



Southern Africa REPORT

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August 1998



The Winnie Factor

Also:

- **Mbeki's Blues**
- **Damn the
Lesotho Dam**
- **Truth and
Reconciliation**

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Southern Africa REPORT

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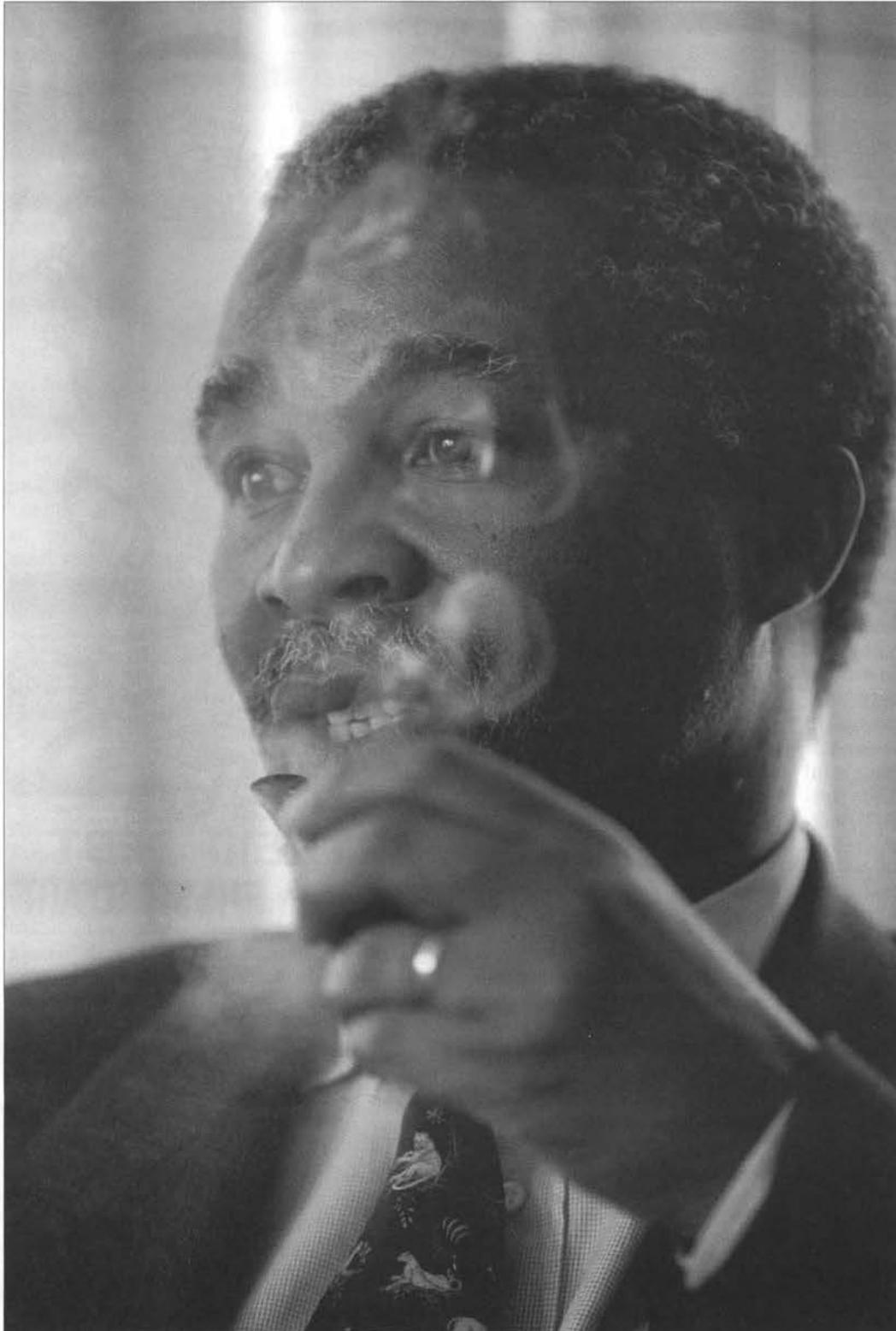
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Mbeki's Blues



It's hard not to feel that Thabo Mbeki, ANC president and likely successor to Nelson Mandela as South African president, is caught between a rock and a hard place. One of the principal architects of the ANC's neo-liberal strategy of appeasement towards capitalism, local and global, as presumptive engine of South African economic transformation, he also has a popular constituency to deal with (not least in next year's national elections). And the latter, the vast mass of the African population who have seen little or no improvement in their own lives since 1994, are restless.

Moreover, many are restless not just about the length of time it is taking to see significant delivery on post-apartheid expectations: after all, four years is a relatively short period in which to right all the manifold injustices of the apartheid era. Much more fundamentally, they are restless about the very real possibility that the ANC is embarked – in particular through its embrace of GEAR, the Growth, Employment and Redistribution programme – on precisely the wrong path in South Africa.

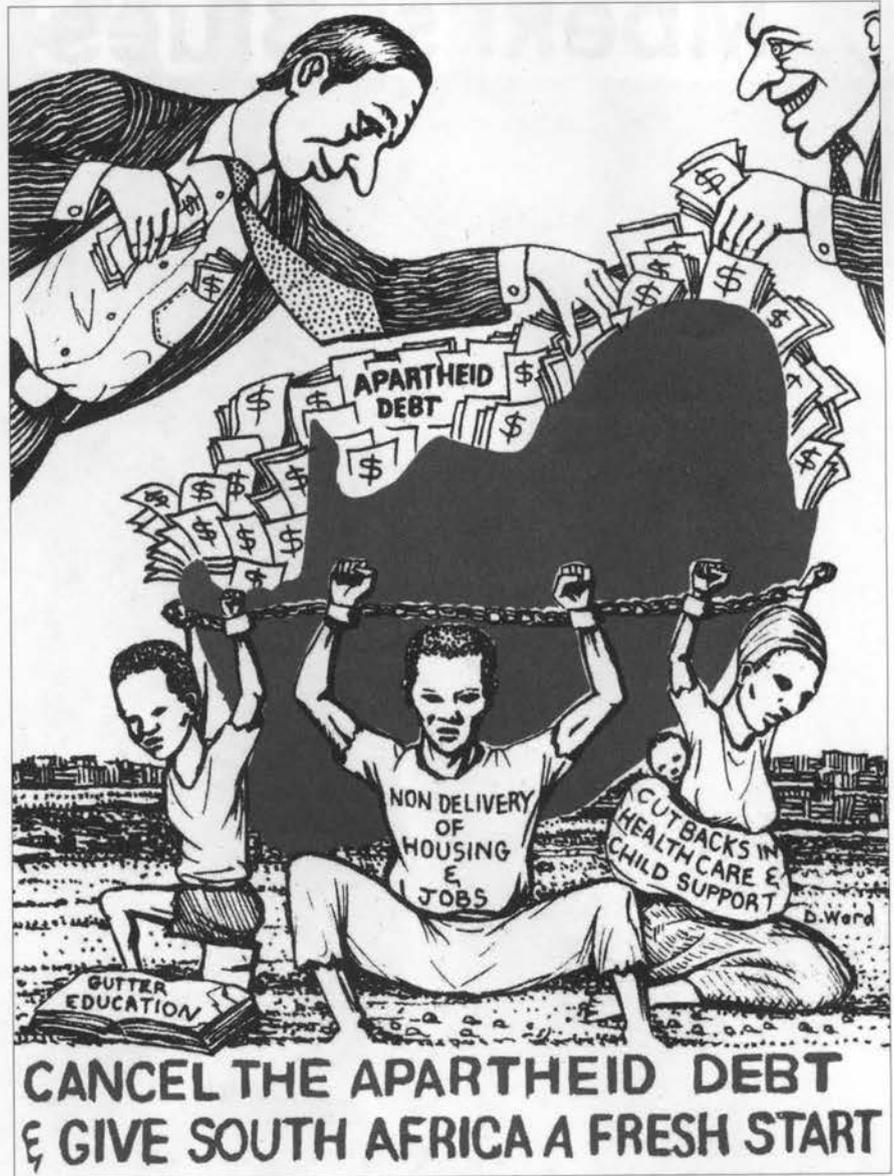
Mbeki and his col-

João Silva – PictureNET Africa

leagues are not about to reverse this overall policy direction. Is this because they feel market solutions to be intrinsically developmental; or because they feel them likely to service their own nascent class interests; or because they feel there is no alternative in any case? This is an issue we have discussed in these pages previously and will not return to here. What can be specified, however, is the result Mbeki and company would now most dearly love to achieve: they seek to dress up their conservative economic positions with a political rhetoric that will serve to legitimize such positions in the eyes of an increasingly suspicious black population.

This is no easy task, as several articles in the present issue may help to demonstrate. Chronicling the many failed promises in the urban sphere, Patrick Bond and Mzwanele Mayekiso also note the multiplying examples of township unrest and suggest the possibility of fresh challenges to conventional ANC/Alliance policies welling up from within civil society and based on new trade union-township dweller alliances. Meanwhile Stephen Robins, in a thoughtful evaluation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), suggests the possibility that no reconciliation of the sort envisaged by the TRC is possible as long as the deeply entrenched inequalities of South Africa are felt to be so little challenged by the present government.

Small wonder, then, that Mbeki has permitted himself some pretty radical diatribes in recent months, including attacks not only on wealthy whites (afflicted, he says, by "social amnesia") but also on a "black elite" that abuses "freedom in the name of entitlement" (see the article entitled "Mbeki champions poor against black and white elites" in *Southscan*, 12 June 1998). This latter group, he charges, "seek to hi-



D. Ward - Alternative Information & Development Centre

jack the sacrifices which millions of ordinary people made to liberate our country for noble purposes, in order to satisfy a seemingly insatiable and morally unbound greed and personal thirst for wealth and comfort, regardless of the cost to our society." And he concludes with a warning about "the danger of a mounting rage to which we must respond seriously."

Note, however, that such radical sounding language is permitted to Mbeki but apparently to no-one

else. As Sheila Meintjes chronicles in her provocative "cover story" on Winnie Madikizela Mandela, part of the latter's political strength and resilience has sprung from the role she has claimed for herself as populist tribune of those impoverished South Africans she argues have been left behind in the ANC's ascension to power. And one of the reasons - but only one among a number of other plausible reasons, Meintjes makes clear - Winnie has been sent to Coventry by the ANC leadership

is that they will not readily tolerate public dissent over their core socio-economic strategy.

This is true whether such dissent comes from Madikizela Mandela's Africanist/populist corner or from further to the left. For there are many who challenge ANC policies (GEAR, in particular) on the grounds that its chosen economic strategy is not only failing to deliver economic growth or development but that it must, inevitably, produce precisely the kinds of stark inequalities that Mbeki claims he is against. And such left critics are not – to put it mildly – being treated kindly.

