

# Southern Africa REPORT

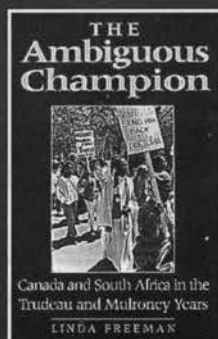
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## Washington Consensus or *Nonsensus*



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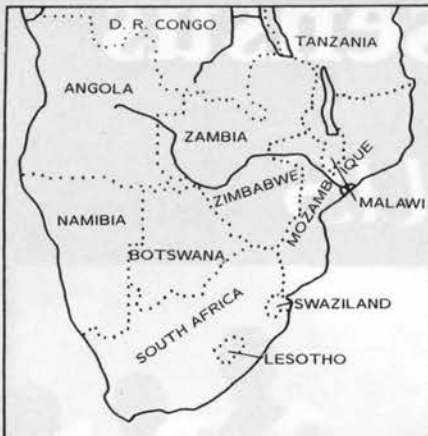


# Southern Africa

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# REPORT

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## Southern Africa REPORT

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# The Crash of Neo-Liberalism



Well, not quite perhaps.

And yet that's the way the influential *New Left Review* banner-headlined a recent issue, one featuring an extended analysis of the unease occasioned within global power circles by the faltering of the Asian miracle (see Robert Wade and Frank Veneroso, "The Gathering World Slump and the Battle over Capital Controls," *NLR*, #231).

More generally, Wade and Veneroso suggest a backlash that may, in fact, "be the harbinger of the second stage of Karl Polanyi's 'double movement,'" thus recalling Polanyi's identification of "a recurrent pattern in the evolution of capitalism, in which a period of free market policies gave rise to such instability and inequality as to trigger a social and political response, resulting in tighter social and political controls over markets – especially over finance."

"From this perspective," Wade and Veneroso continue, "we have been in the first stage for the past twenty years – the stage of market supremacy over governments and society. The Asia crisis and its spreading contagion may be leading to the second stage,

Ken Oosterbroek – PictureNET Africa

the reordering of power away from markets and towards governments.”

Interestingly, amongst those harbingers of “backlash” evoked by Wade and Veneroso in their article is none other than South Africa’s Thabo Mbeki, discovered stating at the twelfth heads of state meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement late last year that “the ‘free market’ path of development . . . has failed to live up to the expectations of the people of the South.”

Even more significant, perhaps, was the recently concluded meeting of the annual World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Here not the left but the capitalist right, including many heads of state and multinational corporations, gathered to discuss the question: “Is global capitalism delivering the goods?”

Considerable hand-wringing occurred, much of it questioning the bona fides of a completely unreconstructed neo-liberal global (dis)order. “What we need,” the forum’s president, Karl Schwab, argued, “is globalization with a human face.” And even US Secretary of the Treasury Robert Rubin felt forced to admit that “there is no question but that unfettered markets do not and cannot by their nature deal with all needs.” (Another American, AFL/CIO President John Sweeney, went further: “Our task is not to make societies safe for globalization, but to make the global system safe for decent societies. Globalization in the extreme, corporate dominated, deregulated form we have witnessed is not the scapegoat of the current crisis – it is the cause of it”!)

At Davos a dissenting South African voice was also heard, this time that of Nelson Mandela himself. As he asked in his farewell speech: “Is globalization only to benefit the powerful and the speculators? Does it offer nothing to men, women and children who are ravaged by poverty?”

Good questions. But we might pose an additional one: just how deep can all this rhetoric, at Davos and beyond, be expected to cut in terms of the possible regulation, even overthrow, of capitalism in favour of more humane outcomes? Certainly, the criticisms of global capitalism from Mbeki and Mandela haven’t gone far when measured against the concrete policies these leaders continue to sponsor in South Africa itself. Nor has the United States, still such a key global player, stepped forward with any substantial qualification of the “Washington Consensus” – as reflected in its own policies or in those of the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO – to put flesh on the bones of Robert Rubin’s expressed concerns, let alone those of John Sweeney.

In fact, the most that can be said for such developments may be not that they reflect any definitive “crash of neo-liberalism” but that they have at least pried open for critical scrutiny some of the apparently sacrosanct premises of neo-liberal globalization. It is not now quite so heretical as it was, until recently, to suggest that there may be – must be – an alternative after all.

What can this mean? Recall that one of the chief criticisms of Polanyi’s work is that he gave far too little sense of the class struggles and political contestations that can work, concretely, to produce the “double movement” he felt would arise to check the horrors of purely market determinations.

Fortunately this isn’t a weakness of the two articles that lead off our present issue. Thus Patrick Bond, in a scintillating survey of developments in the southern African region, suggests the extent to which popular forces are indeed beginning to rally against the Washington Consensus and its regional counterpart, the local state elites’ tired nostrum that “There is No Alternative” (TINA). And Hein

Marais, in a bracingly contentious open letter to the South African left, reminds it (and us) that the people of South Africa may be well ahead of the politicians in projecting the possibility of launching a genuine alternative.

Encouraging words, something that has been in short supply in recent issues of SAR. And yet these articles also indicate just how much more work remains to be done in order to challenge effectively the playing out of the Washington Consensus in the region. Meanwhile, other contributions to the current issue help reinforce a sense of the costs of neo-liberal hegemony should it sustain its hold over southern Africa.

Marcus Power identifies in his survey of recent developments in the sphere of Mozambique’s media many negative reflections, political and cultural, of the policies that country has been forced to pursue. And John Saul’s extended review-essay on the monumental study of Canadian policy towards South Africa written by our long-time collaborator, Linda Freeman, underscores the message of her concluding chapter. For Freeman finds Canada – whatever the strengths and weaknesses of its earlier stance *vis-à-vis* apartheid – now pushing a narrowly market-driven approach to its links to the “New South Africa” that can only make more difficult that damaged country’s attempts to find its way forward.

Of course, this latter outcome need come as no surprise. The Canada of the FTA and NAFTA, of Mulroney and Martin, of Rae and Harris, has also swallowed neo-liberalism whole: here at home as well as for overseas consumption. Can there be any doubt that the struggle to find the political means to make Polanyi’s “double movement” happen is as urgent for us as it is for our southern African comrades?

**SAR**

# The Washington Consensus



Paul Velasco - PictureNET Africa

## Winning or Waning?

BY PATRICK BOND

*Patrick Bond is in the School of Public and Development Management at the University of the Witwatersrand.*

Might Southern Africa offer growing resistance to the "Washington Consensus" – and possibly even the "post-Washington Consensus" proposed by World Bank Chief Economist Joseph Stiglitz – at a time both the region's economy and traditional International Monetary

Fund (IMF) models are in serious crisis?

No different than "neo-liberalism," "Thatcherism," or "structural adjustment," the term Washington Consensus signifies the inordinate power of persuasion achieved during the past two decades by the IMF and Bank, the White House, Treasury Department and Federal Reserve, and a host of nearby corporate- and bank-sponsored think-tanks which

together promote national policies and global economic management favoured by Northern financiers.

Judging by recent indications, it may be asking too much for the ruling political parties in countries like Mozambique, Zimbabwe and South Africa to decisively rebel against neo-liberal orthodoxy – until further international financial deterioration changes global power relations, and until civil society ratchets up activism to higher

levels. But that activism also must encompass a far greater strategic awareness of the danger of simple tinkering with neo-liberalism, even while there is great applause on the Left regarding the crash of the Washington Consensus.

If not the rulers, progressive opposition leaders in at least these three countries all seem anxious to push harder on the boundaries, notwithstanding very different configurations of social forces and levels of political consciousness. There is no predetermined trajectory. Nor do the three ruling parties' common traditions in allied nationalist liberation struggles during the 1970s and 1980s provide hints of future ideological shifts.

In Mozambique, efforts by the IMF and Bank to portray the Frelimo government as a successful supplicant, and to reward this with a bogus form of debt relief, were widely discredited in 1998. In Zimbabwe, recent government inroads into domestic financial prerogatives (price controls, slight tightening of exchange controls and the attempted imposition of a capital gains tax) give some indication of technical resistance, but the IMF in January 1999 demonstrated quite transparently its power over embattled, unpopular President Robert Mugabe. And in South Africa, a brief window of post-neo-liberal opportunity – opened in October 1998 largely by the SA Communist Party – was in danger of closing by early 1999, though not without civil society dissent.

#### **What Mozambique is owed**

With approximately US\$5.6 billion in foreign debt by 1998, in the wake of at least US\$20 billion in apartheid-generated damage (not counting a million lives), Mozambique found itself repaying more than US\$110 million a year. Although this is a small fraction of what in fact should have been repaid (in a context in which the state budget was virtually entirely funded by foreign aid), it represented a huge drain on resources.

As a result, when in 1997 the World Bank and IMF responded to debt relief pressure (largely from the Jubilee 2000 movement and progressive NGOs) with its "Highly-Indebted Poor Countries" (HIPC) initiative, Mozambique was a logical place to begin. But notwithstanding a write-down of approximately US\$1.4 billion in debt owed to the IMF and Bank, the actual repayment relief only amounted to US\$10 million a year, leaving Mozambique to continue servicing the debt at US\$100 million annually, representing more than 20% of its foreign exchange earnings.

Thus HIPC allowed merely a write-off of unserviceable debt – which no one ever expects Mozambique to repay – yet virtually no real relief. Worse, in return there were harsh conditions attached to the debt relief. Only last December did these begin to emerge as a matter for public debate, at an unprecedented foreign debt conference at the Assembleia da Republica, attended by 500 members of the parliament and civil society leaders.

In order to comply with HIPC, parliamentarians learned from London-based journalist Joe Hanlon, they soon have to pass legislation effectively quintupling patient fees for public health services over a five-year period. The demand was part of a report accompanying a March 1998 letter by World Bank president James Wolfensohn, agreed to by government leaders and major donors, but not previously disclosed to either the parliament or civil society. According to the letter, the terms of HIPC also include the privatisation of municipal water. Already, acknowledged the Bank report, water "tariffs have been increased sharply in real terms over the past 18 months and are to be increased even further prior to the signing of management contracts."

Frelimo's parliamentary deputies were angry about their leaders' capitulation to the HIPC deal, and warmly welcomed delegates from

trade unions and the Mozambican Debt Group who reinforced the general demand for a total cancellation of the foreign debt. A special parliamentary commission to investigate the debt was then established.

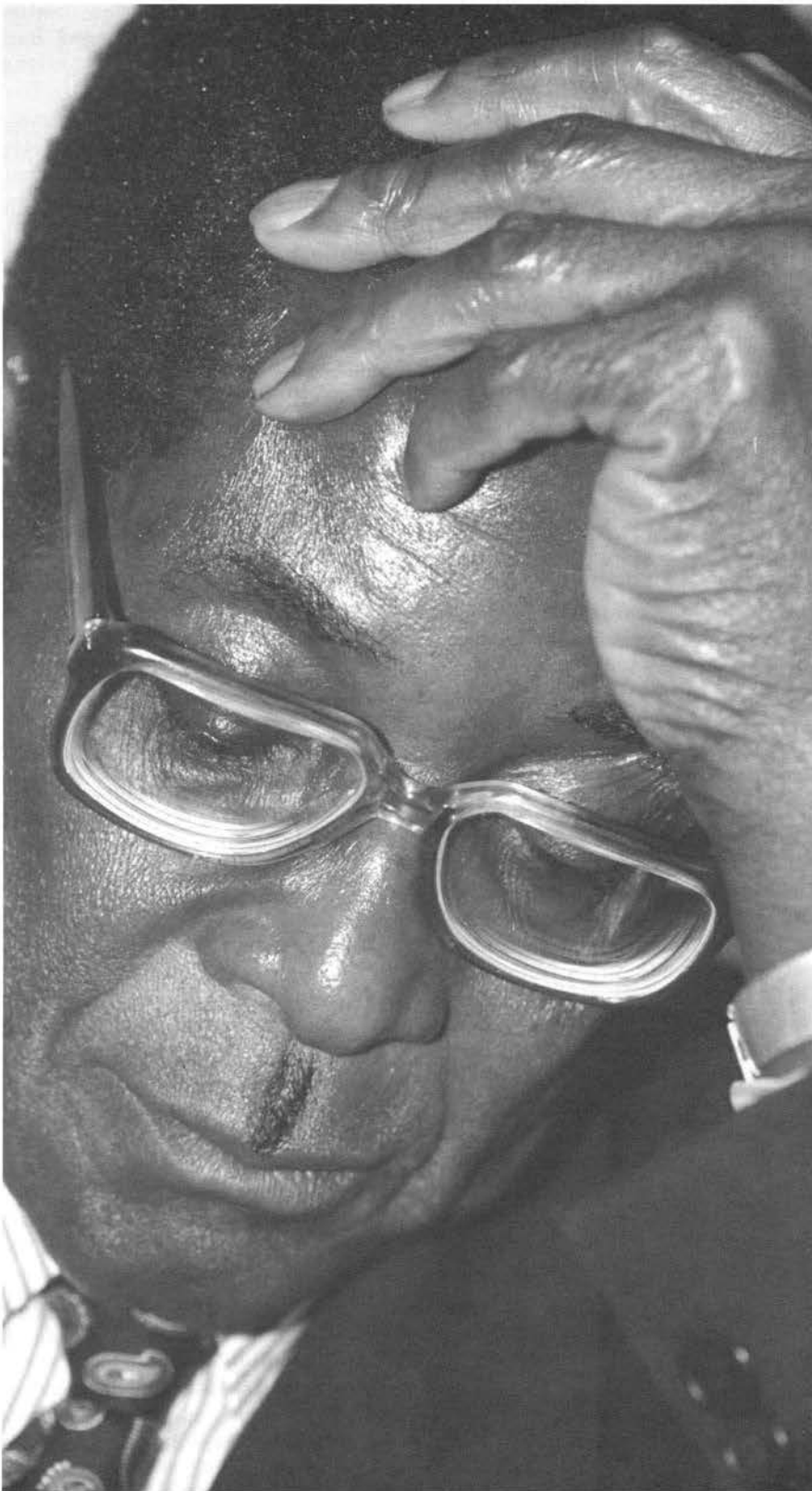
The Bank's Maputo representative, Dr. James Coates, could only comment, grimly, that Mozambique's US\$1.4 billion in debt relief was far more than other HIPC countries received, and Mozambique should probably not expect further relief. Rebutted Hanlon, "This is a political matter, which should be decided democratically, not by the high-paid Washington technocrats. When the technocrats needed \$100 billion to bale out the international banks in East Asia, at the expense of taxpayers and the poor, they found it fast."

The previous month, the G-7 countries had announced a new \$90 billion IMF fund to be used for emergency rescues of financiers exposed to large emerging markets that are considered "too big to fail" – unlike the world's poorest country, Mozambique, which remains out of sight, out of mind, to international economic managers. However, as a hopeful footnote, at a late December meeting with Anglican Church Archbishop Njongulu Ndungane, South African Finance Minister Trevor Manuel said that he had made provisions for writing off Mozambique debt to Pretoria, along the lines of a similar 1996 arrangement for Namibia.

#### **Zimbabwe's zig-zags**

Of a much higher profile is the mismanagement of Zimbabwe's economy and political system. The problems are often portrayed as deriving merely from the maniacal ravings and corrupt schemes of Mugabe and a few powerful cronies like Defense Minister Moven Mahachi. In addition, however, there remain even more formidable structural barriers to social progress and economic revival.

Zimbabwe suffers several maladies: confusing populist govern-



Robert Mugabe

ment rhetoric on race/class issues; a nominally “Marxist-Leninist” ruling party; white corporate domination of the industrial, agricultural, financial and services sectors; and an inability to break into global markets. Since independence in 1980, Mugabe condoned an ever-greater role for the private sector in Zimbabwe’s development, in the process taking on vast quantities of international debt (whose repayment cost 35% of export earnings by 1987), culminating in the 1990 adoption of a structural adjustment programme that parroted the Washington Consensus.

