressure and slightly loosened its grip on Mozambique. The IMF had prohibited Mozambique from spending aid which was actually on offer to rebuild schools, roads and health posts and to restart the economy; publicly the IMF denied this, but donors became increasingly outspoken and even issued a public statement in 1995.

Aid spending is limited in two ways. One target Mozambique agreed to with the IMF is "deficit before grants." In other words, deficit targets must be met before grants can be made available. Since the government cannot run an overall deficit, "deficit before grants" must be less than total grants, and thus is effectively the amount of aid that the government can spend. London-based experts on the IMF in Africa say that the Fund is being much harder on Mozambique than on many other African countries, such as Uganda, where the IMF does not use deficit before grant as a cap on aid.

The second key is the requirement for an increase in "international reserves" - in effect, dollars in the bank. These two are linked, because donors have in recent years offered Mozambique more aid than the IMF would allow it to spend, and the IMF has insisted that this extra aid simply be kept in the bank as extra reserves. The increase in foreign reserves is accounted for by cuts in spending on war repairs. Even Jeffrey Sachs, the very conservative director of the Harvard Institute for International Development, wrote that "there is no clear need for a rapid and substantial build-

up of foreign exchange reserves" in Mozambique.

For more than two years, the donor community has been pushing for a more expansionary policy, which would allow more money for investment and concentrate less on simply curbing spending. The first public step was the October 1995 statement by donors criticizing the IMF. In October 1996 the World Bank's vice-president for Africa, Callisto Madavo, told a Maputo press conference that the Bank would press this in negotiating the annual joint IMF-World Bank "Mozambique Policy Framework Paper" (PFP).

The Bank stuck to its word, and when the PFP was issued on 8 May 1997, it really did allow a substantial increase in spending. Deficit before grant rises more than \$90 million this year, with an increase of more than \$50 million in capital expenditure.

But, in effect, donors who claimed they wanted to give more to Mozambique have been told to "put up or shut up," because foreign reserves will still have to increase by more than \$90 million - less than last year, but still substantial - and this must be funded by donors.

The table at the right shows what has happened over the past three years, and what the IMF demands are for the next two. What the table shows is that the amount of aid the government could use fell sharply between 1994 and 1996 - by \$166 million per year in just two years. This caused a fall in capital expenditure of \$60 million per year - which meant war damaged roads, schools and health posts in rural areas were not repaired. The donors



## mozambique

were still willing to give money, so the IMF insisted it be put in the bank.

The permitted increase in capital expenditure was matched by an unexpected increase in current spending which will be used to increase civil service salaries. IMF spending curbs had forced the salaries of more than half of all civil servants to be below the poverty line, and this was widely seen as a motor behind corruption. Low paid staff took bribes and stole time and equipment in order to feed their families – corruption through need – but then they could not denounce their superiors who were corrupt through greed. This was recognized by Planning and Finance Minister Tomaz Salomão when he warned donors in Paris that the elimination of corruption is dependent on “an increase in salaries to levels which give dignity to the civil servant and meet their cost of living.” Now this will be permitted.