Indeed, the recent conference of the ANC's ostensible ally, the South African Communist Party, produced paroxysms of rage both from Mbeki and his principal, Nelson Mandela, against those with the effrontery to criticize GEAR. The language used to whip its allies into line was harsh and ugly, variously described by *Southscan* as "markedly aggressive," a "scathing . . . barrage," and a "public onslaught." Mbeki accused SACP leaders of "fake revolutionary posturing," terming them "charlatans" and "confidence tricksters" attempting to build their organization "on the basis of scavenging on the carcass of a savaged ANC." As for Mandela, he stated firmly that "GEAR, as I have said before, is the fundamental policy of the ANC. We will not change it because of your pressure." And he hinted darkly of the consequences that might well follow from any continuing criticism of GEAR.

Though the rhetorical fury unleashed by Mandela and Mbeki at the SACP conference was more vitriolic in tone, this kind of attack is part of an offensive that has also been unleashed in recent months against the ANC's other major ally (but GEAR critic), the trade union central, COSATU. What impact such threats will have on the militancy of the SACP and COSATU

and their mounting of further criticisms of ANC strategy remains to be seen. But the communists and the unions are not alone in any case. There are those emergent township militants, identified by Bond and Mayekiso, who begin to hint that the ANC emperor may have few clothes. There are members of the ANC itself who are less than satisfied with the direction things have taken in the past few years. And there are also the churches.

Anglican Archbishop Winston Ndungane was himself slammed by Mandela for questioning the gospel according to GEAR several months ago. But the churches nonetheless returned to the charge at the recent tri-annual conference of the South African Council of Churches. There that redoubtable campaigner against apartheid (and former secretary general of the SACC), Dr. Beyers Naude, argued that "while GEAR is a 'party political issue,' when it affects the poor, the church has no option but to intervene." At the same meeting, Mzwandile Nuns, representing the worker ministry in Kwazulu-Natal, noted the government argument that they are "cutting social spending in favour of lower company taxation which will subsequently create an environment for more companies to invest."

But, he continued, "what we see on the ground is different. The bulk of poor people remain where they were many years ago." The lesson? As another delegate to the conference, Professor Takatso Mofokeng, put the point, the churches "should go back to the trenches, because it seems that is the language the government understands." "People should demand what they are entitled to and use the methodology that works. GEAR didn't come up for referendum. If people are not happy about it they must stand up against it!"

Where does this leave veterans from the Canadian anti-apartheid movement? Even as we struggle against the deep wounds being inflicted on the social fabric of our own society by the embrace of neoliberal nostrums, shouldn't we also be reaching out a hand to our counterparts in South Africa, those who are raising similar questions about market il/logic and doing so under even more dire circumstances. Note, in this regard, Linda Freeman's final remark in her trenchant review of a recent history of the Taskforce on Churches and Corporate Responsibility (TCCR) and its key role in Canada's anti-apartheid movement.

"Finally," she writes, "one is left with some sadness that the Taskforce's commitment to the struggle of the South African majority ended with the collapse of apartheid. For many, life in South Africa became more dangerous in the transition, and the post-1994 years have not been easy. While the struggle for economic and social rights is a much more complex phenomenon than the struggle for basic civil and political rights, who is better placed than the churches to take it on?" As noted, South African churches are beginning, precisely, to "take it on." But Freeman's message is intended for Canadians. And not just in the churches.



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Urban Betrayal

The ANC in the Townships

BY PATRICK BOND AND
MZWANELE MAYEKISO

South African activists and authors Patrick Bond and Mzwanele Mayekiso, are frequent contributors to Southern Africa Report.

The deterioration of municipal services and declining standards of infrastructure have become commonplace in post-apartheid South Africa and housing has become a policy farce. All of this is not because South Africa is now under "black rule," as many conservatives would have it, but on the contrary because a combination of factors reinforcing residual white power remain. These factors are evident in the profoundly anti-redistributive, market-oriented policies on municipal services designed in late 1994 by the World Bank and inexplicably adopted by the Reconstruction and Development Programme (or RDP) Office in 1995 and Department of Constitutional Development (DCD) in 1996 once the RDP Office was closed and local infrastructure became DCD's responsibility.

Led by Minister Valli Moosa, a core United Democratic Front strategist during the 1980s, DCD had the misfortune of carrying over to the New South Africa some of the country's worst bureaucrats, the white men who designed complex systems of racial segregation. Equally unnerving is the fact that some of Moosa's newly-recruited bureaucrats have, in challenging the legacy of apartheid planning, chosen to do so by invoking neo-liberal principles, an alternative approach that merely compounds the problem for the poor.

Some are quite brazen about this latter choice. In late 1996, for example, the government's main infra-

structure bureaucrat, Dr. Crispian Olver - who during the 1980s was a leading white student activist and member of the ANC's underground armed forces - was challenged about his failure to adopt the RDP provision that services such as electricity and water should be cross-subsidized. Reminded that Alusaf, the big aluminum plant in Richard's Bay, receives electricity at roughly R0.02 per kilowatt hour while rural consumers often pay as high as R0.48, Olver responded to the *Mail and Guardian* that "If we increase the price of electricity to users like Alusaf, their products will become uncompetitive and that will affect our balance of payments." More recently, in a Port Elizabeth seminar on municipal water, Olver blamed opposition to privatization by the trade unionists present for "the failure of the RDP"!

In both cases, however, Olver was simply articulating principles established by World Bank teams who have come to South Africa not only to design national policy but also to invest in privatized municipal infrastructure (through a US\$25 million equity stake made by their subsidiary, the International Finance Corporation, in a fund that promises a 28% US\$ rate of return). This clearly generates conflicts of interest as, for instance, when Bank staff went to Port Elizabeth in 1996 to study the capital expenditure on household water supply and after a week produced a plan with only one option: privatization. (The tenders for establishing a formal privatization policy have just been reported back to the Port Elizabeth City Council, although the SA Municipal Workers Union vows to fight the plan.)

Beyond the shrinkage of the state through privatization - sup-

ported, ironically enough, by former radical community activists of the SA National Civic Organization (SANCO), whose near-bankrupt investment fund allied with the British water firm, Biwater, to bid for the first big municipal contract, in Nelspruit - another sign of declining standards suffered by low-income black South Africans is the level of essential services they can expect when new infrastructure is built in coming years.

Services surprises

For those with below a R800 per month income who live in municipalities with no other means of topping up the subsidy, services will be reduced to a pit latrine (not flush toilet), low-voltage electricity (not enough to run a heater or hot plate), a yard tap (not even in an internal sink), high-mast lighting, and gravel roads.

Again, thank the World Bank for these declining standards - far lower than under even the worst formal apartheid planning - which were established in a March 1995 infrastructure investment report and which are justified mainly by the refusal of both the DCD and the Department of Finance to cross-subsidize the provision of reticulated water and electricity. These services are now considered so expensive at non-subsidized costs that low-income families will be denied the ability to flush their excrement or to turn on an appliance that requires more than 5 amps to run.

Unfortunately, the excrement will often seep into ground water through Johannesburg's dolomitic rock or down Durban's many hillsides or into Cape Town's and northern Pretoria's high water tables. Water purification costs will in-

crease, diseases will multiply, and women will bear the brunt of the heaviest burdens. But these and many other socio-economic costs of the planned standards – as well as the prospective countervailing benefits of the “alternative” strategy foreseen in the ANC campaign platform, the above-mentioned RDP – were never seriously factored in by Bank staff and DCD consultants.

Housing policy offers no relief from this grim prognosis either, with official figures showing the construction of less than 50,000 units built over four years on the currently operative subsidy plus bank credit formula – notwithstanding nearly 300,000 subsidies granted. This in part reflects the fact that the prescribed subsidy, at R15,000 and with no inflation adjustment since 1994,

is roughly half the amount required to build a proper house as mandated by the RDP – providing just enough shelter to qualify as “kennels,” as recipients described them recently to Australian journalist John Pilger. Meanwhile at least 200,000 new families search for houses each year, as the backlog soars.

The ecological, public health and gender-related problems associated with shortfalls in housing, infrastructure and services will become even clearer once project developments are more advanced. But already South Africa has witnessed its share of urban protests since the November 1995 elections, protests not unlike the “IMF riots” that grip so many wretched Third World cities.

Urban protest

Most strife has come in the deregulated field of urban transport, where instead of the massive provision of public transport mandated by the RDP, Minister Mac Maharaj expanded the neo-liberal policies of the National Party regime, thus failing to stem the ubiquitous taxi violence and accidents bred by overtrading and an intense speed-up of drivers in search of profit. On public rail lines, as well, transport restrictions and higher commuter prices in Tembisa (just east of Johannesburg) sparked riots that left nearly a dozen people dead at the hands of a (privatized) security company in mid 1996.

In early 1997, even more intense riots broke out in El Dorado Park, the low-income coloured township of Johannesburg whose local political leaders have regularly taken up populist, quasi-ethnic campaigns against the ANC. During a day-long protest, four people were killed over resident demands for lower municipal rates. In August 1997, several protests over service payments shook East Rand and Pretoria townships, the Mpumalanga town of Secunda, and even Butterworth in the distant ex-Transkei (where after three straight days of protest against municipal officials one resident was



Paul Grendon



Henner Frankenfeld - PictureNET Africa

Constructing sewer system at Ivory Park squatter camp, east of Johannesburg

shot dead before crowds dispersed). In KwaThema, east of Johannesburg, the houses of three ANC councillors were, tragically, burned down by angry residents.

The protests were sometimes marked by a high level of sophistication. Thousands of residents of Tembisa went on a march that left R13 million worth of electricity meters destroyed one winter afternoon in August 1997, in anger about the installation of a "pre-payment" system that, in the words of local Communist Party leader Tebogo Phadu (writing in the journal *Debate*), was "being pushed by transnational corporations - Siemens and Sony in particular [and that] would have a profound impact on our tradition of community organization/mobilization as it promotes 'everyone for him/herself' (i.e. individ-

ualizing payment), further marginalizing the working class, particularly the unwaged."

The last three months of 1997 witnessed an intensification, not amelioration, of local grievances. During that time the pace of water disconnections, on grounds of non-payment, soared, while the number of households that could afford to reconnect was very small - with the number of summonses issued (geared ultimately to kicking defaulting consumers out of their houses) also rose dramatically. By mid 1998, the conflicts had reached even deeper into East Rand townships and smaller rural towns. In the townships of Witbank and Tsakane, municipal offices and a post office were burned after evictions and summonses stripped residents of their personal property. In Amersfoort,

community residents kidnapped a leading councillor in anger over mass cut-offs of water which had led directly to the death of an infant. Tembisa saw more strife over evictions from houses where commercial banks declared foreclosure. Everywhere, urban alienation and rural despondency were on the increase.