The programme failed decisively, and not simply because of two bad droughts in 1992 and 1995. The overall structure of Zimbabwe’s economy and society left it ill-suited for rapid liberalisation, extremely high real interest rates, a dramatic upsurge in inflation and large cuts in social welfare spending. For even while Mugabe often obfuscated matters – with rhetoric hostile to the Washington Consensus – his finance ministers (Bernard Chidzero, Ariston Chambati and Herbert Murewa) loyally followed a fiscally-conservative, deregulatory agenda from 1990-97.

As a direct result of funding cuts and cost-recovery policies, exacerbated by the AIDS pandemic, the brief 1980s rise in literacy and health indicators was dramatically reversed. In contrast, the stock market reached extraordinary peaks in mid-1991 and mid-1997, but these were followed by crashes of more than 50% within a few months along with massive hikes in interest rates. More steadily, manufacturing sector output shrunk by 40% from peak 1991 levels through 1995, and the standard of living of the average Zimbabwean worker fell even further.

Although there was finally GDP growth in 1996-97, it quickly expired when international financial markets and local investors battered Zimbabwe’s currency beginning in

Henner Frankenfeld – PictureNET Africa

November 1997, ultimately shrinking the value of a Z\$ from US\$0.09 to US\$0.025 over the course of a year. Inflation was soon imported, leading in January and October 1998 to urban riots over maize and fuel price hikes, respectively.

### Mugabe responds

Mugabe's reactions included a November 1998 claim – widely disbelieved – that he would return to “socialist” policies. Yet a few hints of reasserted Zimbabwean sovereignty came in the face of financial meltdown, such as a mid-1998 price freeze on staple foods and several minor technical interventions to raise revenues, slow capital flight and deter share speculation.

For example, the 1990s liberalisation of a once-rigid exchange control system had created such enormous abuse that new regulations on currency sales had to be imposed. Yet two days after a 5% capital gains tax was introduced on the stock market, a stockbroker boycott forced a retraction. Indeed, the government was not, apparently, powerful enough to reimpose full (Malaysian-style) exchange controls – which had been widely expected in the event a January 1999 IMF loan fell through, given the perilous state of hard currency reserves.

As economic grievances and more evidence of political unaccountability mounted, trade union leaders Morgan Tsvangirai and Gibson Sibanda called several successful national stayaways beginning in December 1997. Mugabe's increases in general sales and pension taxes to fund a large pension pay-out for liberation war veterans were vociferously resisted, and government backed down slightly.

Simultaneously, an October 1997 threat to redistribute 1,400 large commercial farms (mainly owned by whites) scared agricultural markets and allowed Mugabe extensive populist opportunities to attack worried foreign donors (especially the Brits). But land-starved peasants gained

only passing hope – unrealistic, considering Mugabe's past practice of rewarding farms to political and military elites – and land invasions of several large farms were quickly repelled by authorities. And, in another unpopular move, Mugabe sent several thousand troops to defend the besieged Laurent Kabila in the Democratic Republic of Congo in mid-1998 – according to rumour, in order to protect the investments of well-connected Zimbabwean firms (dozens of body bags soon returned).

### The IMF visits Zimbabwe

In January 1999, power relations were finally unveiled when an IMF team arrived and undid several policies. Instead of redistributing commercial farms by paying current owners (over a long period of time) for only the buildings and infrastructure, the government would now have to also pay for the land, and all (market-related) compensation would be up-front. The IMF team also told Mugabe to lift price controls by June 1999 (which could unleash new riots). In exchange, Zimbabwe received US\$53 million, and this in turn released another US\$800 million from other lenders.

The IMF team also, however, did a service to the progressive cause by raising eyebrows about an extremely shady privatisation deal (a Malaysian firm bought Zimbabwe's major electricity-generation complex on the basis of a suspiciously soft low-interest loan), and by demanding to know who was financing the Congo war (Mahachi claimed the money came from Kabila's government and Angola).

The IMF visit thus generated confusion amongst the state-owned press and key black business leaders, who together initially slammed the visitors for “changing the goalposts” on conditionality, but who later welcomed the loan on grounds that economic confidence was now – even if artificially and temporarily – restored. Mugabe, who had invoked strident anti-IMF rhetoric at a major December 1998

World Council of Churches meeting in Harare, again zig-zagged back towards some degree of international financial “credibility.”

But if on the surface it appeared that Mugabe's reversal at the IMF negotiations represented yet another cunning example of discarded principles so as to rake in sufficient funds to keep his regime going a bit longer, there was, nevertheless, a sense of desperation in the wind. The week before, rumours had circulated in the SA military about a coup attempt from within Mahachi's army, which when printed by *Zimbabwe Standard* editor Mark Chavunduka and reporter Ray Choto in mid-January led to not only hysterical denials, but to their illegal detention and torture by military police (in violation of a court order), and then to the detention of publisher Clive Wilson. The overkill suppression of the journalists convinced much of society that the three had stumbled onto the truth.

### Challenges from civil society

Thus if Mugabe continues to play this apparently-suicidal endgame, the budding mass-popular opposition – still based largely in civil society – will no doubt contemplate a run for the presidency in 2000, potentially under Tsvangirai's lead. The popular-front character of a grouping now known as the National Constitutional Assembly – which with church, NGO, human rights and some liberal business support has set up something akin to Zambia's late 1980s Movement for Multi-party Democracy – does leave space for expanding not just political freedoms in a potentially rewritten constitution, but also socio-economic rights.

Yet the Zambian example – and Frederick Chiluba's metamorphosis from trade union democrat to neo-liberal authoritarian – is a worrying precedent. Extremely heavy pressure on Tsvangirai suggests he may adopt what seem to be, at first blush, relatively easy corporatist politics that would bring to



gether big government, big business and big labour. In his own words a couple of years ago, such a "social contract would involve the three parties reaching a consensus where workers agree to restrain wage demands on the one hand and employers agree to control price increases for commodities, invest surpluses to create more jobs and train workers on the other. For Government, you would expect them to cut spending."

But other pressures are also emerging. In late February 1999, the ZCTU will host a "working-class summit" to help establish a more thorough-going programme of action with the civil society allies for the coming year. Indeed, the future trajectory is unpredictable, a matter for struggles that are still to define Zimbabwe's immediate future. But because it was from 1990s South Africa that Tsvangirai borrowed the counterintuitive "tripartite" rhetoric - in marked contrast to his previous organic radicalism - and because SA unions' disappointment with the outcome of such corporatism is no secret, it is to the current erratic struggle over the ANC's Growth, Employment and Redistribution Programme (GEAR) that we can turn next.

### **Post-election, "post-GEAR" realignment in SA?**

The residual progressive forces of the Democratic Movement, and new organisations bubbling up from the base, remain South Africa's saving grace. Given that the president, deputy president and virtually all ministers embraced the Washington Consensus during the mid-1990s, an interesting but confused debate emerged within the ANC Alliance in 1998 about the implications of its disintegration.

Thus what stands out in South African progressive politics is the continued critical capacity of a few high-quality unions, community-based organisations, women's and youth groups, Non-Governmental Organisations, think-tanks, networks of CBOs and NGOs, progres-

sive churches, political groups and independent leftists. At grassroots level, alienation has intensified and a high level of non-participation in the 1999 election is anticipated. The 1994-96 surge of shopfloor, student and community wildcat protests has subsided, however unrest continues to break out in black townships that have been subjected to high increases in service charges and power/water cutoffs.

In contrast to those suffering more as a result of Washington Consensus policies, much of the South African elite, white and black, appears increasingly corrupt, opportunistic, greedy and liable to move abroad with as much capital as possible (and now, headquarters, in the cases of Anglo American, South African Breweries, Liberty Life and even the Old Mutual insurance giant).

It is not as if these policies are delivering the goods. Not only did the stock market crash by 40% between April and September 1998, the currency dropped 30% over a few weeks in between. As a result Reserve Bank Governor Chris Stals raised interest rates by 6% (to their highest real level in modern South African history). Throughout, formal employment shrunk quickly.

There have been various fight-backs from progressives since 1994, many of which targeted neo-liberal policy advice that ministers received from World Bank advisors. Most importantly, the mid-1996 Growth, Employment and Redistribution policy (GEAR) was denounced from the outset and had lost all credibility when all targets (except inflation) were soon missed. Perhaps most striking was the Finance Ministry's projection that from 1996-98, 650,000 jobs would be created, when in reality about 300,000 were lost. Aside from ongoing Alliance debates, GEAR was repeatedly questioned by unions, women's groups, left political parties, churches and NGOs (including a major 1998-

99 SA Non-Governmental Organisation Coalition alternative economics commission, itself hotly contested from within by several conservative NGO leaders displaying residual ANC loyalty).

### **Development policy: The Washington way?**

World Bank staff, working with conservative local bureaucrats and consultants, also designed other micro-development policies. In the cases of low-cost housing, land redistribution and small business promotion, neo-liberal policies were reliant upon commercial bank lending, the availability of which was far short of what Ministers Joe Slovo (and his replacement Sankie Mthembu-Mahanyele), Derek Hanekom and Alec Erwin gambled on. All three cases represent embarrassing development failures.

Development policy typical of the Washington Consensus era is also dominant in other critical areas. The first and decisive draft of the municipal infrastructure framework was written by World Bank staff, and will leave low-income urban residents in segregated slums. Thus instead of racial borders, planners are now dividing the cities along class lines, according to whether or not there is pit latrine sanitation, low-voltage electricity lines (inadequate to power a stove), and insufficient, means-tested consumption subsidies. Others from the World Bank mission in Pretoria have, since 1994, advocated a dramatically lower child maintenance grant, promoted "food-for-work" (not pay) in public works projects, and suggested the Department of Health conform to US-style "managed care" (insurance company-controlled) commodification of basic health services.

Suddenly, in the midst of growing Democratic Movement concern about World Bank bias in the ANC government, the figure of Joseph Stiglitz emerged in 1998. His January 1998 speech in Helsinki - subtitled "Moving Toward the Post-Washington Consensus" - repre-



João Silva - PictureNET Africa

*A woman dumps garbage into a river of sewage outside the township*

sented a dramatic desertion from orthodoxy. Underlying Stiglitz's insights is a recognition that, in a context of individual economic decision-making, "informational asymmetries" cause market imperfections, particularly in financial markets.

This new line of argument excited some commentary in the South African press. By October 1998, ANC parliamentary whip Max Sisulu (the party's main Keynesian) was heard pushing the Stiglitz line so hard at an ANC executive meeting that Trevor Manuel pleaded with the gathering not to try to val-

idate "a new high priest of economics." (Sisulu was soon "redeployed" from political leadership to head the state-owned arms manufacturer Denel.) In short, Stiglitz' critique from within appeared, at first blush, extremely helpful in undermining confidence in existing policies.

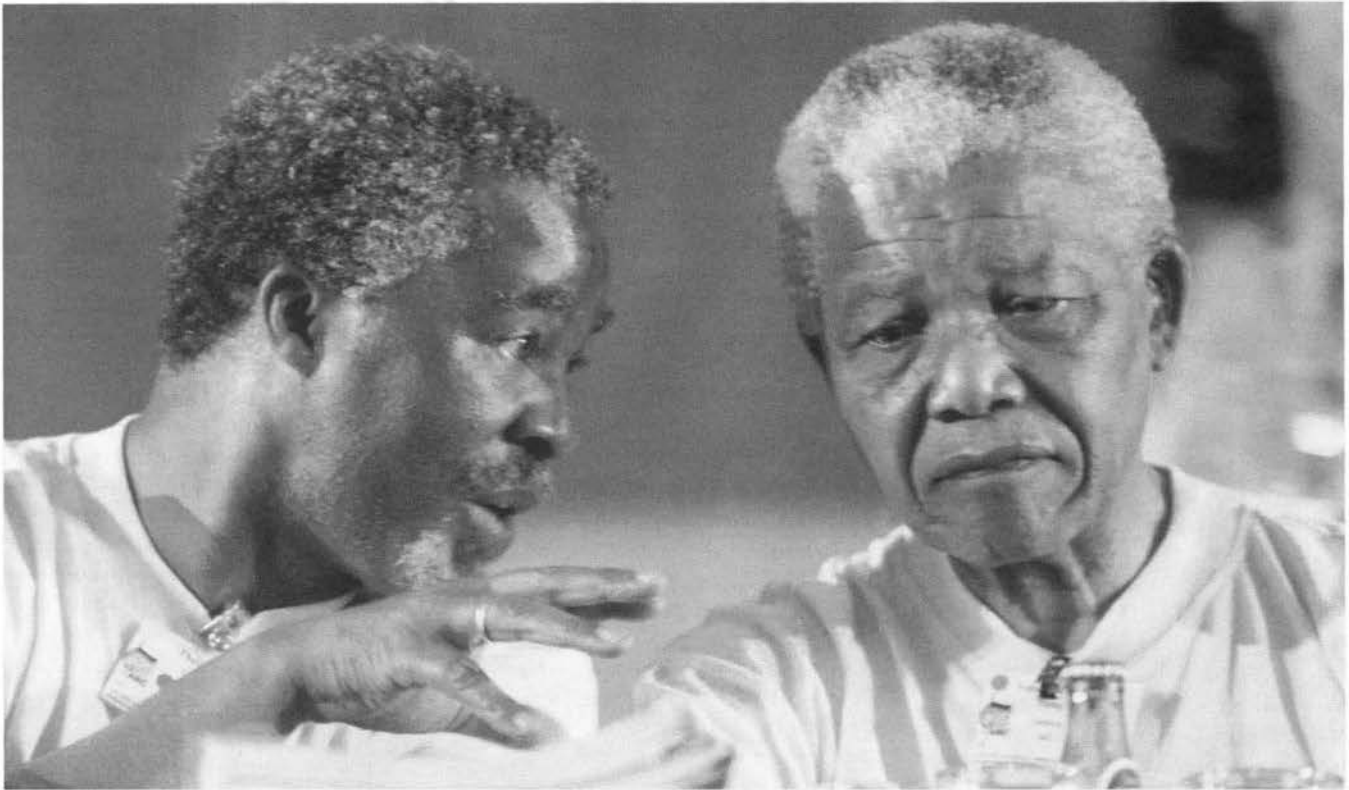
A warning may be in order, however, echoing that of Manuel. According to London School of Oriental and African Studies economist Ben Fine, Stiglitz's post-Washington Consensus shares some of the same fundamental flaws

as its predecessor: "It can deal with the regulation of the financial system, for example, its efficiency, and the protection of shareholders, without once mentioning the economic and political power structures embodied in a financial system."

Indeed the current disjuncture between the status quo oriented Clinton - Rubin - Camdessus - Greenspan - Fischer - Summers bloc and reformers centred around Stiglitz may boil down, ultimately, to an elite fight between hostile brothers. As Fine concludes, "The social content of [Stiglitz's] theory - based on the methodological individualism of neoclassical economics - seems incapable of explaining the presence of social structures and institutions, let alone classes and the state, whose existence is glaringly obvious."

As if to remind South Africa of even more obvious radical doctrine, a surprising document was released, also in October 1998, by the ANC-SACP-Cosatu Alliance: "The Current Global Economic Crisis" (published in the *African Communist*, First Quarter 1999). Authors Jeremy Cronin, Joel Netshitenzhe and Mbhazima Shilowa insist that "The present crisis is, in fact, a global capitalist crisis, rooted in a classical crisis of over-accumulation and declining profitability."