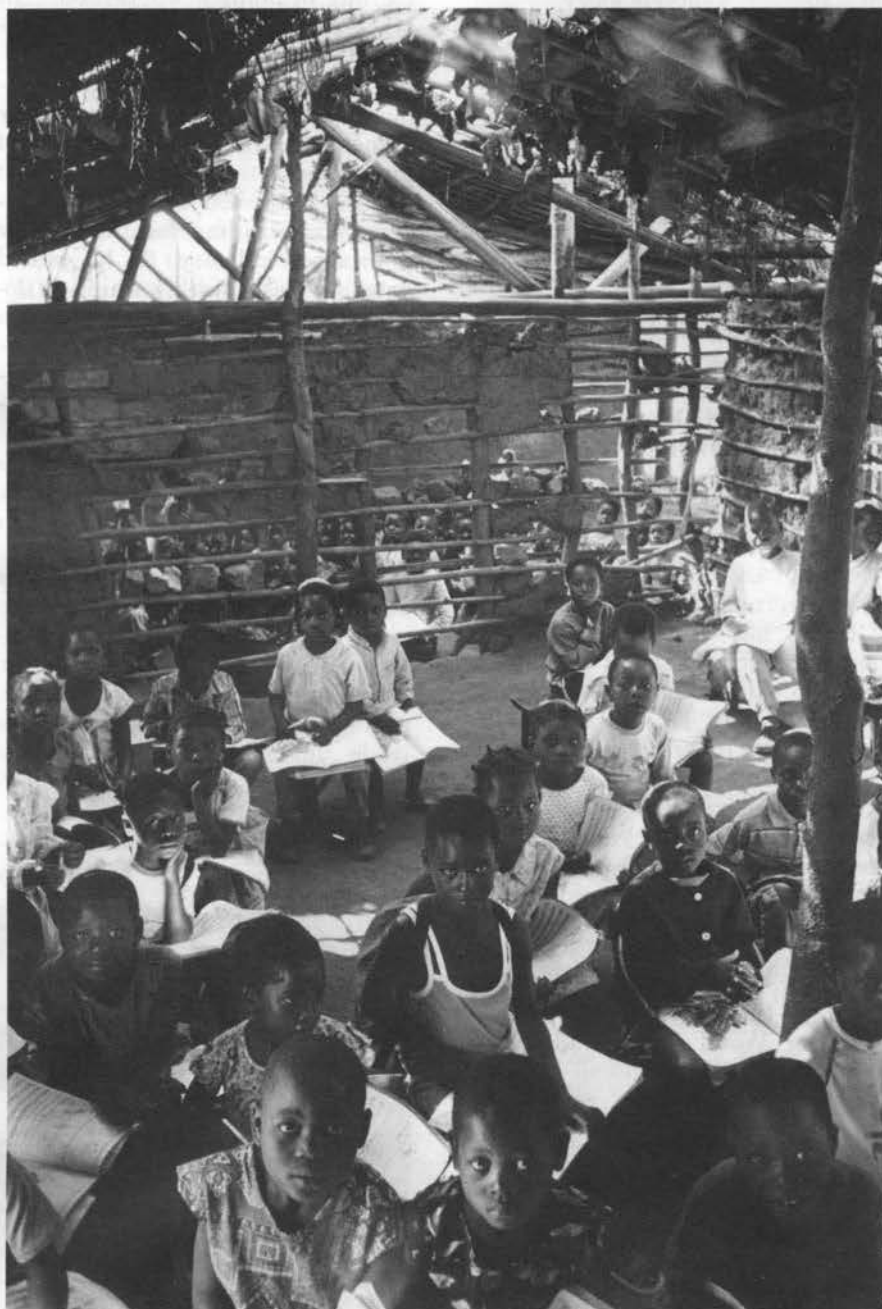
### Only in Maputo

Easing the IMF stranglehold which threatened to suffocate Mozambique only tackles part of the problem. Mocumbi pointed to the danger of class and regional differences, both of which are widening. In an unrestricted free market, resources normally flow to the richest people and the most developed areas. The overwhelming emphasis on the mar-

ket has concentrated development in Maputo, at the expense of the north and rural areas in general. All of the biggest proposed or agreed projects – including an iron and steel plant, a huge aluminium smelter, Mozambique’s largest tourist development, an export processing zone, and a new toll road – are concentrated in the tiny World Bank-promoted “Ma-

puto corridor” which links Maputo to South Africa.

Expensive restaurants continue to open in Maputo and survive on Maputo’s new rich rather than tourists, although there is also a boom in tourist facilities with several new hotels under construction or just open.



Education cuts leave schools in a poor state

Ernst Schade - Impact Visuals

### IMF controlled amounts

(\$ million)

	Deficit before grant	Capital expenditure	Total foreign reserves
<i>Actual:</i>			
1994	434	358	127
1995	310	319	160
1996	268	298	290
<i>Programme:</i>			
1997	360	353	371
1998	390	379	462

Visiting IMF and World Bank staff who only frequent Maputo's cement city do, indeed, see a vision of growth, expansion and prosperity. In parallel there is a growth of informal markets and street trading, as Maputo's poor struggle to eke out a living, and a growth of violent crime – but this is seen only through the car window by those who talk of Mozambique's success story.