White Paper whitewash

At precisely the same time, a Local Government White Paper (LGWP) was being drafted by DCD consultants. Released in March 1998 the LGWP has managed to avoid any mention of the above problems. Alongside these and other omissions, it also manages to contain serious contradictions and an overall surrender to neo-liberal orthodoxy.

Of course, depoliticized analysis invariably characterizes orthodox

“developmental” white papers, and the LGWP is no exception. The numerous precedents for municipal social struggles prior to the early 1980s are ignored, and 1980s struggles are reduced in import to a questioning of the legitimacy of apartheid political structures – not township socio-economic conditions. The theoretical approach underlying the ANC’s “National Democratic Revolution” (the concepts of municipal dual power and organs of people’s power, for instance) is evacuated. And the LGWP fails to recognize the subsequent inability of local negotiations processes to resolve deep-rooted municipal problems during the early 1990s, or to discuss why that has occurred.

Yet the municipal quagmire, partly associated with the tragic inheritance of the Local Government Transition Act (LGTA), is at least conceded: “Real transformation has yet to occur ... The compromises reached during the negotiation of the LGTA, such as the delimitation of wards in a manner which skewed representation and the requirement that municipal budgets must be approved by a two-thirds majority, will remain in force until the final phase of the transition ... Huge infrastructural disparities and inequalities resulting from apartheid local government remain ... Delivery on new municipal mandates cannot be achieved within the existing institutional framework.”

But having conceded the injustice and practical failure of this arrangement, the LGWP lists only a series of technical challenges that remain: “skewed settlement patterns and extreme concentrations of taxable economic resources ... huge backlogs in service infrastructure ... great spatial separations and disparities between towns and townships and urban sprawl ... new municipal institutions which recognize linkages between urban and rural settlements ... entrenched modes of decision-making, administration and delivery ... inability to leverage private

sector resources for development ... substantial variations in capacity ... need to rebuild relations between municipalities and communities.”

These are all vital challenges, to be sure, but only at the end of this list are readers informed, obliquely, that transitional municipal governance has had a deeply alienating affect on the ANC’s local-level constituency. The next question is whether the kinds of provisions made in the LGWP begin to offer relief to “formerly disadvantaged” but still very much oppressed township residents.

Redistribution: from rich to poor

Our own sense of the neo-liberal formulations of municipal development policy lead us to the opposite conclusion: that the next period will see intensified protest, largely because of the failure of DCD (as well as other departments) to redistribute decisively national and local-level resources to low-income people.

The LGWP offers at least lip-service to the idea of redistribution, as well as three specific (if relatively minor and localized) techniques: “service subsidies”; “... support to community organizations in the form of finances, technical skills or training”; “... linkage policies to directly link profitable growth or investment with redistribution and community development.” But in its failure to grapple with questions of macroeconomic policy (GEAR), the LGWP implicitly toes the government line that trickle-down policies will ultimately benefit locales. The LGWP doesn’t mention GEAR’s budget cuts, nor their implications for local-level service delivery. Nor is there a recognition that under the export-oriented logic of GEAR, competition between cities for new investors is likely to get out of hand.

More specifically, the LGWP fails miserably to prepare South Africans for the shock of receiving extremely low levels of infrastructure and services, as described

above. There are, to be sure, vague promises that an “equitable share” of central government revenue will “enable municipalities to subsidize the operating costs of providing basic services to poor households” – without, as seen, discussing the option of cross-subsidizing higher levels of services (rejected by the World Bank) or acknowledging the 85% real decline in such intergovernmental transfers since 1991. Here, in Finance Minister Trevor Manuel’s office, lies the real “culture of non-payment”!

Local democracy: too expensive

Likewise, there is no explicit mention of the bankruptcy or forced rationalizations of approximately half the 850 municipalities in South Africa, notwithstanding the fact that this has often been mentioned by DCD officials in the press. The LGWP offers only a justification of “amalgamation” (and this based on a theoretical “harmonious relationship” between urban and rural municipalities rather than the reality of bantustan settlement patterns which have left most rural towns without recourse to a neighbouring wealthy city).

The LGWP does acknowledge that income differences threaten to generate a neo-apartheid urban form, for “inadequate service levels may perpetuate stark spatial divisions between low, middle or high income users (particularly in urban areas) and jeopardize the socio-economic objectives of the Council.” Yet there is no official recognition that precisely the DCD’s low levels of service delivery – especially pit latrines which cannot be incrementally upgraded to water-borne sanitation – for low-income people will permanently relegate the poor to far-away ghettos from which any upwardly mobile residents desiring higher infrastructure levels will have to emigrate.

Additionally, the report’s various options for “approaches to service delivery” are highly biased in favour

of privatization. None of the arguments for municipal transformation offered by the SA Municipal Workers Union, for example, are considered. The LGWP does at least note that privatization carries risks of "cherry-picking" (refusal to provide services to low-income areas), poor quality services and unfair labour practices. Notably, though, no warnings are made about excessive levels of profit (like the 28% in US\$ terms demanded by the World Bank's privatization fund).

Cutting off the communities

The LGWP chapter on Municipal Finance fails to mention numerous indicators of the municipalities' fiscal stress, or to explore adequately the conditions under which roughly half of all municipalities will be found to be financially insolvent. Instead, this chapter proceeds to take the most extreme, conservative interpretation of price policy for water, electricity and other municipal services.

Note the LGWP provisions that there must be "payment in proportion to the amount consumed"; that there must be "full payment of service costs"; and that tariffs must "ensure local economies are competitive" by insulating businesses from cross-subsidies. Taken together these provisions have the effect of preventing municipalities from adopting progressive block tariffs; a universal lifeline service to all consumers; and local level redistribution from often wasteful business users to low-income consumers. In doing so, they directly violate the mandate DCD was given in the RDP, which explicitly calls for all three of these things.

Moreover, the final chapter, on the Transformation Process, virtually negates the roles of communities and municipal workers. Hence the document ends by appealing to citizens to trust a largely technocratic process. This may be entirely appropriate: as an explicitly and implicitly neo-liberal policy document, the LGWP probably requires the demo-

bilization of the two key constituencies (communities and labour) which would be capable of allying with ANC councillors (were they so inclined) to actually achieve transformation.

But what is the result? The transformation envisaged in the LGWP becomes essentially, in its key economic and development components, a neo-liberal amplification of local apartheid. The segregated city will now be frozen along class lines, with a small fraction of black South Africans expected to migrate into white suburbs which in all other respects will remain effectively intact. Township livelihoods and informal settlement survival strategies will decay. Gender and generational relations will become more tense under the pressure of municipal crisis. Unemployment will worsen as privatization takes hold, often entailing (as the World Bank predicted in the case of Port Elizabeth water) a 40% rationalization of municipal workers. People who once had access to closely by councillors in small towns will find their local councils many dozens of kilometres distant following amalgamation.

The DCD has many responsibilities and powers, and could have done far more in the LGWP to right historic wrongs than simply facilitate the free market. Now, given the failure of the ANC state, the struggle to achieve social and economic (and gender and ecological) justice moves decisively to civil society.

A new politics?

Who monitors the likely violation of constitutional rights when municipal water supplies are cut off completely? Who ensures comparability between white residential areas and black residential areas, when vast distortions in standards of living become more not less pronounced? Who intervenes when national government has failed, in many of the most crucial categories, to provide municipalities with the leadership required to bring South African democracy to fruition?

If organizations of civil society do not urgently step forward to address the profound shortcomings of the LGWP and associated housing, infrastructure, water, energy and economic policies, then these questions will be merely be rhetorical. Evidence of the LGWP's shortcomings will then continue to be found in the continued fracturing of traditional alliances between community, labour and progressive political parties which has been underway these past few years, as well as in the periodic riots, noted above, of furious urban citizens responding to the post-apartheid denial of South Africans' rights to live in humane conditions.

Hope lies in the potential unification of two political trajectories now in train. One is the growing strength, militancy and wisdom of the SA Municipal Workers Union in their anti-privatization struggles. The other is evidenced in the attempt, led by dissident progressive activists from the Alexandra and Soweto civic organizations, to establish an alternative community voice at national level. This latter has included a May 1998 launch of the new Association of Resident and Civic Organizations in Gauteng, an initiative that has pulled many civics out of Sanco affiliations. The conditions are excellent for a continued elaboration of such reassertions of a community politics, at once Left and independent, from deep within civil society.

Of course, resources are necessarily scarce for this kind of challenge to the Alliance power structure. Look, however, to a recent Samwu bumper sticker for evidence of the potential for allying production and consumption struggles. It states, simply: "No to privatization! 50 litres of water per person per day free!" There will be more such issues around which community and labour - as well as women, the youth, churches and other social forces - can come together in unity against neo-liberal notions of development.