But the radical tone, unprecedented in recent years and truly extraordinary as official ANC-Alliance sentiment, belied the managerial, decidedly non-transformative character of the strategic vision that followed, calling for quite pedestrian economic reforms: "the need for fiscal discipline" (a GEAR shibboleth); a surprisingly conservative approach to funding old-guard bureaucrats' pensions (reducing available monies for social programmes); "a more nuanced understanding of the key challenges in terms of Tax policy"; more flexibility when lowering protective import tariffs; "less rigidity on inflation, and less anxiety about defending the value of the rand - and there-



Adil Bradlow - PictureNET Africa

fore the prospect of easing pressure on interest rates.”

In the end, the document's concrete proposals come to rest squarely within the existing framework of GEAR. Thus while the penultimate paragraph begins, “At the ANC's NEC of last weekend, the notion of an Alliance ‘post-GEAR’ consensus was mentioned in passing,” the document is quick to deny the merits of “engag(ing) polemically with each other along these lines” – and so in the process vanquishes more progressive critiques.

#### **Resistance from civil society**

Yet key segments of South African civil society, at least, activity continue to offer hope for a post-post-Washington Consensus. Advocates of economic justice are found more and more frequently in networks and loose coalitions such as the Campaign Against Neo-Liberalism in South Africa and the Jubilee 2000 debt cancellation initiative. The latter, chaired by Molefe Tsele and with patrons including Archbishop

Ndungane and poet Dennis Brutus, has had phenomenal success in recent months publicising the US\$20 billion in apartheid-era foreign debt inherited by the ANC in 1994. Some government officials – especially Manuel and his lead bureaucrat, Maria Ramos – wish the issue would evaporate, and have gone to great lengths to delegitimize the Jubilee effort.

But what this example, plus a recent denunciation of Stiglitz by SA NGOs unimpressed by his back-tracking from the Helsinki speech during a January meeting in Johannesburg, and all the other contestations of South African neoliberalism represent, is the potential for a realignment of politics once the 1999 election is behind us. Forces in civil society, perhaps joined by some maverick Communist Party activists, could well advance several of the socio-economic “wedge issues” to the point at which a new Mbeki administration would be forced against the wall, pressured to choose between losing a large

constituency or trying a completely different approach to policy-making.

At a time when Southern African ruling political parties are too frightened to even take a Stiglitzian position – or if they do so occasionally as has Mugabe, it is in the most erratic and counterproductive manner – progressive forces in civil society (and perhaps, like Mozambique, in parliaments) will have to unite and, quite probably, cross borders to make coherent demands of their leaderships. Central to such demands will be a strengthening of regional and nation-state sovereignty in the face of a crisis-ridden globalization, and far more seriousness around regional economic integration, glued through solidarity against the institutions of the Washington Consensus.

Such demands won't be successful for the immediate future, to be sure. But they offer the only common-sense card that many of the region's social forces now have to play.

**S A R**

# Fiddling while Neo-liberalism Burns? A Letter to the South African Left

BY HEIN MARAIS

*Journalist Hein Marais is the author of the important recent book South Africa: Limits to Change – The political-economy of transition. It is published by Zed Books, and distributed in North America by St Martin's Press.*

Internationally, 1998 was a year of corners turned – disastrously by the juggernaut of capitalism, hopefully by the European left, and indecisively by the political administrators of the industrialized world.

As sundry economies crashed and fell through the floorboards, Max Weber's description of capitalism as "mechanized petrification embellished with a sort of convulsive self-importance" suddenly regained a topical and authoritative ring – even in South Africa, though you had to prick up your ears to notice.

There, a thin – some might say "morbid" – smile edged onto the faces of the South African left as the Washington Consensus collapsed and the ANC's bulwarks of orthodoxy sprung leaks. By the end of the year, even the ANC's leaders could no longer avoid publicly acknowledging the "need for fresh thinking, new leadership and greater flexibility in economic policy-making."

"We see a coherent and broadening campaign against neo-liberal economic policies and that debate's now moved inside the ANC," says the SA Communist Party's Jeremy Cronin. "Partly it's due to global developments, but it wouldn't have happened here if the left had not stood its ground."

## The traditional left

Cronin's words are a handy yardstick for just how deep into the em-

brace of convention the ANC government has snuggled – and how narrowed the traditional left's vistas have become.

Correctly or not, the fate of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) plan has become an index of the left's verve. Midway through 1998, the prognosis seemed good from that point of view, if a little confusing.

Presidential communications head Joel Netshitenzhe put out a discussion paper which, in plodding and pedantic fashion, did little more than remind his comrades of a few vintage truisms that used to be the meat and potatoes of ANC discourse only a decade ago.

"The state is not a neutral, non-partisan entity, but it is an instrument that is used to pursue the interests of a class or group of classes," he wrote, adding that "the core of any revolution is the

issue of property relations" and that "the battles around political power are in the final analysis about socio-economic resources and their allocation."

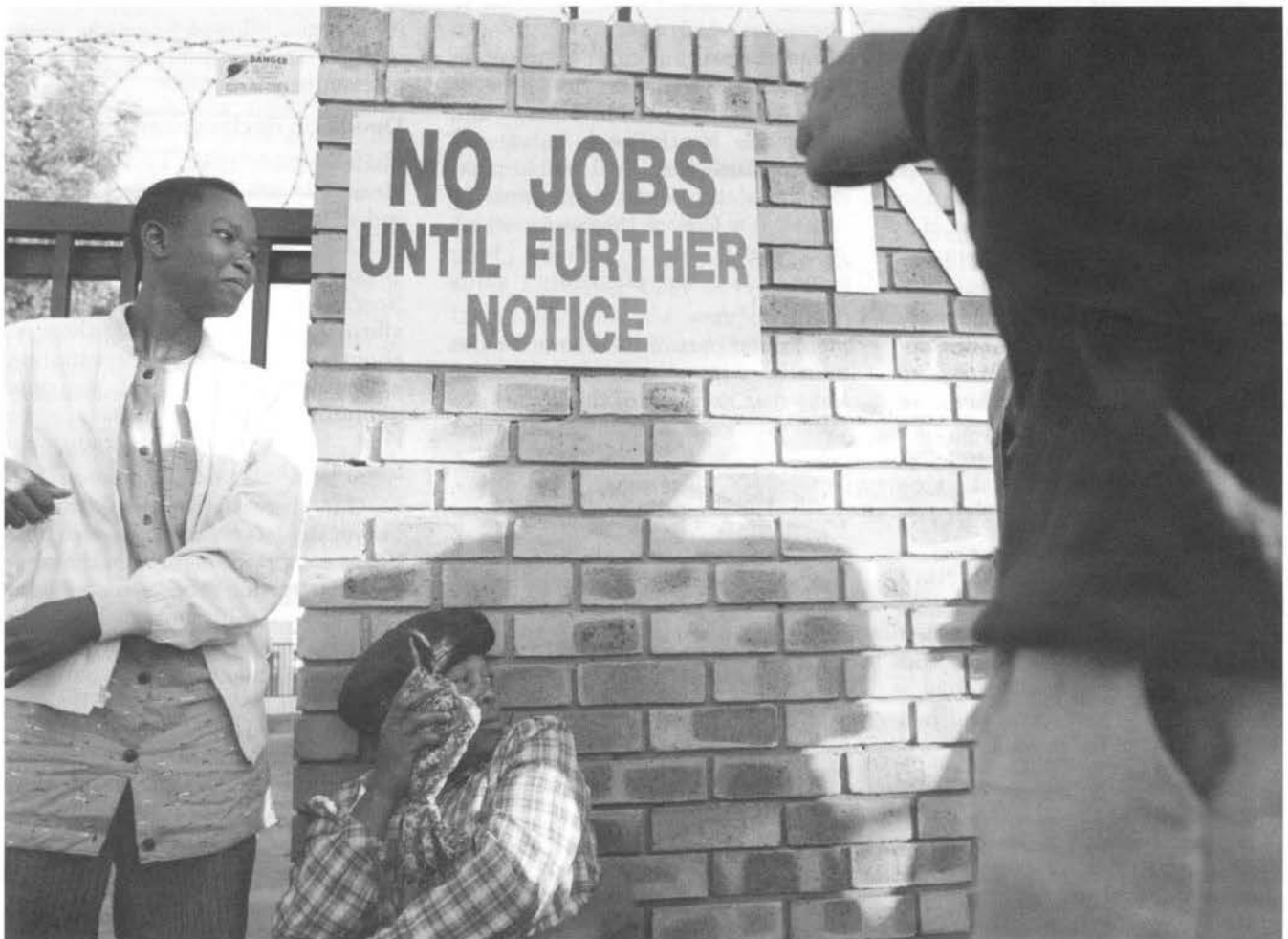
Coming as a veiled riposte to Thabo Mbeki's 1997 paper "The State and Social Transformation" – a kind of paint-by-numbers "Third Way" text – Netshitenzhe's intervention put some bounce back into the step of SACP types. They needed it, having just endured a savage attack by Mbeki at their July congress.

Then, in an October Tripartite Alliance meeting, another minor foray was launched – in the form of an economic discussion document which asserted "the possibility (and the necessity) for the progressive movement ... to question what was until the most recent period the unquestioned economic global paradigm."



Jeremy Cronin with Cheryl Carolus at a COSATU march in 1995

Henner Frankenfeld – PictureNET Africa



Greg Marinovich - PictureNET Africa

Leaving aside the fact that this “paradigm” had for years not only been questioned but resisted by some states and by a multitude of social forces around the world, the mere debating of the document in top alliance ranks lifted spirits.

#### Reverse GEAR

A felicitous moment seemed to have arrived. As the global economic crisis worsened, former point-men of neo-liberalism were queuing up to preside over the wake of the Washington Consensus. Fed-up with being stuck in a fiscal boot camp being run out of the finance ministry, several SA government departments were beginning to grump about GEAR. Cosatu still blustered publicly about the “reverse GEAR.” Statistics SA

announced that 498,000 jobs had been lost since 1994 while economic indicators place SA on the brink of recession. Meanwhile, an unfriendly dialogue – carried out mainly by academic proxies – was developing between the finance ministry and Reserve Bank around monetary policy.

The moment went begging. When it mattered – particularly in alliance and ANC executive meetings – Cosatu and SACP leaders contented themselves with the vague suggestion that some “counter-cyclical measures” might be stirred into GEAR’s broth. At the November Job Summit, macro-economic policy was off the agenda, replaced by a package of welfarist projects that still await scrutiny and implementation. And with time-worn

dexterity the ANC engineered a truce with its disgruntled allies in the run-up to the 1999 elections. Temporarily perhaps, the argument was again settled by the injunction: “Unity at all costs.”

What about the bright side? Organized business’ push for greater flexibility in the labour market has been blocked for now, thanks mainly to Cosatu’s diligence. The Basic Conditions of Employment Act was passed over the heads of business, at last imposing on capital some forms of accountability that become a democratic society. And the feisty Blade Nzimande’s replacement of the ineffectual Charles Nqakula as SACP general secretary brought the prospect of a party that could occasionally draw the line, instead of toeing it.

The traditional left – still stuck in the mould of the Third International – wedged ajar a few more doors in the corridors of power. But doors open and shut. That such modest developments should cheer up this left came, really, as a kind of back-handed confirmation of just how remote the dreams of a left-driven transition became in the 1990s.

“At the ideological level we’re winning some battles, but at the organizational level we’re still a long way off from the point where we can really achieve the programmes and results in the ways we imagine them,” cautions the National Union of Mineworkers’ research chief, Devan Pillay.

#### Other voices

Of course, it’s still fashionable to smack the South African left about the head with the claim that it has to come up with “viable alternatives.” The fact is you just have to know where to look.

For the left is indeed beavering away at alternatives. The new labour regime attests to this, as does the local Jubilee 2000 campaign (and its proposal to restructure the public service pension scheme and free up billions of rands for social spending), the counsel sifted from last year’s Poverty Hearings (staged by the SA NGO Coalition [Sangoco]) and ongoing efforts by the same Sangoco’s “Economics Commission” to design a new framework for economic and social policies.

But several aspects of this bear emphasis. For one thing, the SACP has had little more than a walk-on part in these endeavours. Progressive civil society – mainly in the development and religious sector – increasingly is stepping into the breach. And, no matter the speeches and tub-thumping, the ANC government still seems in thrall to the notion that “There Is No Alternative,” at least not at the national level. (Mind you, on the global front there does seem to be a nascent, positive drift

in the making. The odds were always stacked against the South African government’s extravagant bid last September to exhume the Non-Aligned Movement and recast the North-South balance of forces. Much wiser is its subsequent emphasis on quietly hammering together a G-8 of the South which just might also, eventually, lever some space for progressive shifts nationally.)

A good part of the blame for this paucity of imagination has, then, to be laid at the door of the traditional left. A decade after 1989, this left



still stands as a wozy reminder of Ellen Meiksins-Wood’s lament a few years back that “it is not only that we do not know how to act against capitalism but that we are forgetting how to think against it.”

Compounding this failure is an equally debilitating and enduring refusal by the left to examine critically its own preconceptions about what constitutes effective political practice. For example, the SACP’s auto-critiques have not yet matured into an examination of its statist principles.

As a result, its activism remain focussed almost exclusively on the state, a route that reinforces the ANC’s disciplinary hand and helps alienate the party from ordinary South Africans. Both the party and – but to a lesser and perhaps more understandable extent – Cosatu concentrate their resources on influencing policy. But much of this effort occurs behind the enclosures of institutions and (in the case of the tripartite alliance) of structures shielded

from the public gaze. The combative energies allowed to escape those confines are too feeble or arcane to quicken hearts outside.

#### Deeds or declarations

Little wonder that, in the war of ideas, the left still holds the short end of the stick. For every Cosatu or SACP member willing to wear a T-shirt that says “Build Socialism Now” (or any other progressive affirmation), thousands of others go about happily swaddled in corporate advertising slogans and insignia. Subliminally they’re making some kind of statement. The traditional left, though, isn’t listening.

Out there in the “real world,” talk of the left is still a cue for a dismissive snort or sympathetic snigger. Partly this reflects a dominant ideology of fatalism married, as it always is, to the advice that “Looking After Number One” is what matters. But it’s also fuelled by the traditional left’s tendency to express itself through stiff acclamations rather than dialogues, and by its substitution of declarations for deeds.

“Our challenge,” says Zane Dargor of the Development Resource Centre, “is both practical and ideological. The two aspects cannot be divorced. We can only build widespread respect for left perspectives through practical mobilization.”

This will be the left’s litmus test as it crosses the threshold of the millennium: to spark the imagination and enlist the (always loose and provisional) allegiances of ordinary South Africans who float on the fringes of organizational life.

Still a work-in-progress is the cobbling together of a national popular alliance, centred on leftist (or even leftish) forces and geared at a thoroughgoing redistribution of wealth, power and opportunity. Whether those forces’ programmes are labelled “socialist” or “social-democratic,” “reformist” or “revolutionary” is not the point. What matters are the content and quality

of their actions, not simply the purity of their theory.

### Remedies?

As good a starting point as any, it seems, is to finger some of the debilities that still hobble the left and to propose a few remedies.

- Nowhere is the phrase “with friends like these, who needs enemies” truer than on the left. It needs to achieve a less hermetic and more elastic self-definition. A cease-fire in the sniping between “socialists” and “social-democrats” would be a good beginning. Let those distinctions be demonstrated and tested in action, and not simply as rhetorical affirmations. We will discover that our affinities and the scope for united resistance (conjuncturally at least) eclipses a ritualistic emphasis on difference.

- It’s time to ditch the notion that the left refers narrowly to certain trade union organizations, the SACP and a few light-weight ultra-left groupings. The definition is plain inaccurate. If the left has turned a corner or two in the past 18 months, it wasn’t with the party or Cosatu at the steering wheel.