## Keeping domestic capital down

The concentration of investment in Maputo is not accidental. The iron, steel and aluminium plants would more sensibly be sited in Beira. Putting them in Maputo means that foreign managers can drive (using the new toll road) or fly in from South Africa for the day – or stay for the weekend in the new beachfront resorts. It seems that foreign investors are prepared to spend substantial amounts of extra money, for example for an extra 1000 km of power line for the aluminium plant, in order to make it easy to pop back to Jo'burg.

And all of the emphasis of the Bretton Woods institutions (BWIs) has been to ensure the entry of foreign capital and the development of Johannesburg as a sub-metropole. World Bank bidding procedures make it very difficult for Mozambican firms to bid – they cannot get credit (due to IMF credit ceilings), they cannot hire requisite skilled staff (because the international agencies pay more), and the BWIs prevent Mozambique from giving any support to domestic industry. So it is foreign contractors who win the tenders for the toll road and for World Bank funded road rehabilitation. An Indian company won the contract for school text books, when local firms could have done a better job.

Privatization has also been rushed through at record speed to ensure that the biggest state companies go to trans-national corporations: cement to the Portuguese, beer to South Africa, etc.

The IMF recognizes the growing backlash against privatization, with its loss of jobs and reduction of local control. In its 9 June 1997 report on Mozambique's request for an Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (i.e. an IMF loan), the Fund sets as one of its "structural performance criteria" that "the momentum of privatization is not lost in the face of political opposition." In other words, democracy cannot extend to privatization.

When the cashew processing industry was unexpectedly bought by domestic trading capital instead of foreign firms, the World Bank within months published a previously secret report calling for the cashew processing industry to be closed down. It was a stark warning to domestic business not to get above its station. Since then, all major privatizations have involved Mozambicans only as junior partners of foreign firms.

Naturally, the Maputo corridor is dominated by South African firms, acting on their own or as agents for TNCs.

The domestic business sector hardly has clean hands; it has been involved in drug and currency dealing and profiteering. Nevertheless, it has won growing national support, particularly from the press and from trade unions which would rather deal with domestic business interests.

One factor which has put domestic business, and particularly

small business, at a disadvantage is the lack of capital. The IMF imposed particularly harsh credit limits, which meant banks could give so few loans that they simply gave the easiest ones – to Maputo traders. There were no loans for rural trade, and few loans for the productive sector (which needed longer term loans and not just 90-day trade credit). This led to a major marketing crisis last year, when peasants produced a bumper crop and no one bought it.

An allied problem was that many small Mozambican business people had their factories, shops, farms and lorries destroyed in the war. In some cases they still owed loans on that equipment. No money was available to get started after the war. In a few areas, particularly tourism, tiny South African business people were able to move in because they could get loans in South Africa. Again, Bretton Woods policy put Mozambican capital at a disadvantage.

Small business in rural areas face two other problems. One is that five years after the end of the war, many destroyed rural roads and bridges have not been repaired. This is due to World Bank policy on road repair which puts the stress on main roads used by foreign businesses which are being upgraded and rebuilt to high standards by foreign contractors; this is linked to the IMF cap on spending, which means that if main roads are rebuilt, minor rural roads cannot be.



*Small business training course in Maputo*

Santos Finiosse – AIM



Santos Finiose - AIM

*Home-brew on the way to  
an informal market*

The final problem is the Bretton Woods obsessive opposition to agricultural marketing boards, introduced throughout the region in the colonial era and abolished now. They were wholesale (and sometimes retail) buyers of food crops such as maize, and also maintained large stockpiles; now, it is the peasants and traders who are expected to maintain any supplies, but with the shortage of credit, traders will not buy maize if they cannot sell it. In many areas there was no commerce at all last season, because traders could not work profitably with no credit and no marketing board.