SAR

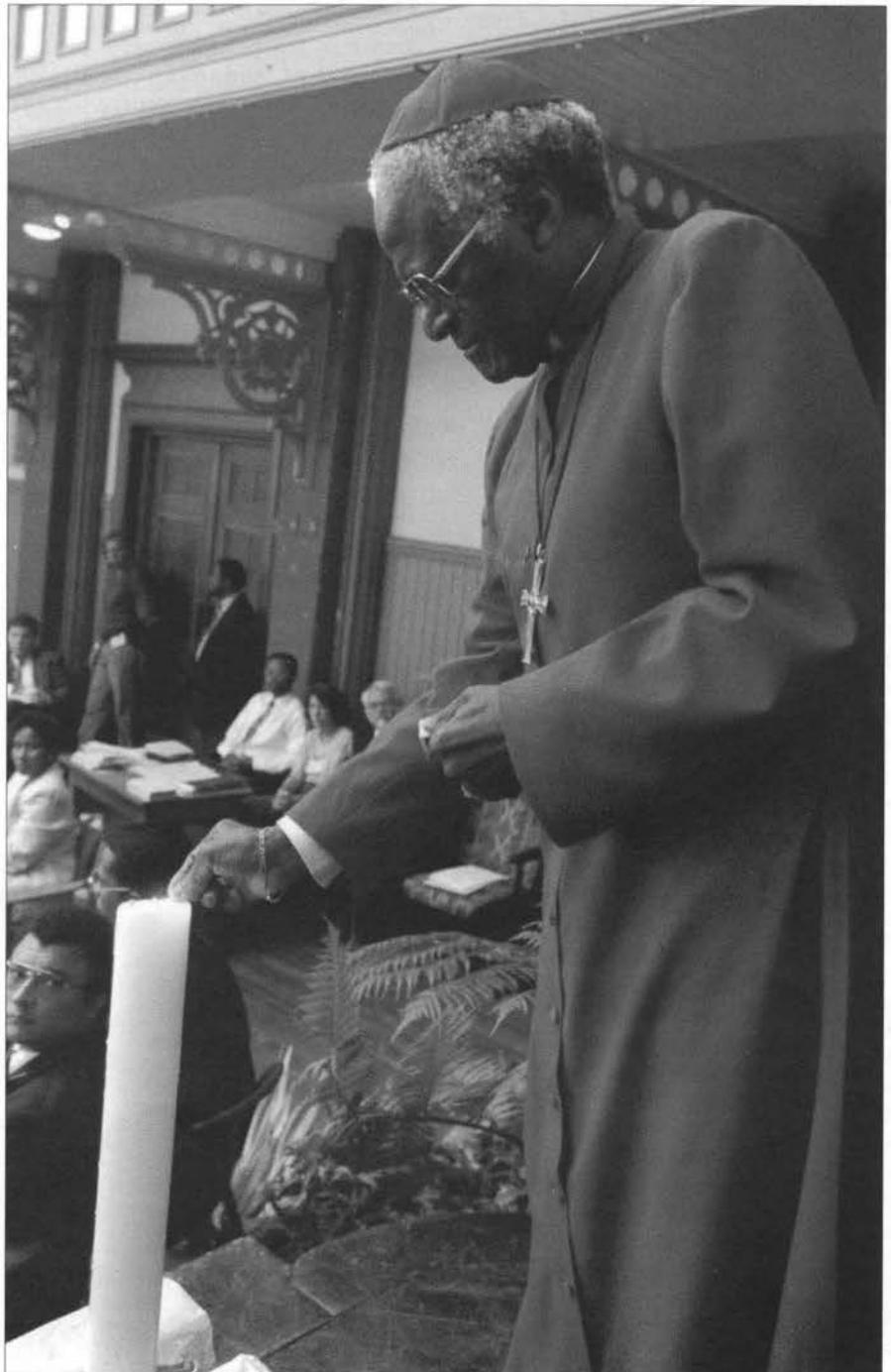
The Truth Shall Make You Free ? Reflections on the TRC

BY STEVEN ROBINS

Stephen Robins teaches in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at the University of the Western Cape. He has published on issues related to land and cultural identity. His most recent work is concerned with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the role of the historical narrative and personal and cultural memory.

Claudia Braude recently criticized Antjie Krog's much acclaimed book, "Country of My Skull" (1998), for endorsing a "postmodern" sensibility that celebrates the slippery and subjective character of truth claims (*Mail & Guardian*, 12th June, 1998). The book, based on Krog's personal experiences as an Afrikaner radio journalist covering the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), raises important questions concerning historical truth, Krog writing that, in the end, she has difficulty even pronouncing the word "truth." And yet Braude for her part is profoundly uneasy about this kind of questioning of the very possibility of arriving at the truth of apartheid.

With good reason. To be sure, the TRC hearings have complicated our understanding, and this will make it difficult for the TRC to produce, in its final report, a neat and unambiguous account of the apartheid past. However, if acknowledging the subjective and elusive character of all truth claims were all that were possible, one could easily slip into a kind of perverse relativism that would play into the hands of conservatives who are now claiming that the human rights violations of the liberation movements can be compared to those perpetrated by the apartheid state.



Adil Bradlow - PictureNET Africa

Referring to the limits of representing the Holocaust, Saul Friedlander (1993) notes that we are confronted with the an insoluble choice between the inadequacy of traditional historiographical representation and the need to establish as accurate a narration of the Holocaust as possible. Should we not seek to parallel Friedlander's position by recognizing the problems of telling the complete story of apartheid and yet attempting nonetheless to tell this story as reliably as possible? Acknowledging the complex and ambiguous character of South Africa's recent past need not encour-

age the kind of celebration of disavowals of truth (whether they be based on post-modern philosophical premises or, as seems most often to be the case, on more mundane and opportunist grounds) that facilitate apartheid amnesia and moral relativism.

The German precedent

Braude's fears of slippery truths, revisionisms and moral relativism have a dangerous precedent in the German Historian's Debate or "Historiker Streit" that raged in West Germany the mid-1980s. German revisionist historians argued for an

empathetic understanding of the anxieties about the Russians that purportedly led Hitler to the barbaric Final Solution. According to Ernst Nolte, given the historical reality of the Gulags, Hitler had reason to fear that the Bolsheviks would subject the Germans to terrible tortures if they succeeded in expanding westward. From Nolte's perspective, the Bolsheviks were the original perpetrators of global annihilations in modern history, while the Nazi exterminations were acted out of anguish at the idea of being themselves potential victims of the Red Terror. Since, for Hitler, "Bolshevist equalled Jew," it was a short step from this primal fear of Red Terror to the trains destined for Auschwitz. Not surprisingly critics of this and other aspects of revisionist historiography in Germany argued that it represented a displacement of Nazi responsibility for genocide, and contributed towards the blurring of the boundaries between victim and perpetrator.

Nolte and his ilk have called for revisionist accounts of the Holocaust from a German national perspective, which they claim is necessary to counter the biased interpretations that have been written by the victors. What bears emphasizing here is that the recent testimony to the TRC of former Minister of Law and Order Adriaan Vlok sounded remarkably similar to Nolte's contributions to the "Historiker Streit." Could it be that Vlok's testimony marks the beginning of South Africa's own historian's debate?

Thus, in his attempt to counteract the official account of the national liberation struggle that is emerging from the TRC hearings, Vlok too sought to "contextualize" human rights violations perpetrated by the apartheid state by attributing these actions to anxieties and fears of "communist terrorists" and totalitarian tendencies within the ANC and SACP alliance. In a preface to his 84-page application to the TRC,



Benny Gool - PictureNET Africa

Jeff Benzien demonstrates prisoner interrogation technique at TRC hearing

Vlok portrays himself as a committed Christian who devoted his political career to countering the perceived communist onslaught. While Vlok acknowledges that "apartheid did result in pain and suffering" he ends up concluding that "Marxism/communism's record was more terrible."

Like the German revisionists, Vlok has sought to deny responsibility for state violence by referring to fear of "the Red Peril." While fear and hostility to communism may indeed have been a factor that motivated apartheid state terror, surely this is not a morally acceptable justification for systematic racial discrimination and brutality against the civilian population! One hopes that the TRC Report will serve as an invaluable archive for those wishing to challenge the New Right revisionism and apartheid denial of the likes of Vlok.

Zimbabwe counter-example

For the TRC hearings have indeed provided a wealth of fresh evidence of apartheid human rights violations – even if they have also complicated attempts to produce the kind of seamless heroic nationalist narrative of the kind produced in neighbouring Zimbabwe. There Robert Mugabe's ruling party ZANU has indirectly controlled the production of official histories of the liberation struggle and the Zimbabwean state has incorporated influential academic historiographical accounts of the guerrilla war into a mythology of nation-building that privileged and celebrated the role of ZANU in the anti-colonial struggle. In this account the guerrilla violence was represented as heroic resistance in such a sanitized form as, for example, to merely gloss over the killing of alleged "sellouts." By contrast, in South Africa the media has given prominence to TRC hearings that have opened up a highly visible public accounting of the complexities and ambiguities of "the struggle."

While the official narratives of South Africa's liberation struggle

continue to highlight its heroic character, the TRC hearings have nonetheless allowed a multiplicity of voices to be heard. For instance, the TRC has heard testimonies and evidence not only about the torture and killing of anti-apartheid activists by agents of the South African state, but also about the victims of ANC and PAC terror attacks, the incidents of torture in ANC camps, and the "necklacings" of alleged apartheid informers. Although it was initiated by the ANC, the TRC hearings have complicated heroic struggle narratives and allowed for a far less monologic account of the past than was initially anticipated: testimonies of abuses have come from South African citizens situated on all sides of the conflict.

No equivalent process has occurred in post-independence Zimbabwe [or, equally infamously, in Namibia for that matter – *editor's note*]. Neither guerrilla violence nor the state terror unleashed against civilians during the so-called dissident war in Matabeleland in the 1980s has been dealt with along the lines of a Truth Commission. Instead, an official silence regarding the Matabeleland "disappearances" continues. This silence is maintained by media censorship, as, for instance, in the initial banning of Ingrid Sinclair's "Flame," a film that demythologizes aspects of the liberation struggle by telling the story of the rape of female fighters. (The Zimbabwe War Veterans Association was outraged by the film and demanded that it be banned. The film was initially confiscated on the grounds of being pornographic but was later officially passed with cuts.)

In short, the official versions of Zimbabwe's liberation war reveal none of the ambiguity and complexity that has surfaced at the TRC hearings. However, although such nuance may indeed be preferable to officially sanctioned truth and hagiography, it also reinforces the danger of relativism noted above. For instance, although the liberation movements did indeed commit

human rights violations, to equate these incidents with the scale, systematicity and bureaucratic nature of apartheid terror would be a serious mistake. An inventory of violations would readily reveal that the apartheid state was indeed the villain of the piece. One only has to consider the recent revelations of apartheid's multi-million rand chemical warfare research programme – which included plans to manufacture chemical substances that would neutralize political opponents and bring down black fertility rates. So, alongside forced removals, pass laws, and the funding of Vlakplaas death squads, the apartheid state also had its own perverse "Final Solution" on the backburner!

In the next few months the TRC will be finalizing its official report based on almost two years of Human Rights Violations and Amnesty hearings. The report is likely to generate considerable debate and controversy. Already we have heard the criticisms of the likes of Professor Hermann Giliomee who has expressed concern that the report will become an ANC-biased official history of South Africa's past. While the report will no doubt be written from the perspective of those sympathetic to the fight against apartheid, this in itself is not necessarily a problem. After decades of apartheid state propaganda a strong argument can be made for the need of an official account of the past written from the perspective of anti-apartheid activists and intellectuals. Although such an endeavour will inevitably be a partial and incomplete version of South Africa's recent past, this does not mean that there will not be opportunities for the production of alternative histories that fill in the gaps, silences and biases of the TRC's final report. It will also be up to South African academics, journalists, film-makers, artists and writers to take up this challenge. The TRC will have provided us with considerable archival material with which we can begin the long and

arduous process of working through the apartheid past.

Truth . . . and reconciliation?

Moreover, the fact remains that, as numerous journalists, academics, writers and political commentators have tried to make sense of the emotional roller coaster that began with the first TRC hearings in East London, the gruesome revelations of the state terror of the apartheid era have shocked and numbed a nation struggling to come to terms with its traumatic past. Of course, while Commissioners and journalists speak of the difficulty of emotionally and psychologically dealing with the raw pain of victims' testimonies of violence, there are those conservative whites such as former President P. W. Botha who continue to be in a state of denial. They derisively label the TRC the "crying game" and complain that it is biased in favour of the liberation movements. They constantly refer to the human rights violations perpetrated by the liberation movements and refer to incidents of torture and killings in ANC camps in Angola the Mandela United Football Club, the necklacings and so on. While, as noted, the TRC Report will address violations perpetrated by all parties, including the liberation movements, it seems likely that these latter incidents will be framed within an overarching narrative of apartheid rather closer to the historical mark than that proffered by such conservatives.