The successful battle around child welfare grants in 1996 was waged by a loose grouping of development organizations and churches. One of last year’s landmark activities, noted earlier, was the Poverty Hearings staged by Sangoco and drawing especially on the almost forgotten strengths of progressive churches. As also noted, Sangoco, along with progressive researchers, is now spearheading a bid to draft the outlines of alternative economic policies. Although originating in ecumenical circles, the international Jubilee 2000 anti-debt campaign locally has attracted an impressive range of local development groups and activists (including, happily, a handful of SACP organizers).

Once tunnel-vision is abandoned, the left appears more eclectic and vibrant than common wisdom concedes, with many sectors capable

of effective organizing while also uninhibited by the dread and self-disciplinary impulses that afflict the SACP and, to a lesser extent, Cosatu. A popular alliance is there for the making – not under the aegis of Big Brother formations but as democratic and pluralist fronts mustered around specific campaigns.

- For the dominant left organizations, beaver away at policy and trying to bend the ears of “comrades” in the ANC and government (all with the integrity of the alliance in sharp and commanding focus) has for too long meant forsaking stern action on social issues.



The government’s decision to withhold funding for AZT treatment for HIV-positive pregnant mothers in the same month it OK’d a R30-billion arms spree was unconscionable. Neither Cosatu or the SACP mustered more than a shrug in response. Their absence from the “Moral Summit” meeting held between church and government spokespersons was puzzling, as was the distance the SACP kept from the Poverty Hearings.

This state of affairs will probably persist until Cosatu and the SACP admit that the tripartite alliance retains meaning only insofar as it enables (rather than constricts, as it does now) the vitality of an effective popular front. Soon, very soon, they will have to bite that bullet.

- The left should slam the lid on the tiresome diatribes against the petit-bourgeoisie and recognize that sections of the middle classes are potential fellow-travellers (and even outright supporters) of our initiatives. In leftist projects historically, they’ve been the wild

cards – neither definitively on-side or opposed.

“It’s the way we approach, promote and practice left positions that will begin to win over parts of these classes,” believes Dangor. “People carp about deteriorating health services, for example, without being made aware that if we socialized health care and stopped the cutbacks we could turn it around. Instead they blame it on the ‘radical’ ANC. We’re losing people by not coherently explaining the background to these things.”

One of the missed opportunities of 1999 was a popular campaign against high interest rates that bludgeoned everyone except the managers of financial capital. It went begging. Until the left draws sections of the middle classes closer to its ambit, it will remain an also-ran in the contest for hegemony.

### Into the new millennium

In sum, an earnest and humble dialogue must be re-opened in the left – a dialogue aimed not at maximum consensus but at maximum collaboration between a variety of actors that share a basic commitment to a just, democratic and equitable society. A conference this year under the banner “The Left: Into the New Millennium” would not be a bad place to start.

Some opportunities surely were missed last year, but others broke the surface. The ideological lockdown imposed by two decades of neo-liberalism is ending. Progressive civil society is finding its voice. Inside the ANC and more broadly in society, colours are being nailed to the mast.

But the left has left few decisive marks on a transition which, after elections in mid-year, will shift into third gear with Mbeki at the wheel. It’s too early to tell, but turning corners then might require levels of invention and temerity that have been way too thin on the ground in the past five years.

**SAR**

# Broadcast News

## Portugal Makes a Come-back

BY MARCUS POWER

Marcus Power is in the Geography Department of Leeds University.

On May 14, 1998 Mozambican prime-minister Pascoal Mocumbi addressed the 38th assembly of the Union of Radio and Television organizations of Africa (URTNA) warning delegates not to accept the transformation of their organizations into "an instrument that turns our continent into a simple receptacle of signals that the world transmits to it." The Mozambican prime-minister has spoken in this and other presentations given to the Southern African Broadcasting Association (SABA) and the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association (CBA) of his vision of African broadcasters as "catalyzers and dynamizers for peace" who act as agents of social and cultural development on the continent.

### The media marketplace

Mozambique has a particularly distinguished record of precisely this kind of socially and culturally dynamic media organization in the spheres of radio, TV and cinema. However, with the beginning of media privatization in Mozambique in the early 1990s and the resulting escalation in Portuguese media ownership this record and the aspirations that lay behind it now look to be increasingly under threat. Indeed, the deregulation and liberalization of the media since the beginning of the 1990's has allowed Portugal (and, we will also see, the Portuguese language) to gain an increasingly powerful hold over Mozambican electronic media outlets.

The initial programme of deregulation and privatization was closely

tied to the beginning of multi-party democracy in Mozambique – through the belief that a more relaxed media environment with foreign private investment would ensure not only improved infrastructure but also more choice and greater media impartiality. Thus, constitutional revisions in 1990 and new media legislation in 1993 saw government commitments to state broadcasting agencies were scaled down, the scope of the Ministry of Information reduced and foreign and private sector investment encouraged. And many observers have pointed to an increase in the choice and diversity of radio stations in the country as one beneficial consequence of these developments. In 1993, for example, there were three stations in the country and the media landscape was heavily dominated by Rádio Moçambique (RM). By January 1996, however, 11 "national" radio stations had been registered a number which had increased to 14 stations by May 1998, among them Rádio VOR of RENAMO and two international broadcasting organizations RFI (France) and RDP (Portugal).

Nonetheless, a range of doubts has also been raised about the implications of encouraging foreign private sector involvement in a country which has had insufficient time to develop national broadcasting capacity and technical skills. In Mozambique the Ministério da Informação has given way to a smaller, arguably weaker Gabinete da Informação, the State's direct support for national media production has been slowly scaled down and foreign media corporations (particularly from Portugal) have increased the countries dependence on international markets. Social and cul-

tural dynamics have seemingly taken second place to the principles of the market.

### Portugal ... and Portuguese

At the centre of recent transformations in the Mozambican audiovisual media and of the controversy that has sometimes surrounded them is an accord signed in May 1995 between the Mozambican and Portuguese governments (worth an estimated US\$60 million) which defined protocols of cooperation between the two in the area of national communication in Mozambique. The protocols were associated with wider Portuguese foreign aid and development assistance packages and enunciated objectives included the improvement of broadcasting infrastructure, professional training and technical capacity. And they have implications for both national radio and TV broadcasting, bringing Radio Mozambique and TVM into close cooperation with their Portuguese counterparts, Rádio Difusão Portuguesa (RDP) and Rádio Televisão Portuguesa (RTP).

Many media professionals have remained wary of increasing dependence on foreign technology and investment, these trends evoking for some historical memories of Portuguese colonialism. (It has been difficult, for example, to forget the origins of RDP in the Rádio Clube Português which became a key agent of propaganda dissemination nationally and internationally for the Fascist dictatorship of the *Estado Novo!*) Nonetheless, in the area of radio broadcasting alone this accord has provided three 10kW FM transmitters and a variety of "technical support" for Mozambican professionals. The largest urban areas Ma-



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## mozambique

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puto, Beira and Nampula benefited first from the installation of the new transmitters. With the provision of six new transmitters with a 50kW capacity donated by Germany RM services are now more widely available in Cabo Delgado, Nampula, Inhambane, Manica, Niassa and Tete. These MW transmitters will by the end of 1998 reach about 80% of each province during the day.

In addition, and despite the improvements to infrastructure and technical capacity in radio-broadcasting which have come as a consequence of the new climate of escalating foreign investment and private sector prioritization, the wider implications for the diversity of Mozambican cultural expression have also been questioned on other grounds. For the fact remains that the extension of MW and FM radio availability has not –

despite some limited efforts to expand broadcasting in the full range of Mozambican languages – significantly advanced the position of programming in these more widely spoken languages. As a result, the Portuguese language has tended to be further privileged.

Debates will continue about the precise significance of this latter development. Still, as Brazão Mazula has argued, one of the “marks of colonialism” that remain in Mozambique is “contempt for Mozambican languages” which still are not used widely in the schools, even in rural areas where the vast majority of the population do not speak Portuguese. Careful consultation with experienced communications workers would have revealed that many feared a ‘bombardment’ of Portuguese culture and information. For many, the contin-

uing dominance of Portuguese over other Mozambican languages and the use of Mozambican audiences in the “defense” of Portuguese language and culture (see below) has to be questioned. Fortunately, Orlanda Mendes of Rádio Moçambique has recently argued that the organization must create conditions so that information is written more directly in the variety of national languages, and of a quality at least equal to the information that is now so widely available in Portuguese. Enhanced support for an expansion of this type of programming would undoubtedly have a ‘dynamizing’ effect on social and cultural development in Mozambique.

### Television, for whom?

The above-mentioned accord with Portugal has also had important implications for television in Mozam-



Henner Frankenfeld – PictureNET Africa

*Community radio station in Tete*

bique, with closely related contradictions to those discussed above also beginning to be visible in that sphere. Thus, the accord of co-operation has put in place new transmitters in Lichinga and Ilha de Moçambique and has aimed to improve existing TV centres in Beira and Maputo with new centres being created in Quelimane and Pemba. A new TV production centre has been established in Maputo (costing US\$7 million) and new transmission facilities have been established in Maputo. According to Botelho Moniz head of TVM this initiative will "bring TV to the country and the country to TV." And yet the question of popular access to TVM remains, particularly since the introduction of a private Cable TV service in late 1998. The geography of access to television in Mozambican society is still highly uneven and TV broadcasting continues to be primarily produced in Portuguese, supported by increasing volumes of Portuguese finance and technical support which retains a distinctly "neo-colonial" (not to mention market-driven) flavour.

RTP Africa and RTP International are services offered by RTP's international directorate which have targeted audiences in the former African colonies and have been able to call on the support of the Portuguese state in their penetration of African TV markets. Although some attempts at co-production with African "partners" are made, Portugal, its history, economy and culture, is never far from centre-stage. In tandem with the objectives of the Portuguese State these services have aimed to (re)establish important cultural and economic ties that were severed by the termination of colonial rule in 1974. Similar accords of co-operation have been established between Portugal and Cabo Verde, São Tomé e Príncipe, Angola and Guinea-Bissau though by far the largest investment has been made in Mozambique. According to Manuel Roque, the President of RTP, the provision of RTP and



Marcus Power

RTPi in Africa arms the former imperial power with "two of the most important instruments available to the Portuguese State in the defense of its language and its culture in these countries"!

When the ONJ, a national journalists organization in Mozambique, first staged a debate on the broadcasts of RTPi and RDPi in November 1995 questions were immediately raised by a number of Mozambican journalists about the government's evaluation of the political, cultural and social impact of the accord on Mozambican society. Many participants articulated a feeling that they had been excluded and omitted from any form of consultation with the government despite the group's considerable experience. Carlos Cardoso, a key figure in the transformation of Mozambique's print media noted of FRELIMO at the time that "it [consultation] is a habit they don't have but they ought to begin to develop." A concern for national interests and national identities was voiced by many delegates who seemed concerned to defend national culture and spoke of a loss of "Moçambicanidade." Many journalists also pointed out that the signing of this accord of co-operation has irrevocably tilted the "balance of communication" between Portugal and Mozambique. According to Gabriel Simbine writing in *Noticias* at the time "it's a unidirectional movement, from Portugal to Mozambique. We are simply bom-

barded by Portuguese culture and information."

Not that this opinion is shared by all Mozambicans in the media organizations directly involved in the agreement, RM and TVM. Successive Presidents of the administrative councils of these two organizations have pointed to the resultant improvements to technical capacity (echoing the language of RDP/RTP). But note, as well, that the accord also fits with the World Bank's plans for a structurally adjusted Mozambique driven by precisely this kind of foreign "private" investment with implications for technical capacity and infrastructure.

The Bank often states its commitment to social and cultural development in Africa but it is difficult to see where the "development" benefits of privatization of state media production lie in a country that has had one the most widely respected records on the continent for radical and innovative approaches to "broadcasting for development." The goal should be broader than simply promoting economic efficiency but should also include broadening the distribution of access to media resources in a country where this still remains profoundly uneven. As noted earlier, privatization is highly unlikely to expand access to broadcasting in Mozambican languages other than Portuguese. Indeed, on this and other grounds, it seems more generally that privatization as presently

defined is incompatible with the objective of increased accessibility and that a much stronger regulatory framework will be needed to oversee and direct media restructuring to serve wider social and cultural interests.

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In 1997 the BBC began 24 hour FM transmissions in English and Portuguese from a 1kW transmitter in Matola. Like RDP, RTP and RFI before them the BBC quoted "professional education and technical assistance" as the justification for its entry into the field. The service, which broadcasts three times

a day in Portuguese and the remainder in English, is currently being extended to Beira and Namapula. Once again the government was quick to express its support for this externally-sponsored initiative, with President Joaquim Chissano, rather surprisingly, commending the BBC for the way in which FRELIMO had used the service to wage its struggle for national liberation! At the inauguration of the transmitter in Matola, Chissano claimed the BBC would respect the realities and culture of Mozambicans, allowing the country to face the challenges of globalization by "emphasizing and reinforcing learning

of the English language." President Chissano's vision of broadcasting and culture in Mozambique thus seemed at odds with the view of African "social and cultural dynamism" outlined by his Prime-Minister Pascoal Mocumbi and cited at the outset of this article. But this merely reinforces the question posed by our broader survey of recent initiatives in the spheres of radio and television (and also cinema: see accompanying box): just how consistent is the government's view of the cultural implications of structural adjustment and of wider processes of globalization for Mozambicans? **S A R**

## The Lusomundo Case

The emerging presence of the Portuguese media giant Lusomundo in Mozambican cinema provides a useful example of the prioritization of large-scale, foreign capital over indigenous medium and small scale investors that current Mozambican policies favour and of the inequalities of access that this produces on the ground. Formed in 1953 primarily as a film distribution company, Lusomundo has since expanded and diversified into exhibition and gone multimedia in the 1980's producing a major upsurge of Lusomundo group profits to 55 million *Esc.* in 1998. Now the biggest communications group in Portugal, the organization owns the Portuguese daily newspapers *Journal de Noticias* and *Diario de Noticias* and has also formed what its annual report calls "strategic alliances" with distribution groups UIP (which includes Universal, Paramount, MGM-UA), Disney, Columbia and Time-Warner for cinema exhibition in Angola and Mozambique.

Lusomundo purchased the *Xenon* theatre in Maputo in 1996 and also now rents the *Gil Vicente* theatre in the capital city, one of the country's largest and historically most important theatres. Lusomundo enlisted the support of the Portuguese embassy in Maputo and put substantial pressure on the Mozambican government, marginalizing several Mozambican investors who also submitted bids. Eldorado Dabula, one of the unsuccessful bidders told *Noticias* at the time that the area where the *Xenon* is situated is a "privileged zone" for the Portuguese due to its proximity to the Portuguese embassy and cultural centre and he accused the Portuguese of wanting to turn the area into "a specimen of little Portugal." At the time of acquisition Lusomundo allegedly warned competitors with bids for the *Xenon* that rival companies would never receive Lusomundo-translated films. According to Paulo Cavalheiro, Lusomundo's Director of Operations, "Lusomundo has a heritage at

the level of films that nobody else in the Lusophone communities has ...." This "heritage," combined with Lusomundo's support from the Portuguese State and the organization's established capacity to generate Portuguese subtitles meant that the market for the *Xenon* and more generally for the privatization of cinema theatres in Mozambique was never really a "free market."