It is also important to remark that with an El Niño triggered drought forecast for 1997/98, there are no food reserves in Mozambique because the Bretton Woods institutions consider it poor practice to keep reserves, as was common in the past. Instead, they argue it makes more economic sense to buy on the world market in poor years. This is a bias toward the big international grain traders and against local business. But with IMF spending caps, it also means that Mozambique will again have to take money away from schools and health posts to import maize.

### Slight easing for rural business

Prime Minister Mocumbi summarized all of these problems in his May Paris speech when he noted that "the national private business class, which is still nascent and lacking in financial resources, has to an extent been penalized by the restrictive policies that help to slow down inflation, particularly in the decapitalized rural areas."

Under heavy donor pressure, the IMF has backed off on its most dogmatic free market policies. Previously it had argued that the market was the only "efficient" way to allocate credit. This year the IMF allowed Mozambique to set up three special funds which will direct money to disadvantaged parts of the domestic private sector.

- One special fund will allow the government to use receipts from privatization (which the IMF had previously said had to remain in the bank and could not be used) combined with donor and NGO funds to create an Economic Rehabilitation Fund (FARE) to provide credit for small rural enterprises.
- The second fund will be used to pay off debts incurred by private firms for assets destroyed during the war. These debts make it impossible for many small traders to take new loans.
- The third fund will assist the rural commercial network.

### "Grievances about the economy"

Although Mozambique is touted by the Bretton Woods institutions as one of its few African "success" stories, the easing off - limited though it may be - by the IMF, reflects pressure from donors and those more perceptive of the international agencies who realize that success cannot be measured by sitting beside the pool at the Hotel Polana in Maputo.

A larger question remains, however. Are such minor changes of direction really likely to be enough to blunt the relevance of the kind of stark warnings about current policies that are rife in Mozambique? Consider one of the most recent of such warnings, from the Refugee Studies Programme in Oxford: that body's careful and insightful study of "The Reintegration of Ex-combatants in Mozambique" - written by Chris Dolan and Jessica Schafer and issued in June of this year - points to "a lack of visible reconstruction efforts in many areas." It also warns that "rural areas are thus trapped in a vicious circle: lack of roads leads to lack of market opportunities which leads to lack of cash and in turn inability to buy consumer goods, resulting in reluctance on the part of the rural population to produce agricultural surplus and thus economic stagnation."

"'Democracy' did bring elections but it brought no great change in the standard of living of the majority. Disappointment on this account is now strongly expressed in all quarters," conclude Dolan and Schafer. This means, among other things, that demobilized soldiers who have returned to the countryside, often with their guns, are increasingly dissatisfied. "It is not encouraging to hear the high level of frustration and latent violence just below the surface... [T]he widespread persistence of grievances about the economy does not bode well for the future."



# Crossed Purposes

## Migrant Attitudes in Southern Africa

BY DAVID McDONALD

*David McDonald teaches at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, and is the Project Manager of the Southern African Migration Project.*

Most South Africans are proud of the transition that has taken place in their country over the past five years – and rightly so. South Africa in many ways has been an exemplary model of peaceful and democratic change with lessons for other African nations and beyond.

Pride also has its prejudice, however, and most South Africans believe that they live in the best country on the continent. Popular opinion in the country has it that South Africa is the land of “milk and honey” and that every other African in the region is desperate to come and share the wealth and happiness that “Egoli” has to offer. Newspaper headlines in South Africa prominently bemoan what is termed the “flood of aliens” into the country and the crime, disease and chaos that these masses are assumed to bring with them from Africa (as if the rest of Africa were somehow distinct from the southern tip of the continent).

The extent and scale of xenophobia in the country is difficult to determine and there appear to be significant differences across race, class and gender lines on this issue. But it is also clear that there is a strong and widespread concern that South Africa is going to be overrun with illegal migrants from neighbouring countries and that something needs to be done to stem this tide and shore up what are perceived to be extremely porous international borders.