At the same time, many South Africans are profoundly sceptical of the theological language of forgiveness and reconciliation espoused by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and his TRC deputy-chairperson, Alec Borrairie. The Mxenge family, for instance, have outright rejected the apologies of former Police Captain Dirk Coetzee who was responsible, along with Joe Mamasela, for the brutal murder of ANC activists Griffiths and Victoria Mxenge. Like the Biko family, the Mxenges legally

challenged the amnesty provisions of the TRC that offers apartheid killers the opportunity to come clean and escape prosecution.

Despite such challenges to the TRC's rhetoric of forgiveness and healing, however, there is widespread recognition amongst South Africans that amnesty was perhaps an appropriate and politically necessary compromise given the balance of forces at the Codesa negotiations, as well as the real threat of right-wing political mobilization. While this strategic perspective based on an understand of the "larger picture" may not ease the pain of the families of victims, it does perhaps explain why the ANC and its supporters have gone along with this powerful, yet flawed, process.

As the TRC process began to unfold, however, a rather different range of criticisms began to surface with, perhaps, even wider implications. It became increasingly clear, for example, that certain voices and experiences were indeed being marginalized and silenced. For instance, anthropologists Fiona Ross and Pamela Reynolds discovered that even though it was very often women who appeared at the HRV hearings, usually to testify on behalf of their husbands, fathers or brothers who suffered human rights abuses, there was virtually no coverage of the women's own experiences – of, for example sexual abuse – under apartheid. Fortunately, the TRC was relatively quick to respond to this evidence of gender bias and silencing in its proceedings by convening special hearings to address violence against women under apartheid. The TRC also held special hearings into violations against children under apartheid.

The banality of systemic violence

A more subtle but no less dangerous instance of potentially misleading silences has also begun to be commented upon, however: that facilitated by the privileging in the proceedings of accounts of extraor-

dinary human rights violations perpetrated by serial police killers such as Colonel Eugene "Prime Evil" de Kock. While the media coverage of the TRC hearings focused public attention on incidents of "extraordinary" apartheid violence, the everyday bureaucratic violence of apartheid that millions of black South Africans had experienced, and continue to experience, remained outside the TRC frame. In attempting to deal with past violence, the TRC drew a clear distinction between "gross human rights violations" – statutorily defined as murder, abduction and torture – and the "ordinary," legalized, administrative violence of apartheid such as pass laws, forced removals, and racial discrimination and inequalities in health, education, housing, sport and the like. Despite some attempts by the TRC to address the more everyday aspects of apartheid with special hearings into business, the health sector, the media and the military, the dramatic focus has tended to remain on "Prime Evil," the apartheid killers and torturers such as Eugene de Kock and Ferdi Barnard.

The danger exists that, in the process, the everyday realities of the apartheid period – as well as the fact millions of whites kept voting the National Party into power since 1948 – will once again have merely been "normalized" and thus rendered invisible. Such is the charge of critical commentators like Professor Mahmood Mamdani who have taken the TRC to task for focusing too narrowly on gross human rights violations and "extraordinary" violence. This focus, it is argued, has allowed white South Africans to escape moral and political responsibility for the bureaucratic terror of apartheid that they endorsed by so voting for the National Party. It has also allowed the systemic socioeconomic legacies of apartheid to recede from public discourse, with important implications in terms of contemporary public debate on

social transformation and economic policy.

Pilger's truth

For this focus on extraordinary violations may also permit whites to convince themselves that apartheid is dead and buried, thus obscuring the continuities of racialized poverty produced through decades of apartheid social engineering. While the TRC seeks to bury apartheid and transcend its bitter and divisive history, ghosts from past continue to thwart such endeavours. These legacies of apartheid shape the lives of millions of South Africans trapped within racially segregated ghettos characterized by extreme poverty and violence. Here, perhaps, is an essential connection between apartheid bureaucratic violence such as the forced removals from District Six and Sophiatown, and post-apartheid criminal and gang violence and poverty. By recognizing these spatial and sociological continuities of apartheid it becomes possible to link the banality of apartheid terror, political, social and economic, to the everyday violence and poverty of the 1990s.

John Pilger's recent controversial television documentary, "Apartheid

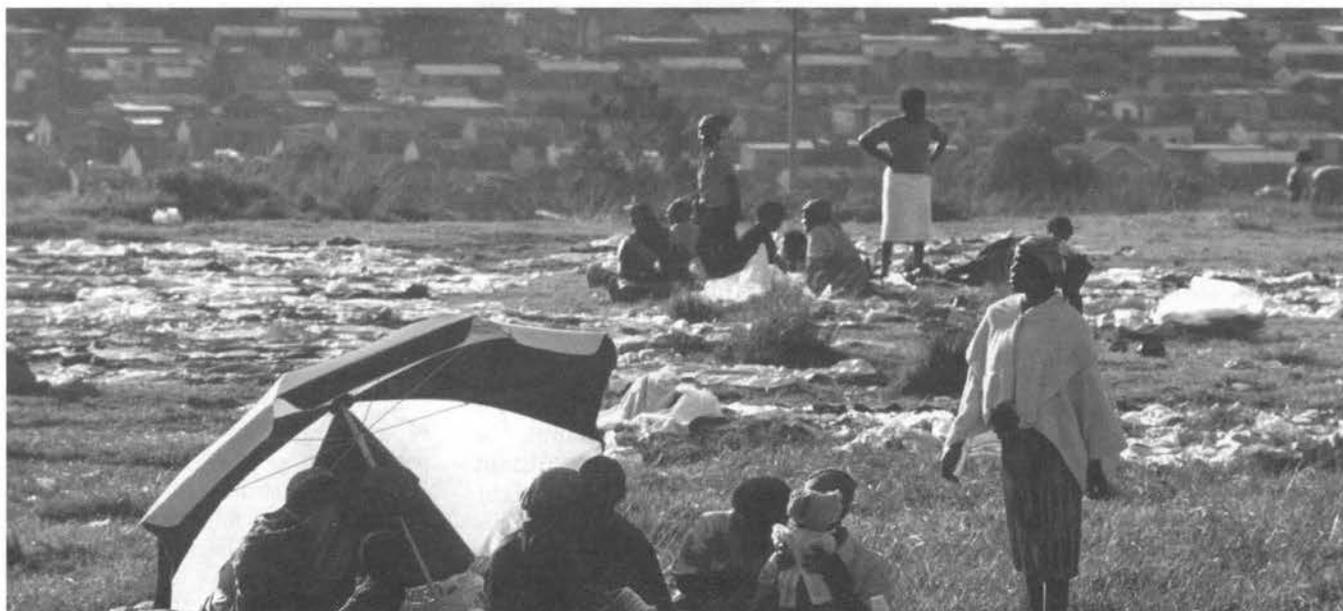
Did Not Die," directly addressed, on South African television and elsewhere, these more structural traces of racial capitalism. Pilger provided compelling evidence of racialized poverty by contrasting the opulence of the historically white suburbs such as Sandton, Houghton and Constantia with the dire poverty of the black townships. Pilger seemed also to suggest that as much as Archbishop Tutu and the TRC may try to bring about national reconciliation through the revelation of truth, without a fundamental process of social transformation this is likely to be an unfulfilled and incomplete project.

Why then were government spokespersons so quick to dismiss and disparage Pilger's seemingly self-evident documentary? Why was it caricatured as Loony Left polemic? Whereas critiques of racial capitalism were once accepted as truth within the liberation movements, they are now dismissed by the new ruling class as pure polemic and/or naive utopian socialist rhetoric. Clearly this particular truth of Pilger's – namely, that apartheid is far from dead and buried – does not fall within the brief

of the TRC. Moreover, without the logistical or statutory means to address the more mundane of apartheid legacies – the systemic character and legacies of racial capitalism – it may be unfair to expect the TRC to have taken on board these more structural dimensions.

And yet, what if it is the case that the TRC's quest for reconciliation in the absence of redress of apartheid's socio-economic legacies is a contradictory one? We can still reassert that compiling an archive of certain important truths about apartheid will have been an invaluable accomplishment, ready to hand when conservative revisionists and moral relativists start claiming that apartheid was not as bad as it is made out to be or when former apparatchiks such as Adriaan Vlok claim that repressive policing and state terror were simply counter-revolutionary strategies deployed to save South Africa from communist tyranny, for example. But we may also be forced to admit that these are not necessarily the sorts of truths that are most useful to setting the present generation of impoverished South Africans free.

■ SAP ■



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Critics note the TRC process failed to address the everyday realities of apartheid

Winnie Madikizela Mandela

Tragic Figure? Populist Tribune? Township Tough?

BY SHEILA MEINTJES

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In 1991 Winnie Madikizela Mandela, wife of Nelson Mandela, the most prominent leader of the African National Congress, faced criminal prosecutors in the Rand Supreme Court in Johannesburg. The fourth accused in the case of kidnapping and assault of youths including Stompie Seipei, she was acquitted of assault but found guilty of kidnapping. Ever since then there have been questions about her role in the assaults that occurred in the back rooms of her home in Soweto, in the disappearance of Lolo Sono, and in the death of Stompie Seipei, whose decomposed body was found months after his disappearance. What is intriguing is that the rumours of violence and assault against these and other youths, both at the end of the 1980s and earlier, when she was banished and living in Brandfort, and subsequent evidence of fraud and corruption which emerged in the early 1990s, did not end Winnie Mandela's political career. Despite ostracism by the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) at the end of the 1980s, Winnie Mandela has remained a strong political force in South African politics. Not even her divorce from Mandela affected her popularity and support. Although she did not win nomination to the Deputy Presidency of the ANC in December 1997, she remains President of the ANC Women's League, a member of the ANC National Executive Committee and an ANC Member of Parliament.

How are we to understand her unique power and position? The

conventional explanation is that she has become an icon of black feminine suffering and a symbol of strength and courage. She was also a hugely romantic figure, beautiful and cruelly separated from her husband, Nelson Mandela. Hers was the great political love story and tragedy of our time. Divorce has simply enhanced the image of her tragic life. In South Africa, her symbolic appeal is reinforced by her consistency in providing moral support at funerals and trials. She also reflects popular sentiments in her political rhetoric, especially in her criticisms of the slowness of delivery and social transformation under an ANC-led government, and in her outspoken empathy for the poor.