The result? Despite relatively low prices to begin with, ticket prices in two of the largest theatres in the capital city have since become relatively unaffordable to the majority. Mozambican investors have been marginalized by Lusomundo and the strategic alliances it has established in North America. And, perhaps most important of all, the Instituto Nacional de Cinema (INC) has become a peripheral organization, fighting bankruptcy in its attempts to adjust to new relationships with foreign capital while also becoming increasingly dependent on international development agencies for funds. As in many other areas of the Mozambican media, these developments signal a rather radical departure from the popular revolution in social communication that began with socialist transformation after independence. Then, cinema production, distribution and exhibition co-ordinated by the INC was re-organized to meet the needs of regions and social groups ignored in colonial times. Now, however, the objective of increasing national production which reflects national culture and identities has given way to a promotion of foreign private sector involvement and investment which, more often than not, has failed to deliver enhanced access and participation. Privatization has not promoted equality of access or equality of opportunity and financial support from the State has been withdrawn from organizations who have had distinguished records of innovation in "social communication."

# Redefining Relevance: The New South African Theatre

BY LENA SLACHMUIJLDER

*Lena Slachmuis is a freelance writer and musician based in Durban.*

*Out of the ashes of protest theatre, South African theatre is blossoming with new themes, provocative stories and daring new directors. Lena Slachmuis surveys the theatre scene, but highlights the risk of weak developmental initiatives*

As an amplifier of the struggle for liberation, South African protest theatre transported the voice of freedom fighters across the stages of townships and the world. It produced great names such as Gibson Kente and Mbongeni Ngema and trained a generation of talent; yet in its final phase, the fact that it had become synonymous with the liberation struggle raised questions about its lifespan once that battle was no longer.

Five years after the country's first democratic all-race elections, new themes, new names, and new styles are emerging from South African theatre. An encouraging portrait is being composed of an industry insisting on redefining itself, by responding to, reflecting and provoking the society in which it exists. Contemporary social issues, previously politicised historical events, cultural treasures and personal stories are being developed and staged by artists intent on proving their artistry without drifting away from the reality that created them.

Social issues such as domestic violence, crime, unemployment and alcoholism, which would have been deemed irrelevant during the era of "protest theatre," have been explored afresh. One example within the last year is Aubrey Sekhabi's

'*On My Birthday*', a startling expose of domestic violence and adultery set in a black middle-class environment. Another is Thulani Mtshali's '*Weemen*', which highlighted domestic abuse, yet with an ending that showed a victim empowered enough to support the abuser through his process of rehabilitation.

Perhaps the most acclaimed example of highlighting contemporary issues was Sello Maake ka-Ncube's '*Koze Kuse Bash*', which ran at Johannesburg's Market Theatre early last year. A stark portrayal of urban township partying, the play unwinds to reveal how the innocent search for a good time can lead to tragedy and broken dreams. "It was an authentic reflection of urban youth culture," comments freelance arts critic Sandile Ngidi, "and it had a provocative message that asked, 'And then what?'"

Similarly provocative was Johnny Loate's '*Cabbages and Bullets*', which won the Windybrow Arts Festival FNB Vita Award. '*Cabbages and Bullets*' tells the story of two unemployed ex-Mkhonto we-Sizwe guerrillas who feel their struggle has gone unrecognised. They turn to drugs, alcohol and crime out of frustration, pointing a finger of blame at a government sometimes criticised for over-emphasising reconciliation at the expense of improving the plight of the very people whose efforts created a climate where reconciliation could exist.

"There is an emphasis on reconciliation politically, but artists feel a need to go beyond this, unpack it," says Ngidi. "They cannot live on reconciliation alone – they are questioning the paradigm."

To a large extent, these directors' works have been successful in draw-

ing audiences. Sekhabi is an example of the type of new directors who are producing relevant, yet commercially successful work. His production '*Not With My Gun*', described by one critic as "mainstream with a message," had a successful run at the Market Theatre's main stage in August last year. Telling the story of a white burglar breaking in on a celebration of four young black middle class guys, the drama spotlights issues of revenge, morality, and the new relationships that characterise this period of South African history.

These productions signal that new writers and directors recognise their emergence from the era of 'protest theatre,' while appreciating that audiences are no longer looking for the 'amandla' message. Audiences that previously patronised the 'theatre of the struggle' want to be entertained, yet without being transported into a fantasy land that fails to recognise the daily grappling with the hardships the new dispensation has inherited, and the disappointment and cynicism that its high expectations have created.

More than simply playing with new social themes, such as homosexuality or the fascinating blending of multi-cultural urban communities, these new works highlight the schizophrenia that is prevalent in South Africa's contemporary political make-up. Concern about women's continued oppression by society's patriarchal assumptions, or doubts about the honesty of the public process of reconciliation are real issues directly linked to the struggle for liberation.

## Ngema looks to history

Unravelling the past as a way of paving the path to the future has become an increasingly promi-

ment theme for some stalwarts of the protest theatre era, such as Mbongeni Ngema of 'Sarafina' fame. Ngema sees less urgency in reflecting the contemporary social issues than in exploring previously manipulated, misinterpreted and even hidden events in South African history. "I see a lot of the work in Jo'burg dealing with stories of today, things like hijacking, etc, but I feel that we need to educate our people about the past," he explains. "There are incredible stories in our past – just imagine the Zulu amabutho meeting up with modern war technology, fighting back with spears, and winning?"

Ngema's current work-in-progress, *The Zulu*, deals with precisely that history. Scheduled to premiere in Germany in May this year, *The Zulu* recounts the Anglo-Zulu war and the famous confrontation at Isandlwana when the Zulu amabutho defeated the British army. "I believe we have a duty to inform our own kids," says Ngema, recounting a recent visit to the family of Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini, where the family was astounded to hear some of the stories about history that directly featured members of their own ancestral lineage.

Ngema's production, and other works, such as Thulani Nyembe's musical *Bozzoli ... like Pantsula ... like Mshoza*, linking urban dance culture with recent decades of political activism, feed directly into the need for South Africans to bolster pride in their African identity. This is a definitively political need, as without it the radical changes necessary in this period of transformation will be impossible. Even amidst the controversy over the sincerity of Deputy President Thabo Mbeki's commitment to the 'African Renaissance' concept, there is a recognition that Africans and Black South Africans at large have to find strength and insight into their identity through their history and culture.

Achieving this while still attracting audiences to the theatre re-

quires skill and imaginative theatrical approaches. Thirty-three year old Bheki Mkhwane is an example of a theatre practitioner who feels liberated by the transcendence of the protest theatre era. His work, which he describes as aimed at "inspiring the audience's imagination," is developed through a workshop-less production. It is about "an interesting moment on stage – not a good script, not a good story, not good acting." His approach has won him an audience and critical acclaim: last year Mkhwane scooped up seven FNB Vita awards including Best Actor in his own one-man show *Solomon's Pride* and Best New Play for "Sitting Around the Fire," which he created and directed.

But does Mkhwane feel burdened by an obligation to address pressing social problems in his work? "I don't find it a burden, but rather a challenge," he replies. "Theatre is a mirror of the community and its social problems."

Ngidi is encouraged by the spate of new young talent in the industry. "Young actors are no longer pigeonholed into township theatre. There is more artistic finesse, the divide between black and white actors is decreasing," he argues. "Increasingly, the artist is being seen from a black perspective, but also as a universal being."

#### Emphasis on craft

An emphasis on enhanced craft is essential to keep the audience's attention, says Madoda Ncayiyana, an award-winning writer, director and actor, who now focuses primarily on writing and producing drama for radio and television. "People are looking very much at their own stories, those that never got a chance to be told. But in a way they are not daring, very simple and thus have to have a fine art to appeal to the audience," explains Ncayiyana. "With protest theatre, the audience knew the subject so well ... now there is more of a challenge."

Ncayiyana points out that there's a lot of humour in new works, nearly all of which revolves around the different relationships emerging in the 'Rainbow Nation.' "This is still safe. We need to be thinking always where we want to lead the audience to, how we can challenge them."

As a writer for radio drama, which has a long history and exceptionally dedicated listenership, particularly on the African language radio stations, Ncayiyana recognises different needs in a radio audience. "Radio drama has been very conservative over the years," he says. "Now is the time to tackle themes that have previously been taboo."

Using this popular format to change attitudes and behaviour around issues such as violence, AIDS/HIV and human rights is a priority of Vuleka Productions, an independent radio production company which Ncayiyana co-directs. A recent example is a 30-episode radio drama of Vuleka's, entitled *Ingoma kaMama* (*Mama's Song*), which highlights taxi wars, conflicts between South Africans and African immigrants, and the rural/urban and generational divide. But the message underlying the highly entertaining production is one promoting peaceful methods of resolving conflict, breathing a fresh new approach into a genre otherwise reserved for tales of witchcraft, gangsterism and other sensational, but educationally empty, stories.

Using drama for educational purposes is another increasingly popular trend in theatre, as well as radio and television. Now in its fourth year, the Stop Crime Drama Festival, initiated in Gauteng province, will this year go national in an attempt to encourage talent from all nine provinces. In television, at least three current or upcoming drama series build on social/educational aims, such as health education or participatory democracy. Riding on the success of series like *Soul City* (around AIDS/HIV) and *Khu-*

*luleka* (human rights/democracy), comes 'Yizo Yizo', which aims to present a hard look at educational problems in a township setting.

**Sour portrait of development**

This sweet picture of the theatre scene turns sour when one examines the developmental side. Training and development of new talent hasn't progressed to people's expectations. The apex of creative work is Johannesburg, where three major theatres are encouraging and promoting new works through initiatives such as the Young Directors Festival. Other city centres, such as Durban, present a much less glamorous cultural landscape, with former state cultural bodies half-way transformed or not at all, and few opportunities for previously excluded voices.

Ngema, appointed to head the musical drama department of the former state-sponsored Natal Performing Arts Council in Durban, now the Playhouse Company, admits that he has done minimal work in this area through his official post. He blames the Playhouse Company, saying, "It was set up to deliver to the new South Africa but it is still run like in the past. I hope that we can do more in future."

The casualties of this lack of new opportunities are people such as Zeph Nzama, director of the Durban-based Mbumba Artists. A stalwart of the grassroots community theatre initiatives that have nurtured new talents and sustained themselves with industrial and educational theatre, Nzama is disillusioned with changes in the last few years.

"There are new faces in senior posts, but they don't do much to give people chances or access to resources," he says. "We need to put our work on stage, but we don't have that chance. In Johannesburg, the Market and Civic Theatre do a lot, but here in Durban there is nothing like that. The Playhouse Company hardly puts on work from

the community; it is all white productions."

Mkhwane is equally critical of current attempts to develop new talent. He points to the absence of top talent being produced by the universities and technikons, blaming their overemphasis on theory rather than practical work. He has similarly harsh words for some top directors, accusing them of "robbing" people of their raw talent, without developing it further.

Mkhwane dreams of someday starting his own 'culture house', whereby a fund would be allocated to various creative initiatives, with young artists working alongside more experienced artists. He yearns for more opportunities to create and direct new work with upcoming talent, so that he can encourage them to adopt his creative methods. "There is too much emphasis on words and script and direction," says Mkhwane, nonetheless defending the discipline his approach requires.

The risk inherent in the developmental shortcomings of this blossoming theatre industry lies in its potential to become elitist and reach

a tiny minority of viewers. In order for the inspiring work to inspire others, it needs to be seen on stages across all of South Africa's urban centres and beyond. Without that, eight out of nine of South Africa's provinces will end up being drained of its theatrical talents, as they join the 'flood to Johannesburg' in search of greener pastures.

Hopefully, the changing face of television and radio drama will feed off the new directions of the theatre industry, and vice-versa. Redefining the content of 'protest theatre', while retaining and improving on the craft is the crux of the challenge facing new directors. Fortunately, high standards of the era of 'protest theatre' have developed a demanding and critical audience, which judging from its support of some of the new works, appreciates seeing its own emotional and political grappling portrayed realistically, thoughtfully and skilfully on stage. The South African theatre industry will be poorer if it does not rise to the demands of this audience, and instead resigns itself to the purely commercial realm of entertainment and sensation, which characterises the theatre sphere in the majority of urban centres in the Western world. Certainly there is enough dramatic, musical and dance talent to sustain a purely commercial theatre industry. But such theatre would end up tragically neglecting the difficult yet critical emerging agenda that the new-found liberation presents to all South African artists.

As recent works have demonstrated, exploring the complex and difficult questions arising from the new-found freedom, seeking strength and clarity from the tortured South African past, and giving space and support to imaginative new and previously hidden talent can, and hopefully will, secure contemporary South African theatre its place as an evolutionary successor to 'protest theatre'.

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# Canada's Anti-Apartheid Record

## A Class Act

REVIEW BY JOHN S SAUL

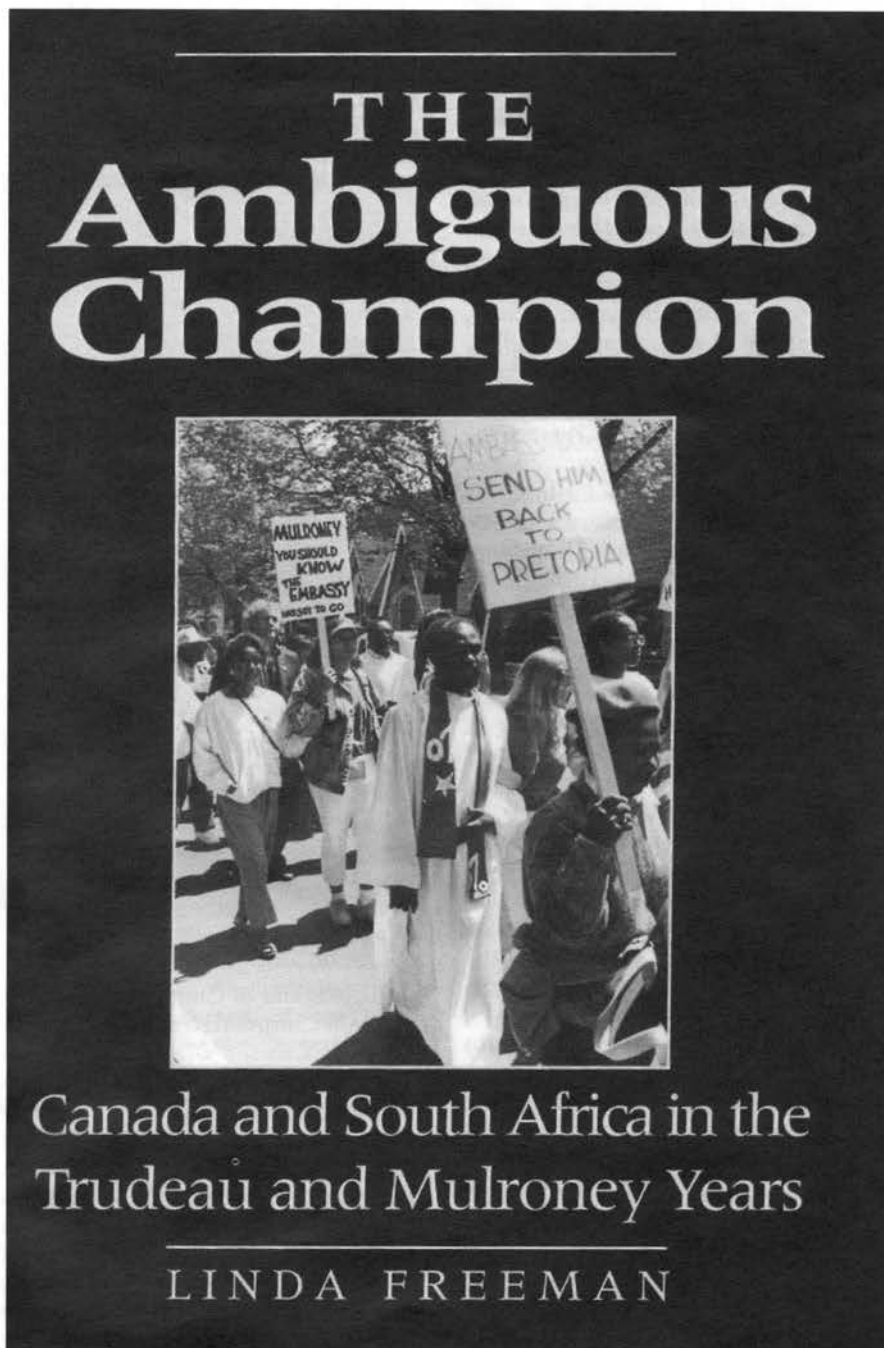
*John Saul is has been a long-time anti-apartheid activist.*

*Linda Freeman, The Ambiguous Champion: Canada and South Africa in the Trudeau and Mulroney Years. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998. 466 pp. ISBN 0-8020-0908-5*

Diplomacy is the art of going abroad to lie politely for one's country. So the wags would have it. And whatever else one might say about Nelson Mandela's otherwise very moving visit to Canada late last year there was quite a lot of lying going on. How else to categorize the constant references to Canada's grand and glorious record in the anti-apartheid struggle?