The policy implications of these negative public perceptions are far-reaching. With the South African government currently in the process of revamping its apartheid-era immigration legislation (currently known under the rather ominous title of The Aliens Control Act), anti-immigrant sentiment has the potential to disrupt a rational and more progressive policy-making process.

Part of the problem is the enormous gap in understanding of cross-border migration in the region. A better understanding could support the development of an immigration policy that is more consistent with South Africa's broader commitment to human rights and its prominent role in the Southern African Development Community (see Jonathan Crush's article in *SAR* Volume 12, Number 1 for an overview of the need for a new immigration policy platform for the region).

It is with these concerns in mind that the Southern African Migration Project (SAMP) has launched a series of national public opinion polls in the region on people's attitudes towards migration and migrants and their opinions on possible immigration policies for the future.

One set of these surveys were recently completed with 2,300 people in Lesotho, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, the three largest source countries of migration to South Africa. The surveys were done over an eight-month period starting in October of 1996, and represent the most comprehensive surveys on cross-border migration yet conducted in the region.

### Key highlights

It's evident from the survey that not everyone from Lesotho, Mozambique and Zimbabwe wants to get into South Africa. Despite the popular notion in South Africa that Africans from other parts of the region would do anything to get into the country, an overwhelming number of the people interviewed identified their home country as a better place to raise a family than South Africa. Better access to basic resources like land, water and housing were the most important reasons, but safety and crime levels were also seen to be much more favourable at home. Even South Africa's much vaunted democratic reforms don't seem to have made much of an impression. Over two-thirds of the respondents said they find “peace,” “freedom” and “democracy” to be as good, or better, in their home country as in South Africa.

Not surprisingly, job opportunities were deemed far better in South Africa than at home, as were opportunities for buying and selling goods. But this perception of better job opportunities does not necessarily translate into a flood of migration. Only 13% of those interviewed said it was “very likely” they would go to South Africa for a short period of time (up to two years) and only six per cent said that it was “very likely” that they would move to South Africa permanently. Taking into account that an even smaller percentage of these respondents would actually make the move to uproot themselves in order to live in South Africa, the actual number of people wanting to leave their home country is much smaller than one would be led to believe in the press.

Survey results indicate people in the region respect international borders. Contrary to popular opinion in South Africa, people from Lesotho, Mozambique and Zimbabwe do not simply expect the South African government to throw open the doors to whomever wants to enter the country. With the notable exception of Lesotho (where 41% of those interviewed think the two countries should simply "join under one government"), over three-quarters of the respondents felt the South African government should restrict the number of people allowed into the country and should be able to deport those who commit crimes and/or are in the country without proper documentation. Most of these people would like to see policies in place that make it easier for people to move from one country to another, and many question the legitimacy of borders that were created during the colonial and apartheid era, but they do not advocate a radical dismantling of current border systems.

It would also appear from the surveys that movement across the South African border is not nearly as corrupt or chaotic as one might expect from press coverage in South Africa. Of the 40% of respondents who said that they had been to South Africa, 49% crossed the border by car or combi, 22% by bus, 14% by train and 4% by plane or other formal mode of transportation. Of the remaining 8% that said they crossed the border on foot, most of them took a bus or combi to the border, walked through customs, and then took another bus or combi to their destination in South Africa. In other words, there are relatively few people sneaking into the country under fences or swimming across rivers.

Moreover, 89% of these respondents had official passports from their home country before entering South Africa and 72% had the appropriate South African visa. Although these figures show that a sig-

nificant number of people are still crossing the border without proper documentation, the figures are not nearly as high as one would suspect from anecdotal reports in the press. (The fact that the majority of respondents without proper visas were from Zimbabwe is partly a product of the fact that it is so difficult and time consuming to get a visa for South Africa in that country).

Based on these findings, the movement of people across the South African border from Lesotho, Mozambique and Zimbabwe would appear to be a much more formal, moderate and regularized activity than previously thought and the potential to manage cross-border migration in the future may not be as difficult as anticipated. The crude policy dichotomy of "open borders" versus "fortress South Africa" need not be the only options in South Africa, particularly if there is a strong foundation of regularized movement already in place from which to build a more humane and regionally integrated "border management" approach to the issue.