Such factors do help to explain the extraordinary political resilience of Winnie Mandela, as we will see in this article. At one level, in fact, her story is easily told (even if more difficult to evaluate). From a shy social worker to prominence as Mandela's beautiful wife and mother of his two daughters, Winnie was ultimately propelled into an independent public and political role. This very independence became a matter of contention as the circumstances of political struggle against apartheid in South Africa required considerable organizational discipline. The tension between the moral position of Winnie as Mandela's wife and her militant independence was at its height during the late 1980s. This article attempts to explore how the interrelationship of the private world of wife and mother and the public life of political activist created the

powerful populist leader Winnie has become.

It was as the wife of South Africa's most symbolic icon of the struggle against apartheid repression that Winnie Mandela first acquired a special place in the political realm. Then, in circumstances over which she had little control, she learned to manipulate events and people and to act in ways that would serve her interests. Over time she became a very skilled political actor, this taking her well beyond the subsidiary role normally accorded to women within the nationalist framework. Her political independence and leadership developed gradually in different contexts. And there were also two aspects to how she perceived her interests and how she acted. In public, she was always the dutiful wife, whose interests were, in principle, subservient to the political objectives of the movement. Her personal and private needs, however, were more complex. She was lonely and vulnerable, even insecure and yet her ability to withstand the attacks of the state revealed a strong and defiant woman. Her beauty and vulnerability attracted men, but she was trapped in her public role as Mandela's wife. And she did, at times, find solace with other men.

Nevertheless, she always publicly framed her political actions in terms of liberation, and she has always seen herself as a loyal ANC member. Not that the issue of loyalty has been altogether unproblematic. For Winnie also viewed herself, during the apartheid years, as having the responsibility of being the most public representative of her husband. This

created tensions between her and the organization's leadership, who, as we will see below, preferred most often to interpret her role in narrow symbolic terms rather than in active political ones. To this have been added other, more recent, sources of tension, also explored below, that further exemplify the dynamics of the on-going transformation in Winnie Madikizela Mandela's political position – while raising a host of questions about the nature of leadership in South Africa in the post-apartheid period.[†]

worker and wife of a national leader. This education came in the form of constant police harassment and violation of her privacy, as well as detention for her activities in the women's anti-pass campaign in 1958. Mandela also encouraged her to participate in the ANC Women's League, the appropriate place for wives.

Once Nelson Mandela was detained in 1961, Winnie entered the second stage when she became, as his wife, Mandela's spokesperson. And here the first inkling of the am-

She became a political figure in her own right, though silenced by her banning order. Politically in the limelight, her banning at the same time limited any discussion about her political stance, or any collective relationship she might have begun to develop with other political activists. Mandela's final arrest and imprisonment, first for four years, then in 1964 for life, cast Winnie Mandela as the lonely and vulnerable political wife.

The reverence she is accorded as victim of the apartheid state, which ceaselessly abused her natural rights by detaining her, banning her, casting her out of her community, and generally making her life a misery is well-deserved. Emma Gilbey's biography sympathetically draws out the terrible conditions of merciless harassment Winnie was subjected to. She shows how in the face of this ceaseless victimization, Winnie drew on inner resources to harden and inure herself against fear of the police and of the humiliations inflicted by the apartheid state. But Gilbey also points to how Winnie's somewhat willful character was shaped by her experiences. Initially her lack of political experience and knowledge had made her feel shy and awkward with her husband's comrades. She was unable and unwilling to receive advice and guidance from them. Then when Mandela was imprisoned for life she found herself virtually unemployable. She was left to cope with extremely difficult circumstances on her own and she began to work clandestinely for the ANC. She participated in underground meetings and organized the printing and circulation of roneoed pamphlets.

The work was dangerous. Her movements and activities were closely monitored by the Special Branch. Everybody associated with her was under suspicion. In 1969 she was arrested and tried under the 1967 Terrorism Act. It transpired that the Special Branch had infiltrated her political cell. Twenty two others were tried with her. Their treatment in detention was terrible.



Paul Velasco - PictureNET Africa

Winnie Mandela & comrades confronting police in protest in Johannesburg

Forging a political role: 1958-1976

One can identify two stages in the initial process that forged Winnie Mandela's political role. The first was a somewhat brief period of political education as a young social

[†] This article draws most of its information from the excellent book by Emma Gilbey, *The Lady: the life and times of Winnie Mandela* (Vintage, London, 1994), from newspaper reports in the author's private collection, and from my attendance at the TRC hearings and at the last ANC Conference during 1997. The interpretation and analysis which I have tried to make here has benefited from long discussions with Shireen Hassim. The inadequacies are all mine.

biguities in her position emerged. An independence of mind and even different ideological thinking surfaced when Winnie met the press. Yet she had never been party to political debates inside the ANC itself. Her position and statements revealed greater militancy as well as a stronger Africanist position than that adopted by the ANC. But they also revealed a determination not to be personally broken by the forces of apartheid, and to encourage others to take up the struggle against apartheid as her husband had done.

Winnie Mandela's political apprenticeship was over when she was banned. She had to report to a police station once a day, and to be at home between 6 pm and 6.30 am.

Solitary confinement, lack of hygienic washing facilities, poor food and physical assault combined to undermine the mental and physical health of the detainees. These were to become commonplace for most political detainees. Winnie was no exception and after days of sleep deprivation and continuous interrogation, the police broke her as they did everybody. Remarkably, she refused to cooperate with the court process, and wouldn't enter a plea. The outcome was acquittal after a bizarre charade of being tried under two separate laws which counsel for the defence showed to be illegal.

Politics in the 1970s changed the relationship between the state and the oppressed. Black Consciousness (BC) had emerged as a powerful movement amongst the youth, which spawned both the South African Students Organization (SASO), led by Steve Biko and others, and the Black People's Convention. Trade union militancy also resurfaced. Winnie was on the edge of these developments, hampered by banning, police harassment and periods of imprisonment for breaking her banning orders.

Surprisingly, for a brief period in 1975 Winnie's banning order was not reimposed. She used her freedom from restraint to attend meetings with BC leaders, to identify with their cause by attending their trials and to make fiery speeches. She warned that black people were impatient and resentful. Her words were prescient. The 1976 Soweto uprisings provided Winnie with a strategic opportunity to place herself in an open leadership position. She urged the parents of protesting children to organize themselves in the newly formed Black Parents Association (BPA).

Militant motherhood, 1976-1989

By casting her activities within the symbolic role of motherhood in the Black Parents Association, Winnie was able to establish a powerful moral and political leadership role,

a role she might not have been able to assume so easily had she not been the mother of the Mandela children. Parental roles became politicized in the wake of police action against children. The BPA raised funds, organized burials, and mediated between students and authorities in schools. Winnie visited police stations, and harangued the police. She helped organize meetings and she spent hours with bereaved parents. She also recruited students into the ANC and helped them to leave the country. But her activities were cut short by arrest and detention. The police meanwhile detained hundreds of students who were tortured for information about who was behind the protests. Many of the students reported that the police tried to implicate Winnie as the main force behind the uprising. From this time Winnie's authority as a political figure began to grow and laid the basis for her renown as the "Mother of the Nation."

On 16 May 1977, Winnie was banished to a dusty Afrikaner dominated town in the Free State where she was unceremoniously dumped at house 802 with her youngest daughter, Zinzi. There was no running water, no electricity, and the house had no floors or ceilings. The town was hostile, and the people spoke mainly Sotho, Tswana or Afrikaans, and hardly any Xhosa, which was Winnie's home language. Winnie took a provocative stance, and would spend hours in the white shops goading the shop-keepers.

Her life was lonely, however. Her youngest daughter was sent away to study, whilst her oldest daughter had married a Swazi Prince and moved to America. Helen Suzman captured the isolation when she wrote that Winnie waited outside the local telephone booth between 10 am and 4 pm waiting for calls from friends and relations. But when friends, like Helen Joseph, Barbara Waite, Ilona Kleinschmidt, and others came to visit her in Brandfort, they were harassed and often taken to court and imprisoned.

Her political independence and leadership role was also developing in this context, however. Gradually, she established a rapport with locals, especially young people, managing to politicize what would normally be conventional, private activities. She set up a creche, a clinic and feeding schemes for the children of Brandfort, with the assistance of Dr. Abu Baker Asvat (in whose death she was later allegedly implicated). In the process, she also offered political education. Her home became both a school and a refuge, particularly for young children. (More problematically, it seems to have become the locus of a particularly violent form of discipline. Justified by her position as mother of her household, this was also an ominous foretaste of things to come.)

In 1980 Winnie's political profile began to change as the ANC launched the "Release Mandela" Campaign - even as the tension, mentioned earlier, between her symbolic and active political roles also became most problematic. Because of her independence, the ANC had some reservations in choosing to draw Winnie in, but the movement felt that her symbolic role was important. Certainly the ANC participated actively in the creation of the myth of Winnie as the "Mother of the Nation," even as her banishment to Brandfort reinforced the legendary status as national symbolic icon that gained her so much political status in the liberation movement.

The campaign substantially altered the material aspects of Winnie's desolate and depressing existence as international media attention focused on her living conditions. But ANC leaders also had begun to find that they were unable to contain her words and actions. This was a tension that would be exacerbated with the emergence in the 1980s of an alternative internal political movement, the United Democratic Front (UDF), which espoused the objectives of the Freedom Charter

and thus presented itself as the legitimate representative of an underground ANC in the popular imagination. The claim to be the authoritative voice of the ANC inside the country had become a source of contestation. And Winnie's controversial statements were to prove an acute embarrassment for both the ANC and the UDF, particularly as the need to maintain a united position was a priority. Public dissent has never been easily managed by the ANC.

1983 formed a turning point in the struggle for liberation in South Africa with the emergence of the United Democratic Front (UDF). In the same year Mandela was transferred to Pollsmoor Prison, on the mainland in Cape Town. A year later troops were patrolling the townships. The ANC Kabwe conference in 1985 believed that the conditions for a People's War were at hand. Winnie Mandela's house in Brandfort was burned down in August whilst she was away visiting her doctor in Johannesburg. She never returned. Instead, she took advantage of changed circumstances to stay in Johannesburg. In November 1985, Mandela became ill and the first discussions about his release began to take place. Winnie's own restrictions were relaxed in December but she was still arrested for breaking the terms of her banning and, in early 1986, was charged for refusing to leave Johannesburg. An international uproar ensued and some months later Winnie's case was shelved.

The Mandela United Football Club

It was then, during those twilight years of apartheid from 1985 to 1989, that Winnie Mandela turned from victim to alleged perpetrator of atrocities. For she was seen at least to condone, at worst to lead, the youth who lived on her property - a group known from its formation in January, 1986, as the Mandela United Football Club (MUFC) - in a supposed war against impimpis and informers. In

the turbulence of militant student activity, a state of emergency, and the invasion of townships by the army and police, her home became one of many loci of refuge. It was also an environment of mutual suspicion and fear, and competition for power. The discourse of the protection of motherhood and family life cloaked the reality that in that context the conventional notions of childhood did not exist. Children were themselves political actors. Winnie perceived her role in terms of providing a disciplined, controlled framework within which those children would pursue their lives. She fed and clothed them, she sent them to school, but she also used them as errand-boys for her political activities. For the former she won both respect and power in the township. When the authority she wielded over the youth in the MUFC assumed a more violent form, she also became feared by some township residents.