Not that Mandela was the main perpetrator of such fabrications. As often as not he spoke about the record of Canadians in general rather than that of the Canadian government in particular when handing out kudos (although even he trotted out the heroic litany of "Diefenbaker, Trudeau and Mulroney" during his remarkable Skydome appearance and elsewhere). Veterans of the anti-apartheid struggle in this country could take some solace from the possibility that, most often, he was really speaking about us rather than about the Canadian politicians and businessmen with whom he was in fact spending most of his time.

And yet it was just such politicians and businessmen - now basking in the glory of Mandela's presence - who seemed most smugly engaged in facilitating the pretence that Canada had been in Mandela's corner all along. Difficult, it is



true, to put on too many airs in the presence of someone who spent twenty-seven years in prison for his belief in racial equality and human dignity and then emerged to

embrace his captors in a spirit of reconciliation. Nonetheless, there was a distinct atmosphere of self-congratulation all round about the visit, and, needless to say, not

a hint of apology from "official Canada" about the role Canada had actually played in the anti-apartheid struggle.

### No apology

Still, apology would have been the most appropriate response. It is the great strength of Linda Freeman's new book, *The Ambiguous Champion: Canada and South Africa in the Trudeau and Mulroney Years*, that it permits of no other conclusion about Canada's record. Moreover, it makes its case with such a wealth of documentation and careful argument that it should stand as the essential touchstone for all future discussion of the topic.

Freeman has come by her expertise honestly. The bibliography reveals that she earned her Ph.D. on the topic of "The Nature of Canadian Interests in Black Southern Africa" as far back as 1978. And readers of SAR will recall her relentless tracking of Canada's southern Africa policy through over a decade of annual surveys in these pages (indeed, her very short list of acknowledgments includes gracious thanks to "the *Southern Africa Report* collective"). This is a book long in the making, then, but worth the wait since the scholarship it represents is thorough and formidable (the footnotes and bibliography run to 130 pages for example, almost a third the book's length!) and the argument important.

What she does is demonstrate convincingly how compromised Canada's official policy towards white minority rule in southern Africa was over the decades. For example, she usefully debunks the overblown legend of Diefenbaker as scourge of South Africa within the Commonwealth in the early 1960s. And she neatly documents Lester Pearson's role, later in the decade, both in rationalizing for a wider audience Britain's half-hearted response (through the weakest of sanctions packages) to Rhodesia's UDI and in himself resisting any economic measures whatsoever against South Africa.

However, Freeman saves her main fire for Trudeau and Joe Clark. Trudeau remains a great enigma for the progressively-minded in Canada, along the lines of: he's so smart, why didn't he do a lot better? In fact, on southern Africa he did worse, as Freeman clearly documents. His was a callous failure of humane principle made all the more galling by his infamous statement of the time that "we should either stop trading or we should stop condemning." But, of course, he continued to do both. A



Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau (on right) with President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania at the 1973 Commonwealth meeting in Ottawa. Trudeau disappointed African leaders with his lukewarm support for southern African liberation. (NAC/PA196186)

The Ambiguous Champion

smug prisoner of Canada's presumed capitalist imperatives, Trudeau idly allowed Canada's economic links to apartheid to deepen on his watch and, as Freeman scrupulously documents, permitted the likes of Hedley Bull and his Space Research Institute to bolster South Africa's military arsenal – this despite the UN's mandatory arms embargo of 1977. Nor, as one might anticipate, were things carried out in any more principled a manner during Joe Clark's brief interregnum as Prime Minister.

### Theoretical interlude

Of course SAR readers, accustomed to Freeman's trenchant articles in our pages over the years, will

need little persuading as to the merits of her book, in terms both of the comprehensiveness of the data she provides and of the general accuracy of the analysis she presents. No doubt many of you will already have read the book for yourselves. Rather than gild the lily, then, let me seek instead to engage critically with several of the book's more controversial dimensions – in terms both of its approach and some of its substantive interpretations – that are likely to be of particular interest to those for whom the experience of the anti-apartheid struggle remains an active legacy.

To a considerable degree Freeman allows her careful documentation to drive her argument on these matters. But she is too good a social scientist to pretend that it is really possible for "the facts" merely to speak for themselves. Some theoretical perspective is necessary and here, in the first instance, she chooses to emphasize the importance to the definition of Canada's policy of structural determinations, these defined principally by the logic of Canada's capitalist economy and the vested interests, corporate and bureaucratic, linked to that logic. This proves to be a powerful entry-point, as a *Globe and Mail* staffer felt forced to acknowledge of her book when first reviewing it last year (Sean Fine, "How Canada failed South Africa," *G&M*, April 11, 1998). Fine concedes Freeman's case that the "politics of balance" (social justice *vs.* economics) claimed by decision-makers as driving Canada's South African policy was largely "illusory": "The guiding philosophy was that the state should not interfere with the private sector."

Still, Freeman is unwilling to advocate any straightforward brand of economic determinism, emphasizing – as a means both of defending herself against such a charge and of enriching her analysis – the simultaneous importance of certain "autonomous variables." In this regard she makes much of the impact of



“discourse,” the extent to which the common-sense premises of establishment discussion of South African issues become a factor in their own right in determining outcomes, especially within the foreign-policy making bureaucracy. And yet what Freeman presents as evidence in this regard is the operation of pretty unmediated capitalist ideology: the reduction of national interests to the unquestioned pursuit of profit.

More convincingly, she notes the impact of the discourse of “non-violence,” much trumpeted by “official Canada” to justify its not taking sides more unequivocally – although here too she shows any such preoccupation to have been pretty opportunistically and selectively defined, not least in Cold War terms. Still, if Freeman had pressed her search for intervening variables a little harder she might also have made much more than she does in this book of our pattern of institutionalized racism that made it all too easy for Canadians to deny to Africans the necessary means of their liberation that (for example) we had been more than willing to grant to the maquis of Europe during the Second World War.

Even more important for Freeman as an “autonomous variable,” however, is something she calls “politics,” this latter said to qualify the impact on policy of established economic interests that seem otherwise to define so much about the supine role of Canada towards apartheid South Africa that she describes. Here the shift in Canadian policy undertaken by Brian Mulroney, the other key player focused on in Freeman’s book, becomes a critical test case for her. If structural/economic determination serves to explain so much about most phases of Canadian policy towards South Africa why, Freeman asks, was Mulroney able to go further than any other Prime Minister in acting, rather than merely speaking, tough towards South Africa? For Mulroney did, as Freeman scrupulously

documents, carry Canada’s sanctions’ policy and some related anti-apartheid initiatives to a high-water mark.

### The Mulroney moment

The issue may be less complicated than Freeman supposes. One other possible intervening variable (somewhere between economic structure



Although many believed Secretary of State for External Affairs Joe Clark was responsible for the new stronger policy on South Africa, he expressed misgivings about sanctions and attempted to check Mulroney’s enthusiasm.  
(Bill McCarthy/NAC/PA197236)

The Ambiguous Champion

and “politics”) she rather surprisingly downplays is class, a factor never systematically embraced in a book that otherwise seeks to stake out radical ground in the study of Canadian foreign policy. And yet what binds businessmen, politicians and higher-level civil servants is the privileged position they share in the upper reaches of the class hierarchy in this society and the (hegemonic) outlook – “discourse”! – they are encouraged to share. Against this

kind of analysis, however, Freeman chooses to frame her radical critique by highlighting what she calls the “structured representation of interests,” an approach that risks functioning as a kind of left variant of pluralist theory. Thus, under normal circumstances, some voices – notably those linked to capital – are argued to sound more loudly in the pluralist chorus that drives our politics than others. But when they don’t, at least in any very straightforward manner, the reason must be “politics,” this term implying, apparently, the impact on policy of a much wider range of political interests. What we were witnessing in the Mulroney case, she argues, is “a response at the political level to the dramatically new conjuncture at home in Canada and abroad in South Africa. In this way, the new policy demonstrated the relative autonomy of the Canadian state from key forces wedded to the policy of the past” (134).

No doubt developments in South Africa itself did change the terrain of decision-making considerably and demanded fresh thinking about appropriate Canadian policies. But how far do the invocation of “the political level” and “relative autonomy” take us in explaining Mulroney’s own response? Not far enough, I fear, if Freeman is suggesting that forces from beyond the sphere of ruling class interests had suddenly become central to Canada’s policy-making *vis-à-vis* South Africa. For the fact remains that “key forces” from the past – the hegemonic Canadian capitalist class – dictated outcomes even during this period.

Of course, the terms of such ruling class hegemony cannot be read crudely off the presumption that some entirely straightforward “logic of capital” is at work; class analysis of a far more shrewd and supple kind is required. Political assertions from below do have some impact, for example: but this is primarily because an effectively hegemonic class will be at its most successful when it is able

to co-opt and contain such oppositional demands rather than merely seek to repress them. This point is particularly important to our discussion, below, of Freeman's analysis of the Canadian anti-apartheid movement. More central here is the fact that struggles within that hegemonic class (struggles between factions and fractions shaped by differing interests and differing levels

labour made available by a parallel system of racial oppression. However, what seems evident is that, by the mid-1980s, a profound debate had emerged within the capitalist class, world-wide and local, over how best to deal with the problem that a near-revolutionary South Africa now posed. Cooler heads within that class had begun to have some pretty daring thoughts, in ef-

who was an extremely vocal member of the Eminent Persons' Group (EPG) assigned by the Commonwealth in the mid-1980s to investigate the South African situation. Echoing the EPG's call for sanctions to force apartheid South Africa to its senses before the confrontation there escalated out of control, Fraser (as cited by Freeman) argued that any such escalation meant



David Hartman

of craft and understanding) to define its strategies are often as intense as any struggle between classes. Indeed, in seeking to understand the apparent anomalies of the "Mulroney moment," it is precisely by focusing upon such intra-class struggles that we learn far more than through any insights provided by "radical pluralist theory."

#### Saving the baby

Thus capital in South Africa itself had long profited from the cheap

fact echoing the earlier insight of Anglo-American executive Zac de Beer that "we all understand how years of apartheid have caused many blacks to reject the economic as well as the political system ... We dare not allow the baby of free enterprise to be thrown out with the bathwater of apartheid."

Particularly important in advancing this point of view was Malcolm Fraser, the Conservative former Prime Minister of Australia,

"moderation would be swept aside ... The government that emerged from all this would be extremely radical, probably Marxist, and would nationalize all western business interests." As I wrote at the time (in my article "Mysteries of the Dark Cabinet: What is behind the Mulroney government's surprising stand on South Africa?" *This Magazine*, August-September, 1988), "it seems clear that Mulroney responded to this reading of the South African situation. To the goal of ingratiat-

ing himself with the black Commonwealth was now added the role of spearheading the forces of enlightened capitalism!" From such a perspective much of the mystery attached to the explanation of Mulroney's anti-apartheid initiative falls away.

To be fair, Freeman does allude to much of this evidence and it is also true that some of the other variables she introduces did have pertinent effects: for example, it probably did make some difference to Mulroney's ability to embrace the side of the intra-capitalist strategic debate he did that he was not a racist like Reagan and Thatcher. Still, Freeman at times seems so intent upon looking elsewhere for additional "political" explanations of Mulroney's choice that she tends to blur the central insight offered by a more firmly grounded class analysis of that choice. Moreover, this latter way of understanding Canadian policy-making is further verified by what happened next: when the South African government seemed to have succeeded at least momentarily in crushing domestic resistance through its Emergencies of the later 1980s its apparent success suggested the possibility of a return to "business-as-usual" on the old racist terms – and reinforced the less adventurous perspectives both of other capitalist actors in Canada and of other, larger, capitalist powers, notably Britain and the United States.

At this point Mulroney's own enthusiasm waned (165), further solidifying a context within which the forces in Canada supportive of a more conventional capitalist approach to South Africa (their lineup usefully itemized by Freeman here) waxed strong once again, and the malignant Clark could emerge as Cabinet point-man for reining in what was now thought to have been too forward a policy. This is not too surprising. After all, even in acknowledging the uniqueness of the Mulroney moment Freeman demon-

strates just how short-lived and shallow the high-water mark of Mulroney's anti-apartheid initiative actually was. Now, as that moment faded, she can link her evaluation of Mulroney that much more firmly to her earlier discussion of the likes of Diefenbaker and Trudeau and emphasize the flimsy nature of Mulroney's own claim to the legendary status that has begun to accrue to him on this front (256). And yet,



In 1985–6, the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group attempted to negotiate a peaceful end to apartheid. In South Africa (from left), Archbishop Edward (Ted) Scott, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada; Sardar Swaran Singh, senior cabinet member, government of India; Dame Nita Barrow, president of the World YWCA and World Council of Churches; Malcolm Fraser, former Prime Minister of Australia; Winnie Mandela, then wife of Nelson Mandela; John Malecela, senior cabinet minister, government of Tanzania; Lord Anthony Barber, chairman of the Standard Chartered Bank and senior cabinet minister, British government; and General Olusegun Obasanjo, former head of government, Nigeria. (Archbishop Ted Scott)

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at the same time, it is interesting to note the number of members of the capitalist class who would come to see Mulroney as having been right the first time. Indeed, it was precisely during the late-1980s period of Mulroney's retreat from his advanced thinking regarding apartheid that certain similarly inclined capitalists in South Africa itself were beginning to press forward successfully the logic of a very similar containment strategy for preempting and taming black aspirations.

#### The anti-apartheid movement

What, while all this was going on, of the Canadian anti-apartheid movement? It bears emphasizing that

in her concern to allow "politics" to matter Freeman is led to study carefully the role – one that another writer might have ignored – played by various forces in Canadian society that swam against the current of establishment interest and orthodoxy as regards South Africa. In her book this encourages an important acknowledgment of the often impressive efforts of a wide range of churches, unions, NGOs and libera-

tion support organizations linked to the Canadian anti-apartheid movement, broadly-defined. And yet, as hinted earlier, in her search for the "political" explanation for the rise of Mulroney's own anti-apartheid policy – one that, given her approach, must emphasize the broadening and diversifying of the range of relevant political forces in order to explain outcomes – she may give the movement far more credit for producing that enlightened policy than it deserves. Even more clearly, she places far too much blame upon the movement for permitting the subsequent weakening of Mulroney's commitments (she speaks, in this respect, of the negative impact of "the

splintering of the movement" in the late 1980s, of the "rut into which [it] seemed to have fallen," and of the extent to which its self-destructive tendencies "removed a key irritant from within civil society" [232-3].

For starters, in documenting the range of organizations and individuals involved in anti-apartheid work in Canada Freeman misreads the nature of the movement in important ways. Thus her main point of reference in measuring movement success seems to be the degree of its institutionalization as a *national* movement. Yet this is not a particularly illuminating angle of vision. True, as she demonstrates, the movement was pulled forward, briefly, towards a more integrated national focus during the hey-day of Mulroney's policies. But most anti-apartheid activists had never been naive about what could be accomplished at that level, choosing instead to prioritize efforts in their own diverse constituencies, social and geographical.