### Questions of gender

There are some important differences between men and women in terms of their personal experiences with cross-border migration which can be highlighted briefly (women made up 44% of the sample size for a total of 1,012 interviews).

As would be expected, more men have been to South Africa than women, they tend to stay for longer periods of time and they tend to work in more formal, pre-arranged occupations, such as mining and manufacturing. More men claimed to be the head of the household than did women (57% versus 18% respectively), more men claimed to be the person who "makes the final decision as to whether to go to South Africa or not" (57% versus 29% respectively) and more men claimed that they "would be able to go to South Africa if [they] wanted to" (76% versus 61%

respectively). The questionnaire did not, unfortunately, capture the dynamics of joint decision making between men and women - often an important part of the decision-making process in African households - but the statistics clearly imply that men are more in control of decision making about cross-border migration than women.

But it is the similarities in men's and women's responses that proved to be the most interesting. Despite the very different concrete experiences that men and women have with respect to cross-border migration and the different decision-making process they go through, their attitudes to migration and their perspectives on life in South Africa and at home are remarkably similar.

Almost to a percentage point, women gave the same responses as men on virtually every opinion-based question in the survey. Their perceptions of South Africa, their reasons for going to South Africa (or for not going), their expected treatment by South African authorities and citizens, and their comparisons of South Africa with their home country were almost identical to that of the men interviewed. And although women were slightly less knowledgeable and slightly less sure of themselves in terms of their ability to get into South Africa and to find accommodation and work there, the differences were not that great. Women outlined a similar pattern of family and friends networking in South Africa as did the men, and they expressed a similar understanding of how one lives as a foreigner in South Africa. In other words, women have the same general perceptions of South Africa *vis-à-vis* their own countries, and they have a very similar sense of what it takes to be a migrant in the Southern African context.

Most surprising, perhaps, is the fact that both men and women were positive about the impacts of

cross-border migration, despite their generally negative images of South Africa and despite the largely negative interpretations of the migrant labour system in popular and academic writings. In total, over two-thirds of men and women equally said that migration had a positive or neutral impact on their family, their community and their nation.

Even when asked how migration impacts on "you personally" – a question that might elicit a fairly negative response from women given the impact that the migrant labour system has had on family life in the past – both men and women gave a largely positive response (14% of women said "very positive," 39% said "positive," and 27% said "no impact"). Mind you, 26% of women and 23% of men identified "having an affair" or "having a second family" in South Africa as one of their three main concerns about a family member leaving to work or stay in South Africa.

And finally, the men and women interviewed for these surveys have

very similar opinions on what should be done about immigration policy in the region in the future. There's a strong desire to see a relaxation of strict cross-border movement controls, but not necessarily a complete dismantling of the notion of national sovereignty.

Whether these differences and similarities between men and women have any direct policy implications is unclear at this point. Besides a need to give these survey results closer scrutiny and analysis, there is the possibility that women's opinions on cross-border migration are largely shaped by the men in their households. Nevertheless, the data do raise some counter-intuitive questions about women's attitudes to cross-border migration and would appear to challenge the notion that women see migration in a different light than men.

### Conclusion

All of this is not to suggest that there are no problems on the South African border or that effective man-

agement of cross-border migration is going to be a simple task. Anything but. There is still much to be learned about the causes, consequences and dimensions of cross-border migration in Southern Africa and a lot of restructuring to be done within the current immigration system. It is essential, therefore, that South African policy makers and the South African public at large be exposed to a more balanced and more informed debate on this extremely important policy topic. Public opinion surveys do not, in and of themselves, provide a full picture of a very complex phenomenon but they do help academics and policy makers to get a better understanding of what is driving (or not driving) the migration process and what kinds of policy initiatives may be more appropriate and acceptable than others.