The role of the MUFC has been much debated in South Africa, in the courts, in the press, and most recently in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Its members behaved like war-lords and thugs in the strife-torn wards that made up Soweto. They were not, however, the only group operating in Soweto, and some of the violence derived from rivalry and power struggles between gangs. But it is the role of Winnie Mandela in the violence in Soweto, and in that which occurred in her own backyard, that has been the subject of court cases and of particular concern to the TRC.

Much was also made of the two incendiary speeches which Winnie Mandela made in April 1986. In one, she called for an end to the tears of mourning, and in the other, at Munsieville, she called for stones, matches and petrol: "Together, hand in hand, with our boxes of matches and our necklaces we shall liberate our country." At the TRC hearings and earlier, during her trial in 1991, she denied that

these were calls for retaliation and elimination of the enemy. At the time, with the country in a state of civil unrest, the ANC in exile distanced itself from her statements and reprimanded her. And Winnie, clearly feeling herself to be more in touch with events inside the country than were the exiled ANC leaders, paid little heed to these pleas.

Back in Soweto, political rivalry between different factions was probably the reason for a raid on Winnie's Orlando house by a group of angry students in February 1987 and again in July 1988 when it was burned to the ground. It may also be one of the reasons for the tragic events which occurred at the end of 1988 when youths were abducted from the Methodist Manse and the priest, Paul Verryn, was accused by Winnie of sodomizing youths in his care. Verryn was a popular figure in the township whose house was a refuge for young activists. It was a time of great paranoia, and some of the youths at the Manse - in particular Stompie Seipei - were accused of being spies. Publicly, this reason was given for their abduction. But privately senior members of the Crisis Committee, set up at the behest of the imprisoned Nelson Mandela to deal with the "hostages" held in Winnie's house, believed that Paul Verryn was framed by Xoliswa Felati and Winnie.

The accounts of these events are by now well known, and will not be repeated here. What is of significance for our purposes, however, is the way that the developments crystallized the ambiguities and problems embedded in Winnie's position. The issues concern the relationship between underground operatives working inside the country, the ANC in exile, and the internal opposition, particularly its leadership. The outcome indicated the enormous symbolic and moral power held by Winnie Mandela. Nelson Mandela from prison issued orders to Winnie to release the youths. She simply ignored him. Neither Church lead-

ers like Bishop Storey, head of the Methodist Church in South Africa, nor Reverend Frank Chikane, head of the South African Council of Churches, nor Dr. Nthatho Motlana, the family's personal physician, friend and Soweto civic leader, nor leaders of the UDF, appeared able to insist on the release of the youths, despite grave concern for their very lives. Storey felt that to invade her back rooms might bring not only the internal opposition movement into disrepute, but might damage the Methodist Church itself. No one was prepared to call Winnie Mandela's bluff, and challenge her authority.

The police did not intervene either. It emerged in the TRC hearings that Jerry Richardson, who played a key role in the assaults and murders which occurred at the end of 1988, was a police informer. The UDF had suspected that the MUFC had been infiltrated by the police and had tried to warn Winnie about

the possibility. She steadfastly ignored their warnings and placed her faith in the very man whose activities were most undermining her political credibility. One can argue that the notion of motherhood had been taken to its political extremes in the life and death struggles in the war-torn township where Winnie lived. Conventional morality had been usurped by codes of war in which normal processes of law and order no longer held. But the fact remains that amidst the rather murky ambiguities about who had the authority to give orders in the name of the ANC, Winnie's power went unchallenged. The morality of a just war seemed, too, to give carte blanche for leaders to punish those who broke faith and became informers. Her own power had become almost unassailable in its moral symbolism of "militant motherhood," as the paralysis which attacked the Crisis Committee attests.

Personal and political survival: 1990-1998

For all the enormous publicity and sensationalism about Winnie Madikizela Mandela's public and private life, she remained an enigma. Catapulted, as we have seen, into Mandela's political life when he was banned and on trial for treason, her experiences created a well of pain and bitterness which, combined with anger and rage, created a "dark side." At the same time, her suffering enabled her to empathize with the oppressed in general. She herself has written and spoken about the experience of torture and psychological disintegration which accompanied her detention in 1969. She maintained that it hardened her, "It is in fact what changed me. What brutalized me so much that I knew what it is to hate."

That hatred bred a leader of great courage during the apartheid years. In the post-apartheid after-



Henner Frankenfeld - PictureNET Africa

At the TRC hearing on the activities of the Mandela United Football Club

math, Winnie's extraordinary political survival was also based on a combination of astute political instinct and almost sexual personal charisma.[†] For a chronology of Winnie's activities during the eight years from 1990-1998 does provide evidence of quite remarkable political resilience in the face of personal crises and political scandals that evoked strong opposition inside the ANC itself. This was not new, as we have seen. But once Mandela was released from prison his support, for a time, cast a long protective shadow over what would for others have been a political nemesis.

In August 1990, Winnie was appointed head of the Welfare Department of the ANC, in charge of repatriating exiles. Welfare NGOs petitioned the ANC against her appointment. Even the ANC National Executive Committee tried to remove her. But Mandela blocked these attempts personally. In 1991 he came to her trial and conviction for kidnapping. Then in 1992 she was accused of misappropriating funds from her department. Public scandal was accompanied by personal scandal, including a squabble with Xoliswa Felati and evidence of an affair. Mandela's problems in his private life threatened to derail his political credibility and ability to lead the ANC. He was forced to declare his marriage at an end in April 1992, following which Winnie resigned all her positions in the ANC. Her po-

[†] *Her great beauty gave Winnie Mandela a sexual power which few women in public possessed. Her sexual liaisons have been the basis of salacious reporting, and point to the existence of a moral double standard when it comes to women leaders. The sexual aspect of Winnie's power has been less explored, however, and needs to be more thoroughly researched. More generally, this may require an analysis which accounts for the gendered dimensions of political leadership, including the intersection between sexuality and power in women leaders, but this is beyond the scope of the present article.*

litical fortunes were at their lowest ebb, or so it seemed.

But in 1993 Winnie made a remarkable comeback when she was elected President of the ANCWL. In December 1993 the ground swell of support for Winnie surprised and shocked the ANCWL and the ANC. With personal disaster staring her in the face, she lambasted the ANC for being out of touch with the people. This won her support and leadership of the ANCWL against the "other" mother of the nation, Albertina Sisulu. Winnie's participation in the ANCWL appeared to many to be one of political expediency rather than one of a commitment to women's issues. But this reading misses the significance of the nature of her support. She symbolized the experience and suffering of many women whose family life had been virtually destroyed by the apartheid system. Alone she had faced the state, with two little girls to bring up, and little means for doing so. Though this symbolism of "Mother of the Nation" now appeared to have crumbled, Winnie's position as long-suffering wife now came to the fore.

Winnie Mandela was now a Woman Wronged. She was wronged by her husband, by her own organization, the ANC, as well as by the system. Her political, if not her personal, fortunes began to rise. She now showed an acute opportunism in fostering a political support base of her own amongst the poor, especially women. The timing of this show of support and solidarity at the ANCWL Conference meant that the ANC could not ignore her when it came to drawing up the election list in December 1993. She was rewarded with the position of Deputy Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology in the first post-apartheid Government of National Unity.

But in power Winnie showed less political wisdom as she began to abuse her position. She was sacked in disgrace from her post for a range of misdemeanours, including an unauthorized trip abroad, us-

ing her position to foster the interests of her daughter, and using state vehicles without authority. At the same time questions of financial mismanagement and malpractice in the League led to the resignation of eleven executive members. The ANC suspended all funding to the League. Rumours of fraudulent acquisition of funds for one of Winnie's private projects, the Coordinated Anti-Poverty Programme, also circulated. Then in August 1994 Nelson Mandela announced that he was divorcing Winnie. Media reports about Winnie were salacious and damning, although for her supporters this merely served to reinforce their perception that she was being persecuted.

Winnie's response was to attack the ANC and the government for lack of delivery on its promises, particularly with respect to the poor. She criticized the movement for its growing elitism, its nepotism, its deafness to COSATU's criticisms of the government's economic policies, and its electoral system. Once more, her role as champion of the rights and demands of ordinary people enhanced her popular appeal.

In April 1997, she was again voted in as President of the League at its Conference, despite efforts of the ANC to support a rival candidate. But the League was much weaker than it had been before. Many of its branches had become moribund. The leadership struggle had been divisive, in spite of public pronouncements of unity. Yet the League was the first to submit a nomination for the Deputy President of the ANC: Winnie Madikizela Mandela. This time, however, the ANC moved to ensure that Winnie's chances of acquiring a leadership position were diminished. Because nominations had to come through ANC structures, her nomination was rejected on the constitutional ground that the League was autonomous. Her only chance now rested with the nomination procedure at the up-coming ANC Conference in December 1997. Prepara-

winnie

tions for this conference were elaborate for this was the first since the ANC had been in government, and also the last before the 1999 elections. There were two preparatory policy conferences. Winnie began her own campaign outside ANC structures to garner support. Her strategy was once more to attack the leadership for failing the people.

The ANC responded that she had every right to seek nomination and to challenge the organization. This was healthy debate. But in October 1997 she went too far. She accused the ANC of being soft on crime and called for the death penalty. Winnie received a stinging rebuke in the press from Steve

Tshwete, a senior NEC member, and Minister of Sport. He rebuked her for being a populist leader of little substance. She had little respect for rules and regulations, and since the ANC had been in government she had made not a single contribution to debate in the ANC, sitting silently in discussions. He criticized her for refusing to take responsibility, as other ANC leaders had, for abuse of human rights by the movement during apartheid. Her populism, he suggested, was undermining the revolution. (*The Star*, 20 November 1997).

A few days after this attack, the TRC hearings into the MUFC began. The events of 1988 and 1989 were replayed in the press, on radio

and on television. Special reports daily recorded the allegations of witnesses and survivors against her. Winnie, beautifully groomed, sat calm and mostly impassive next to her lawyer throughout the three weeks of damning indictments. At the end she accused the TRC of conducting a witch-hunt against her, and conniving to destroy her political career. Archbishop Desmond Tutu literally begged her at least to admit that "things went horribly wrong." Hesitatingly, she mouthed his words. In the immediate aftermath, she found that much of her moral support had disappeared.