After all, the alternative model was the British Anti-Apartheid Movement, its measure of unity facilitated by the compact geography of the UK, but also by a degree of enforced policy conformity (uncritical support of the ANC, for example) that many anti-apartheid activists in Canada would not (quite rightly, in my opinion) countenance. As for the fact that some left-liberal campaigners fell for Clark's venal attempt in the late 1980s to substitute various feel-good gimmicks (his focus on the media question, for example) for any substantial deepening of sanctions, or were coopted by monies momentarily made available by the government for certain kinds of anti-apartheid activities, this was perfectly predictable. Nonetheless, in my experience and in sharp contradiction to the elegiac tone adopted by Freeman about such matters, there was no slackening off of anti-apartheid work in Toronto itself and in many Toronto-based institutions (but this was also

true elsewhere in the country) as the 1980s wore on, whatever the decay of the soft unity that had momentarily surfaced nationally amongst very di-



Press conference with President Kaunda (on left) and Prime Minister Mulroney at the Commonwealth meeting in Kuala Lumpur in 1989. Both were antagonized after Prime Minister Thatcher issued a statement of dissent from an agreement on sanctions she had just proposed and signed. (Bill McCarthy/NAC/ PA197234)

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verse constituencies, regionally, politically and ideologically.

But what about the impact of this movement, however interpreted, on policy? No doubt, in its very diversity, it did make some difference: ironically, Freeman herself – only several pages (248) after her

pronouncement of the movement's self-destruction – is to be found hailing the extent to which forces in civil society (churches, unions and the like) stayed the Mulroney government from merely dumping such sanctions as were in place at the point when the negotiations process began in South Africa in 1990! But in the 1980s phase Freeman focuses upon most centrally, the movement's fate was to flow most strongly with the opportunity offered (largely for reasons beyond the movement's own control) by the Mulroney moment and to appear to ebb somewhat when that moment passed. To interpret events otherwise – to "blame the movement" for Mulroney's backsliding, for example – is to miss the main point to be gleaned from an alternative reading of the history of the anti-apartheid movement in Canada.

For the one thing that a structural-cum-class analysis of Canadian policy-making should underscore is just how limited in its impact a reformist approach (including the attempt to reform one particular aspect of Canada's foreign policy) must inevitably be without a far more fundamental transformation of Canadian society and polity. This is the hard lesson that radical anti-apartheid activists kept learning during the years of their activity as they were confronted constantly with the economic-cum-class logic of our country's link to racial capitalism in South Africa. This is not to say that they – we – were wasting our time, nor is it to say that we couldn't have worked both harder and more effectively. It is to suggest, however, that Freeman's pluralistic/"political" qualifications of her main argument risk blurring the very strength of the case (about the overbearing impact on policy of the untransformed socio-economic structures in this country) she makes most effectively ... and usefully.

#### The struggle continues?

In the end, interestingly, these latter structures reclaim centrality in her

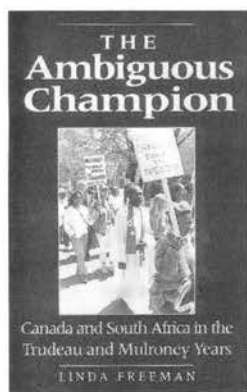
argument about Canadian policy-making. Not the least of the virtues of this important book is Freeman's insistence on carrying her story through, however briefly, to the post-apartheid present – a sign of her welcome insistence throughout on wedding careful scholarship to social and political concern. Moreover, her "Conclusion and Epilogue" demonstrates, once again, the strengths of the structural emphasis within her overall argument. For she reveals unerringly the narrow and selfishly market-driven character of Canada's continuing outreach (trade, aid and the rest) to post-apartheid South Africa, making this chapter of far more than historical interest and indeed required reading. Her conclusion is powerful: "In the current conjuncture of neo-liberal fundamentalism, dominant forces in Canada and the West seem even more indifferent to the interests of the vast majority [in South Africa] than they were in the long battle to end apartheid" (304).

Good stuff. Yet even in this last chapter there must be nagging doubts as to the efficacy of the overall framework (marked by its down-playing of class analysis) that Freeman adopts. The South African state under ANC leadership has proven to be a willing recipient of such market-defined, post-apartheid Canadian outreach. Why? Special attention must be paid, in this regard, to the *embourgeoisement* of a stratum of Africans, within and without the ANC, and the very considerable evidence that this development has contributed mightily to the movement's leadership accepting, in Freeman's words, "policies at odds with the principles of the ANC Freedom Charter" and adopting a brand of "neo-liberal fundamentalism." Was not this precisely the outcome that the deep thinkers within the capitalist class had begun to consider possible in the late-1980s (if not, perhaps, Mulroney himself: whatever the cunning of his broader strategic views, his gov-

ernment crudely down-graded the claims to centrality of the ANC until quite late in the day)? Yet, as Freeman analyzes the ANC (301), first and foremost this "drift to the right in discourse and the approach towards economic policy of senior ministers in the Mandela government, although not entirely uncontested, indicates how narrow the options are"!

This is, at best, only half right. The structural constraints imposed on the ANC by the power of capitalist interests, world-wide and local, are real enough. But the ANC itself has also become part of the problem in many ways, the constraints generated by class formation and class polarization (and by the proto-hegemonic quality of its chosen "discourse") beginning to cut across it just as surely and as sharply as they do across Canadian society and the Canadian political system.

S A R



### The Ambiguous Champion

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# Hell on Earth

**CIIR**

CHANGING MINDS • CHANGING LIVES

Alex Vines

Angola is in a critical transition phase between war and peace. Ruined by three decades of war, and with an appalling human rights record, what are Angola's chances of achieving a lasting settlement?

This Briefing examines Angola's violent past, the chief protagonists, and the fitful peace process. It looks at past and present abuses of rights that underlie Angolans' lack of confidence in the peace process, and points to the challenges for the non-governmental sector.

If peace and reconciliation are to last in Angola, people need access to the truth. They also need economic, social and political freedom. This Briefing examines the kind of national and international reconstruction needed to end Angola's long turmoil.

**briefing**

## Peace Postponed

*Angola since the Lusaka Protocol*



Alex Vines, *Peace Postponed, Angola since the Lusaka Protocol*. The Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR) London, September 1998. 32 pp. ISBN 1852872004

*'The history of the modern conquest of Angola is irrigated by the blood of the victims'.*

These words, written about the sanguinary 75 years of Portuguese wars of occupation in Angola up to 1926, could easily describe the country's recent past. Since 1975, half a million or more have died directly through armed aggression. Up to three times that number, mainly children, have perished through disease and other indirect causes. Once overwhelmingly a rural people, most Angolans today live precarious lives on the edge of towns and cities. After several false dawns, peace is a mirage. And there are no signs that this wretchedness will soon end.

Why has Angola become hell on earth? The chains of causation are long and complex. Put simply, Angolan dynamics pivot around two factors: first, the relentless Western, especially American, insistence on cheap petrol; second, the relentless but frustrated competition among Angolan politico-military elites for control over export revenues. These dynamics have driven a machine for human slaughter. Its essence is horribly banal: the lives of hundreds of thousands of Angolans have been sacrificed so that American Barbies and Kens can keep enjoying their motoring lifestyle.

In an important new publication, Alex Vines, a veteran British analyst of Mozambique and Angola, presents a compact yet wide-ranging overview of the state of play in today's Angola. The aim is not to expose and disentangle the roots

### REVIEW BY DAVID SOGGE

David Sogge works as an analyst, based in Amsterdam, where he is a Fellow of the Transnational Institute. Representative of CUSO and SUCO

in Mozambique from 1980 to 1983, he first began visiting Angola in 1985. Among his publications on the country is a 1992 book with an absurdly optimistic title *Sustainable Peace: Angola's Recovery*.

of the country's agonies, but rather to chronicle and explain events since Angola entered its 'third war' in October 1992. In 32 pages packed with facts and informed assessments, Vines focuses on the military and political battles, the UN's role, with special attention to its (in)action on human rights, and the emergence of Angolan NGOs and independent media.

The result is an indictment not only of Angola's political class, but also of the international bodies tasked with promoting peace and respect for human rights.

Vines begins by reviewing the country's post-colonial history. He quickly sketches its 'second war' from 1975 to 1991. That conflict paralleled other anti-communist 'rollback' wars taking place in the same period: Afghanistan, Cambodia, Nicaragua and Mozambique. Vines alludes to this when he notes that U.S. covert aid to Unita totalled about a quarter of a billion dollars between 1986 and 1991. This bankrolling in the name of freedom and democracy was second in size only to that given the Mujahidin of Afghanistan, the precursors to today's ruling group of violent anti-democrats.

The 1975-91 war teased out and reinforced patterns of social, political and economic polarisation. These beset Angola to this day: MPLA versus Unita; city versus countryside; northern and peripheral ethnic groups versus Ovimbundu people rallying to appeals to ethnic chauvinism; offshore economy of oil and diamonds versus onshore economy and the internal market; elites accumulating via various rackets versus poor people using a wide variety of survival strategies.

Vines alludes to the hidden war economy, and to the competition among what are basically rival mafia networks: 'The division of spoils has become the endgame in the Angolan conflict.' He leaves unexplored the hypothesis that interests in perpetuating highly

profitable rackets on both sides are perhaps the greatest single obstacle to peace. From Bosnia to Sierra Leone to Colombia, wars like this are driven by organized greed. They operate at deep and invisible levels, but could not work without the collusion of international firms and their cartels. The system entrenches interests. For if real peace comes, the rules of accumulation will change. Then new claimants will have to be accommodated. For today's war profiteers, that is a disagreeable prospect.

Vines recounts the political episodes pushing the war forward. He concludes that, in the run-up to the 1992 elections, Savimbi's terrifying rhetoric stampeded voters – who were otherwise fed up with a corrupted and arrogant MPLA – into voting against him. Savimbi's US advisors had prepared him only for an electoral victory, not defeat. Because when defeat came, he took the country back to war with a vengeance. That triggered terrible reprisals, massive government re-armament, and a further 300 thousand dead by the end of 1994.

The booklet concentrates on events since the November 1994 signing of the Lusaka Protocol – Angola's second peace deal. It was brokered over many months and concluded (as in Bosnia, where the Serbs backed down) only after Unita had been coerced through force of arms. Vines shows how the belligerents rather promptly began the peace accord to wipe their boots. At the same time, UN-supervised peace-making went on as a bizarre pantomime. For since Lusaka, Angola has been a theatre of war, but also a stage of theatrical acts of 'peace' alternating between tragedy and farce.

Instead of a cease fire, there were a series of major and minor flare-ups, with direct casualties in the tens of thousands. Instead of a demobilization of armies, there was a re-organization and re-grouping of fighting forces (and the addition

of squads of private mercenaries.) Instead of real Unita soldiers being quartered in 15 UN-supervised camps, there were mainly stand-ins dragooned from among young men, the disabled, and cast-offs from Unita's fighting forces. Instead of real weapons being turned in, Unita handed over mainly old and unusable junk – eliciting a mere shrug of shoulders from the UN. Instead of disarmament, there was a massive re-armament on both sides (a subject Vines has investigated in depth). Instead of a systematic reduction of explosive mines, as popularized by Princess Diana, both sides have been planting more. Instead of the re-incorporation of all Angolan territory under a single Luanda-centred Government of National Unity (that has included Unita politicians and generals since 1997), the country remains divided into two nations, part of which responds only to orders from Unita headquarters in Bailundo – and in some peripheral zones things depend neither on Luanda or Bailundo, but rather the armed men who happen to be present. Instead of freedom of movement of people and goods – a great desideratum for ordinary Angolans wishing to trade, to go home, or to search for work – there are still armed roadblocks, effective captivity, and now widespread banditry to keep people where they are.

The efforts undertaken – a peace accord, a United Nations presence much heavier than in the period 1991-1992, trade and other sanctions, occasional arm-twisting by heavyweights from the Pentagon, State Department, IMF and others from Washington DC – were meant to drive a stake into the heart of the war, to kill it once and for all. But the monster refused to die. Years of international pressure have been a case of going-through-the-motions.

Vines summarises one of the many scripts the belligerents were supposed to have followed: a January 1998 agreement spelling out the steps to full and complete de-

militarization of Unita, the granting of special status to Savimbi, and the extension of national Angolan administration into 'Unita-land', up to and including its highland capital, Bailundo. All in vain. Savimbi has been under-estimated at every juncture. Certainly the scale of firepower at his disposal – demonstrated to great effect against government forces in December 1998 – and the world arms market that supplied it, have been consistently under-estimated.

Vines devotes a chapter to a subject on which he is also quite expert, the impotence of United Nations. He notes especially the motions it went through to monitor human rights abuses. Like other outside agencies, and the Angolan Ministry of Justice itself, the UN's Human Rights Unit in Angola has been deliberately kept ineffective so as not to upset the so-called peace process. Vines shows that this was another piece of theatre, and implies that the UN's lack of backbone has only worsened a pervasive climate of disrespect for basic civil rights, and a widespread culture of impunity. On a broader plane, he concludes: 'In the end, despite repeated postponements combined with UN sanctions against Unita, it would appear that neither side is any longer susceptible to UN or outside pressure.'

In his closing third chapter, Vines considers the still narrow but growing space in civil society that has opened since 1989. In Angola, as in many other places, popular hopes, and increasing amounts of aid money, ride on nonprofit organizations and churches as relief agencies, and as resolvers of conflict. Vines rightly keeps his focus set at a wider angle to include trade unions and independent media – those whose vocations are not in the relief of suffering but in defending interests of members and in speaking truth to power. Due attention goes to Angolan organizations such as SINPROF, the embryonic trade union of teachers, and ADRA, one of

the outstanding development NGOs in southern Africa.

Yet some important aspects of civil society are left under-illuminated. The role of churches is introduced, for example, with the observation that most churches have been built along major political fault lines. But that important idea is not pursued. Instead we find a chronicle of worthy efforts, some of which have been genuinely useful and a few even courageous. But the failings of churches go unmentioned, and appear to fall under a cloak of love. For in contrast to Mozambique, the overall church record in Angola has been marked by schisms, self-interest, and effective paralysis. Church action for peace is thus certainly no better – and given opportunities missed, is arguably worse – than most other foreign-supported institutions in the civil sector.

Vines also does not mention the rise of associations of business people. Such groupings now enjoy a commanding presence in civil society in Africa and elsewhere. Although the real power of business people may be exercised through informal circuits, the influence of their trade associations in setting agendas and steering public discourse in Angola should not be forgotten in the general jubilation about the rise of the 'third sector'.

The omissions in this chapter do not, however, detract from its overall value. It offers intriguing information on flows of money from abroad, particularly those from at Washington, DC, to promote human rights, conflict resolution, and 'good governance'. Vines rightly queries their logic and effectiveness.

There is a sharp synopsis of Angolan media, where propaganda battles are waged and where journalists face serious, even deadly, intimidation. Vines cites media censorship, together with lack of freedom in the movement of people and goods, as the two most fundamental immediate obstacles to the restoration of

popular confidence in peace and in the future.

Vines concludes by calling, as does Amnesty International, for the establishment of an impartial human rights commission in Angola. International human rights organizations should moreover enjoy easier access to the country. And the UN, donors, and the government should promote civic education and reconciliation.

An international spotlight on Angola – particularly on Angolans struggling for civil, political, and social rights – can be crucial. For example, after a particularly brutal assault on the life of an Angolan trade union leader, the BBC broadcast news of the incident within 24 hours. That seemed to bring about a temporary halt to anti-trade union intimidation.