*A 40-50 page analysis of these surveys will be released later this year as part of the SAMP Migration Policy Series. For more details on SAMP please visit the Project website at [www.queensu.ca/samp](http://www.queensu.ca/samp).*

## SOUTHERN AFRICAN MIGRATION PROJECT



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### Cosatu 6th Congress

*continued from page 15*

worked out." A key issue to be resolved is whether Cosatu seconds leadership to Parliament, as it did in 1994, how many are to be sent, and what structures of accountability to Cosatu – if any – will be developed.

The September Commission's – and the Cosatu secretariat's – most serious defeat was a rejection of their proposals to introduce a quota system for advancing women into leadership positions in the federation. The position was strongly endorsed by the National Education Health

and Allied Workers' Union and the Chemical Workers Industrial Union. Opposition to the resolution was led by women delegates – many of whom spoke for the first and only time in the Congress on this issue – who rejected the proposal as tokenism. Their positions were met with thunderous applause by the majority of male delegates, who had little to offer other than stale commitments to the same education and training programmes for women which have previously had little impact.

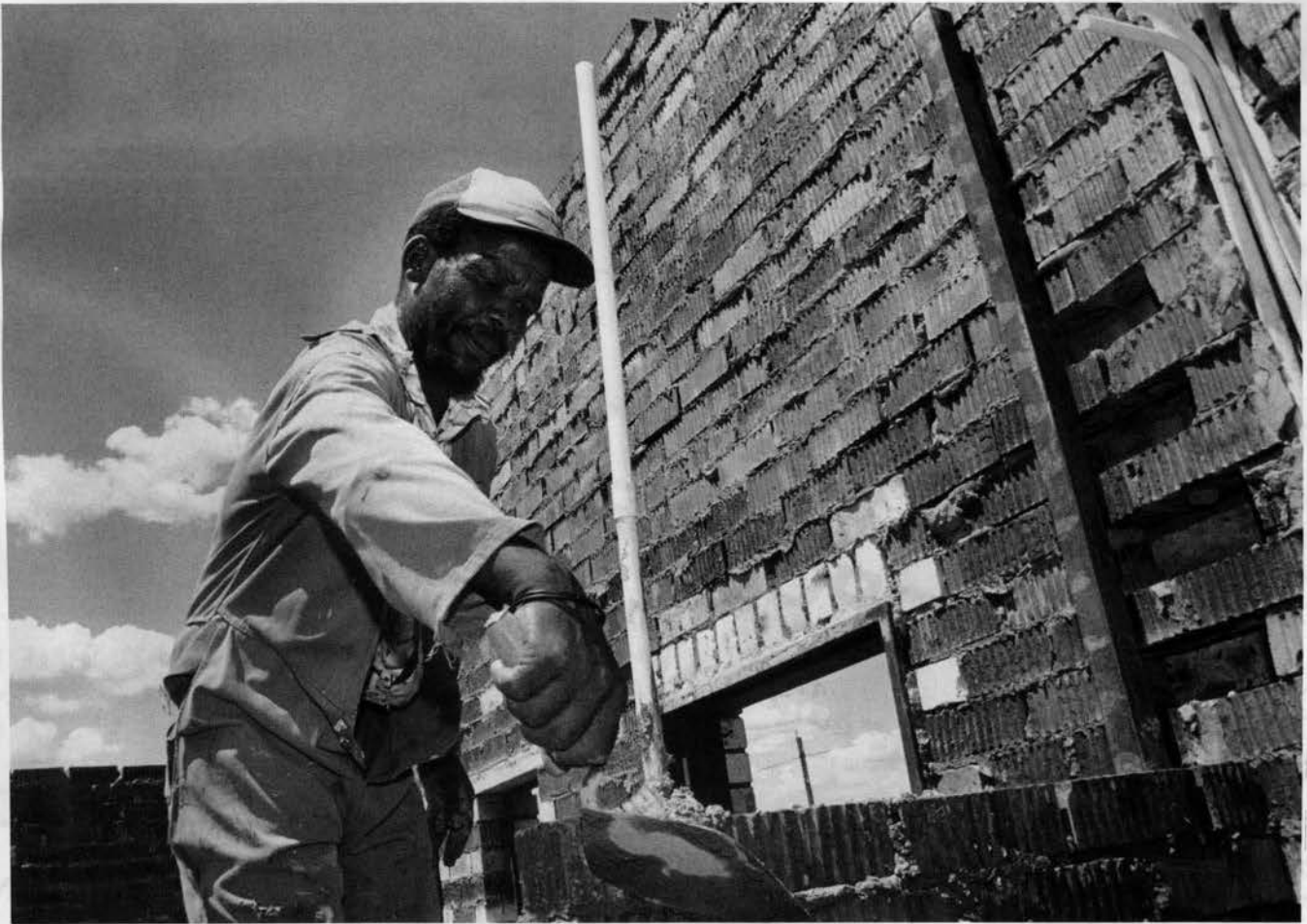
It was clear that a vote on the issue would have meant a repudi-