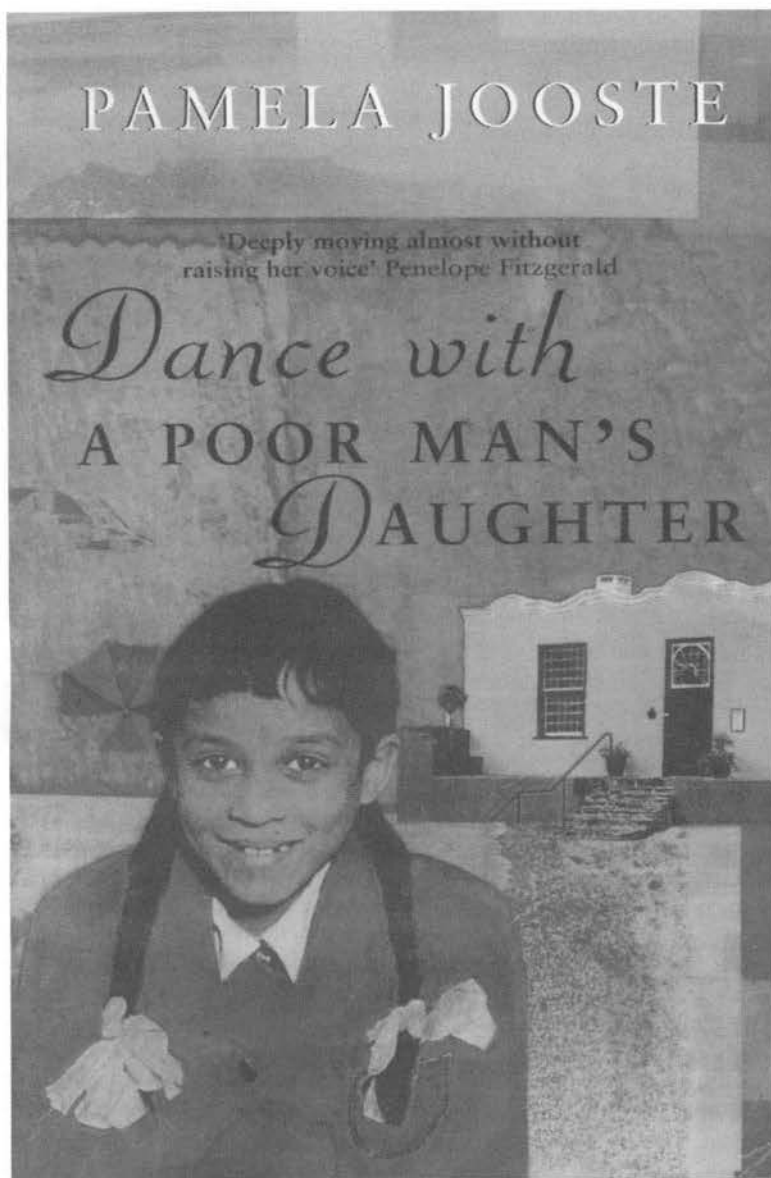
Other struggles may also soon need the protection of the international spotlight. Apart from seeking peace and freedom to move, Angolans are struggling for rights to land. As wealthy Angolans, with South African partners, acquire huge tracts of rural land and urban real estate, poor Angolans face dispossession. Such 'free-market' processes produce far more victims than explosive mines. Yet asset-grabbing gets little attention from NGOs and the media.

Angolans are also struggling for freedom from domestic violence, a special theme of a new women's organization, noted by Vines. For these initiatives too they want and need monitoring and support from abroad. In contrast to many of the dozens of NGOs that have sprung up in response to donor demand for 'partners', member-based groups like SINPROF don't want little project grants and a series of seminars about civil society – the thin soup of today's modern aid industry. They want something more nourishing. Perhaps the revival and re-invention of that old, disused idea: solidarity.

**S A R**



# Whose Dance?



## A REVIEW BY CAROLYN BASSETT

Carolyn Bassett is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Political Science at Toronto's York University. Her dissertation research is on trade unions and the transition in South Africa.

Pamela Jooste, *Dance with a Poor Man's Daughter*. Doubleday, London, 1998. 349 pp. ISBN 0385-409117

Who is Lily Daniels, the 11-year old narrator of *Dance with a Poor Man's Daughter*? Is she a simple fictional character, a wise innocent able to see the injustice of the racist laws and culture that reshaped the lives of all South Africans during the 1950s all

the more clearly because she is free of any 'political agenda'? Is she a crude representation of a secretly racist author? Is she that author's alter-ego, attempting to explain the damage wrought by the Population Registration Act, the Group Areas Act and other manifestations of apartheid, colonialism and racism and to portray these insights to a white South African population still deep in denial?

Pamela Jooste's first novel, *Dance with a Poor Man's Daughter*, won a Commonwealth Best First Book Prize for the Africa region in 1997. Controversy has swirled around the book in South Africa and the book's white author, however, as readers debate the authenticity of Jooste's characters, her use of 'voice,' her presumed audience and her political agenda. Is Jooste offering yet another colonialist, racist depiction of 'the other' or a stirring indictment of the ideology and practice of apartheid? I read more of the latter in her book, but Jooste made a very risky political choice to write in a 'Coloured' voice. Some reviewers have argued that Jooste accepts and reinforces some of the very stereotypes that underpinned and legitimized racial segregation in the first place, therefore making her book's overall message far too ambiguous.

### Lily's story

The story itself is straightforward. Lily Daniels is a young 'Coloured' girl who shares the story of her family and her neighbourhood in the months immediately preceding their forced removal to the Cape Flats. Lily's vignettes explore the special relationship she has with each member of her flawed but loving family, with its strong, independent women and frequently weak and immoral men. Inevitably, their stories are intertwined with the political events of the 1950s, and illustrate the challenges that the various characters faced in these months, and the mounting tensions within the community.

Most striking is the way that author Pamela Jooste uses the naive voice of Lily to illustrate the cruelty of the apartheid state. In Chapter 6, "An Old Native is Dead," Lily struggles to understand her Aunt Stella's story about the removal of old Andries, the Xhosa caretaker of the local graveyard, to a "native location." Lily protests: "Old Andries would never go anywhere," I say. 'He never leaves the graveyard. That's his place and that's where

his things are. He keeps his things in his shed. If he wanted to go to the native location he would have gone a long time ago. He would never go now. He likes his job and he's too old." Old Andries chooses death under a train over a slower death in a desolate place he has never seen among people he has never met.

The forced removals will soon affect Lily's home as well. The stories of James, Lily's presumed father, and Gloria, her mother, show how lives were irrevocably transformed by merely speaking out against the forced removal of the Coloured community to the Cape Flats. Voicing the wrong ideas could make you visible and vulnerable. Yet these two pivotal characters reject the easier option of silence, even at risk to their livelihoods, personal security, and the love and respect of their families and friends.

For Lily also shares with us how fear silenced others, and how often community members would help to enforce apartheid laws and practices because to do otherwise would threaten the little bit of personal security and autonomy they did enjoy. Lily's loving grandmother, the centre of the family, fears the political activities of her daughter even as she supports her overall objectives. "My grandmother knows what's going on and when it's gone on long enough she gets hold of my mother and tells her she must stop what she's doing because she's causing trouble. 'You're going around talking ideas into people's heads and if they listen to what you have to say, they're going to pay a price for it.'" Lily herself echoes these fears, and struggles to understand her mother's actions without fully comprehending the injustice done to herself and her community by the state. In Chapter 13, "A Blaze of Glory," Lily's mother successfully brings her community together – including Lily – in a dramatic peaceful protest of a removal, showing that their eventual compliance was not complicity.

### Colourful characters

Not everyone has read Jooste's book as an unambiguous indictment of the apartheid state, however. In her much-read review in South Africa's *Sunday Independent*, Zimitri Erasmus labels Jooste as just another racist white writing another book for whites that mocks 'Coloureds.' Erasmus is correct in my view to point out that Jooste's presumed audience is white, although she chooses not to make the further obvious connection between Lily and a young Jooste, who spent much of her childhood with friends from the Coloured community. Jooste, the author's note tells us, spent her formative years at the small Docklands hotel her parents managed, a hotel frequented by a Coloured clientele. "This," Jooste tells us, "is where we lived and this is where I learned some things about street life and dock life and bars and gangsters and Union Castle liners that come and go and colourful characters like Gus-Seep and Jack Hoxie and Mr. Asher. ... Mine was a special childhood largely because it was peopled by the same kind of characters I have tried to recreate on these pages."

Erasmus takes issue with these 'colourful characters' – specifically the "useless, worthless, drunken, gambling beings" who characterize the range of Coloured male characters in the book. These characters – particularly her gambling uncle Gus-Seep and her gangster cousin Royston/Domingo – are nonetheless portrayed sympathetically by Lily. She loves them despite their flaws. Jooste appears to be trying to assert the fundamental humanity of the gangsters and gamblers, to explain how the 'Coloured community' has produced and incorporated such characters. Erasmus' point, however, if I understand it, is 'yes, but they are still drunks and gamblers. What you are offering once again is a stereotype of the Coloured man, all the more insidious for its liberal trappings, and its expression in the voice of a little Coloured girl.'

In fact, not all the male characters are portrayed in such terms. Neither James, Mr. Asher, nor Errol could be described as useless or worthless, much less drunken or gamblers, although Erasmus might disagree (one is in all likelihood Lily's father, who keeps her mother's secret while nonetheless developing a special bond with Lily; one is a gruff Jewish storekeeper with a secret heart of gold; and one her gay uncle who willingly takes in the child in Britain when her mother decides that it would be best for her to leave South Africa). All present, in their way, strong and positive male figures in her life.

### Inauthentic voice?

Erasmus also raises her concerns about the author's use of 'voice.' Erasmus notes that "though I recognise myself in the picture on the cover, I do not recognise myself in Lily's voice." Lily lacks 'authenticity,' Erasmus seems to say, and therefore cannot and should not serve as a source of knowledge of Coloured hopes and aspirations to the presumed white reader. One question is how serious this problem is to the artistic and political integrity of the book. As numerous critics of post-colonial literature have noted, authenticity in voice is seldom absolute even among those who share ethnic, class and other characteristics with the characters they create, and imagination is central to the creative, artistic aspect of writing. It is not necessarily invalid, I would argue, for a white South African to imagine how it might have felt for a Coloured girl, similar to herself as a child in many other ways, to have had her neighbourhood destroyed by the Group Areas Act. One can further imagine Jooste attempting to reconcile her childhood friends and companions with the demonized stereotypes that the white community has constructed to legitimize its own privilege. Jooste may have continually revisited these events and attempted

to come to terms with them as an adult.

But Erasmus claims that Lily's voice itself has been distorted with racist metaphors likening black people to pack donkeys and mongrel dogs, associating them with madness and misplaced humour. "Jooste would, of course, not allow thoughts like these to escape from her own lips," Erasmus posits. "But, how comforting for white people to hear their own secret thoughts articulated in the voice of a coloured child."

What is Jooste up to? Is she further illustrating the extent to which the Coloured people of South Africa had internalized South Africa's racist discourse? Is it a sign of the extent to which Jooste had internalized such discourse as a child, while nonetheless objecting to the laws and culture that was made possible to some extent by the discourse? Or is it Jooste's deepest, darkest, secret racist thoughts, as Erasmus suggests?

It is difficult to escape Erasmus' concerns to a point, although I think it important to note that the references likening people of colour to animals are very few, and similar references are made to whites. Just as importantly, the specific words and phrases must be interpreted in the context of the book. The references to 'madness,' for example, usually describe characters who go against the 'natural order' of gender relations or of state authority. Anyone who challenges these relations is seen as 'mad' by Lily in that their behaviour is risky, but it is this risky behaviour that Jooste values above all else. The broader political message that Jooste puts forward is unwavering and unambiguous in its condemnation of the laws of apartheid, even as the book tries to grapple with the complex ways in which individuals attempted to make their peace with the state's overwhelming capacity to enforce its will.

#### Political book

*Dance with a Poor Man's Daughter* must be seen as a political intervention, and I believe that Jooste does herself and her book a disservice with her claim that "Lily is apolitical, so this is not a political book." It is political at a number of levels. Most immediately, it is political in its opposition to the policies and practices of the apartheid state. "It's like bleeding to death little by little my grandmother says. At first you don't notice it and even if you do, it doesn't seem important because there are other things going on at the same time and when at last you wake up, it's too late to do anything about it and the shame of it is that people outside will think people in the Valley don't care. They'll think we're just the same as anyone else and willing to let our Valley die without a murmur." The book may deliver a powerful message to a white audience, too many of whom cling to the idea that apartheid was justified, was moral, was better than majority rule is today, despite the revelations of the Truth Commission.

The fact that Jooste was able to write it, had access to time (she quit her job to write full time while her husband supported her), to a publisher, and to the type of language and constructions that would permit the book to be published are all measures of her white privilege: this is also political. It seems to typify the post-apartheid order - no longer formally racially structured, but nonetheless racialized. That a white woman took it upon herself to explain to other whites what apartheid 'really' meant to the Coloured community was also a political act, and a very risky one. Perhaps my own reaction will simply reinforce Erasmus' critique, but I have to acknowledge the book's power to shape my own ideas about the events it describes. I was riveted by the book and recommend it to others.

S A R

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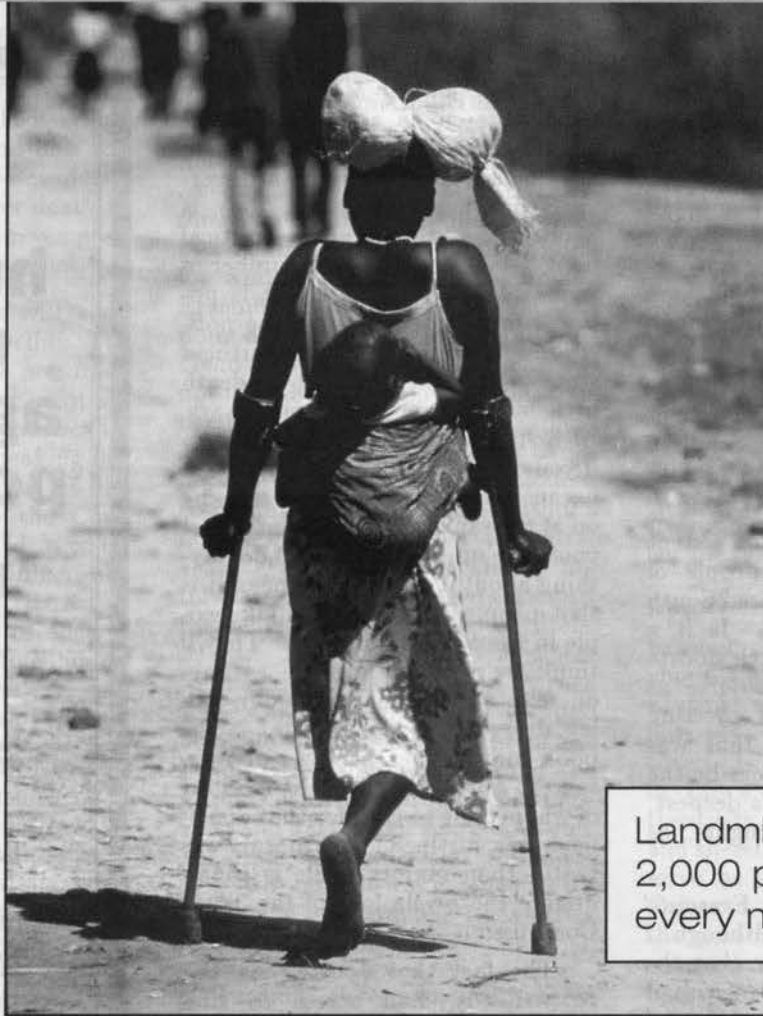
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