ation of key affiliates, the September Report and the secretariat. A compromise was reached – brokered by the National Union of Mineworkers – that committed the federation to setting and monitoring the implementation of "measurable targets."

### Impressive debates

Many of the September Commission proposals were adopted by the Congress, but the value of the exercise cannot be judged by a crude count of recommendations accepted or rejected. What is impressive is that the September Commission





Ansell Horn - Impact Visuals

and the Congress debates happened at all. Cynical observers - even many inside Cosatu - claimed beforehand that the Congress would be stage-managed and that deals had been brokered around the most contentious issues. This clearly didn't happen. Debates were robust - the Congress went well over time - with many issues resolved only after complicated compromises between affiliates, or deferred when agreement failed. Other critical issues - including most of the socio-economic policy proposals - could not be entertained due to the crowded agenda.

The September Commission report was not meant as a blueprint, but as a way to open discussion on crucial issues; it was a starting point for debate, rather than a fully rounded conclusion. In many areas

the Congress clarified positions, but it will be up to subsequent meetings to advance the discussion further and to develop coherent programmes.

This opening is extremely important in a context of global pessimism on the left. Between a simple acceptance or rejection of globalization Cosatu has begun to map out ways to use its organizational strength, mobilizational capacity, and access to formal institutions to defend worker interests and to open spaces for a socialist programme.

In his celebrated book, *Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914-1991*, Eric Hobsbawm concludes:

*The Short Twentieth Century ended in problems, for which nobody had,*

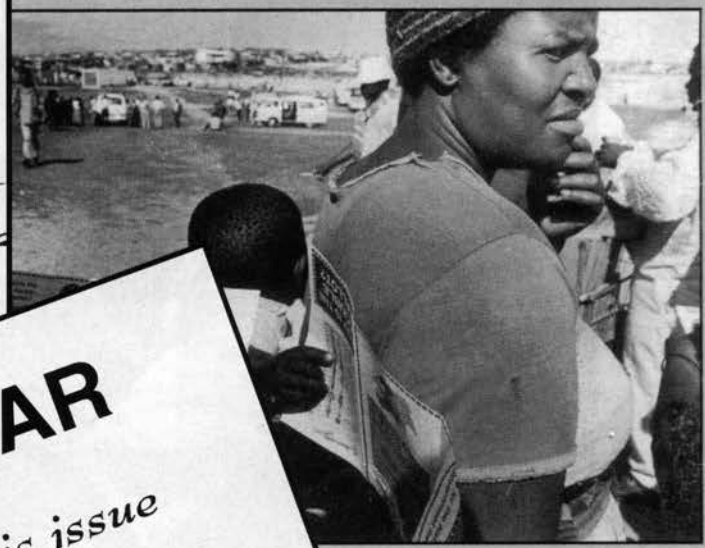
*or even claimed to have solutions. As the citizens of the fin de siècle tapped their way through the global fog that surrounded them, into the third millennium, all they knew for certain was that an era of history had ended. They knew very little else.*

In these circumstances it would be churlish to expect Cosatu to come up with final solutions to problems that have evaded Nobel Prize winning economists. But they have begun the task. Labour and social movements elsewhere in the world would do well to analyze this experience and to find ways of collaborating with it. It will be through such joint endeavors that labour worldwide may begin to develop common responses to global problems.



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