When the ANC Conference opened on 16 December 1997, speculation about her chances was at the forefront of media interest. Crowds of youth and older women greeted her arrival each day, sporting t-shirts and scarves depicting her image. But this noisy support did not translate into numbers at the moment of nomination. Although Winnie tried to consult with "structures," the Chairman, newly elected ANC President Thabo Mbeki, refused to allow this. She was forced to withdraw her nomination.

While Winnie was subsequently elected to the NEC, her support was substantially reduced. I was at the Conference and when the results of the elections were announced in the early hours of the morning, Winnie seemed to be in a state of near collapse. She could barely walk up to the stage and she was helped by some of the delegates. There was such an air of dejection and lifelessness about her that one really wondered whether she would survive. A few months later, however, she spoke at the South African Press Club, and gave a strong speech lambasting the way the press dealt with the changed political environment. Ever the survivor, Winnie was fighting fit. We have not seen the last of her as a powerful political force in South Africa.

Adil Bradlow - PictureNET Africa

SAIP



At ANC 50th Conference, acknowledging supporters



Lori Pottinger - International Rivers Network

The 182 metre-high Katse Dam when it was under construction

All Wet

The World Bank and the Lesotho Dam

BY LORI POTTINGER

Lori Pottinger is the Southern Africa campaigns director for International Rivers Network in Berkeley, California. More information on this project and IRN's other Southern Africa campaigns is available at: www.irn.org.

Water, or a lack of it, is a key issue for southern Africa's future development and even its political and social stability. The region now faces chronic shortages, and conflict over shared water sources threatens to intensify in the coming decades if current trends are any indication. Sustainable water management is

therefore one of the most important issues in the region today.

South Africa has taken a number of innovative steps in the management of its water resources, including clearing thirsty alien vegetation from watersheds, implementing urban water conservation pilot projects that cut local water use up to 30 per cent, and adopting a new water law that, among other things, outlaws private ownership of water resources and recognizes environmental needs for water as well as human ones. At the same time, however, the government has moved forward with new dams that are envi-

ronmentally and socially controversial, and could even set back efforts to further reduce water use.

Next year, construction is scheduled to begin on the second of five dams that comprise the massive Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP), which will transport Lesotho's water, called "white gold" by project developers, to South Africa's industrial Gauteng province (Johannesburg area). The entire project has been mired in controversy since South Africa's apartheid government and Lesotho's military regime signed the project treaty in 1986, however. At that

time, the World Bank, an influential project funder, circumvented apartheid sanctions by making Lesotho – which would have been too poor to qualify for such a loan – the recipient of the funds, a debt that South Africa was responsible to repay.

The Bank is an important funder of the second dam as well, lending legitimacy to the controversial project and claiming to “add value” to the project by lending only to mitigate social and environmental problems. On June 4, its board of directors approved a US\$45 million loan for this project, the Mohale Dam.

Although the battle lines have shifted somewhat from the first dam to the second, controversy continues to swirl around Africa’s largest infrastructure project – and around the Bank’s role in promoting large, destructive infrastructure projects over sound water management and conservation measures. While the first dam, the 182-metre-high Katse Dam, was controversial primarily for the unresolved social and environmental problems it left in its wake, the 145-metre Mohale Dam may not be needed at all. Even project promoters like the World Bank admit its water will not be required until the year 2010, perhaps not until 2018, by which time better solutions to South Africa’s growing water-management crisis may be found. Water conservation experts contend that building the dam now will send the wrong message to South Africans just beginning to grapple with the need for increased conservation and better water planning.

Controversy over the possibility that the project could be delayed by years pushed back the loan approval by half a year, but ultimately Bank staff convinced its Board of Directors that it is less costly to build Mohale now, even if the water is not needed for many years. Despite the controversy and possibly in violation of its own policies, the World Bank

on June 4 approved a loan for Mohale Dam. The LHWP has also received funding from European export credit agencies, international and South African banks and various bilateral donors, including French, British and German donor agencies.

Contradictory water strategy

Many believe the project’s enormous costs will reduce South Africa’s ability to address other pressing water problems. Topping the list of urgent social needs is to increase the number of South Africans with access to water. Currently, millions of South Africans are without reliable, safe water: in 1995, an estimated 18 per cent of the nation’s urban population lacked adequate water supply. Supplying Gauteng’s waterless poor would require just 5 per cent of the water used by middle income South Africans on gardens.

The biggest obstacle to solving this problem is not increasing supply, however. Instead, the biggest obstacle is finding the money to pay for the infrastructure. According to water officials, up to 50 per cent of Soweto’s water is lost through poor-quality infrastructure, for example. According to George Constantinides, the demand manager for Rand Water, spending 1 billion Rand retrofitting less efficient appliances and fixing leaky pipes would save 3 billion Rand in consumption.

Constantinides stated in March of this year that conservation measures could reduce demand by 40 per cent and thereby delay the R6.7 billion Mohale Dam “by years.” Other water experts concurred. “We can get significant savings from delaying schemes,” suggested Guy Preston, head of the water conservation program for the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry. Delaying Mohale Dam would mean a “conservative” R800 million savings per year, including operating costs. “We can put that money into other, more important social things,” Preston said. The two have been proponents of “demand side management”

measures that conserve water, such as installing water-conserving toilets and shower heads, incrementally increasing penalties for higher levels of consumption, and implementing policies to reduce waste by the biggest consumers like large-scale agriculture (which accounts for 50 per cent of South Africa’s water use).

Building the project prematurely could also jeopardize water conservation efforts by altering the financial picture for Rand Water. According to a water conservation expert in South Africa who wishes to remain anonymous, “The tremendous price increase from the LHWP is undermining Rand Water’s demand management programs by making them not cost-effective. In fact, they will find it necessary to subtly support wasteful water-use practices in order to generate the revenues to fund Mohale.” Rand Water could be forced to sell more water, not less, to pay its portion of the project’s capital costs, thus undermining its own efforts to put into place stricter demand-management measures.

The LHWP’s costly dams will mean higher-priced water for South African consumers, a burden which will hit poor township dwellers the hardest. In the past year alone, the price of water for Rand Water (serving Gauteng) consumers almost doubled because of the cost of capital investments, primarily for the LHWP.

Local impact

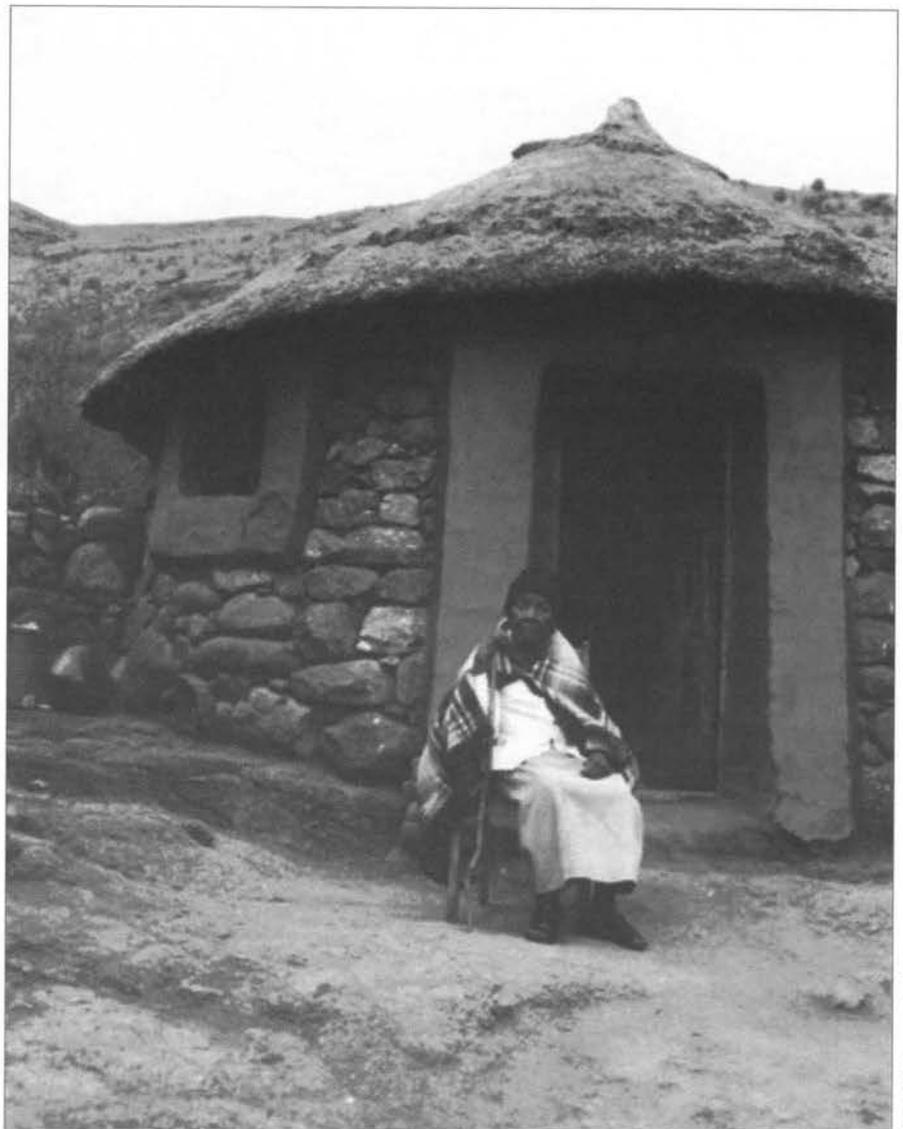
Some township residents have been working to slow the project until demand-management measures and other alternatives are examined. They believe that fixing the leaks in the townships should be a higher priority than building new supply. To that end, in May, some residents of Alexandra township filed a claim with the World Bank Inspection Panel, the independent body charged with investigating claims brought forth by project-affected people of Bank policy

violations. While their efforts did not result in a project delay, the concerns they raised will be evaluated by the inspection panel in coming months.

World Bank policies mandate the examination of alternatives to projects such as the LHWP. Its policy on dams states that “[d]esign of investment programs for supplying water or energy should consider demand management as well as supply options.” But internal project documents imply such policies have been set aside in planning the LHWP. “[A]s important as demand side management in the water sector is,” states the April 30, 1998 Project Appraisal Document, “there is no specific reference in the project to such measures, nor is there a legal requirement in the loan for the RSA [Republic of South Africa] to implement such policies, since this is a loan to [Lesotho-based project authorities] LHDA.”

Nonetheless, without a touch of irony, the Bank appraisal report states that “the LHWP is one of the very few successfully implemented projects in the world aimed at regional water management.” But water planners in the region see it as the wrong approach at the wrong time. Steve Rothert, a water resources specialist working in Botswana for International Rivers Network, says, “The Bank is supporting a project that is not needed for many years, which sends a message that it supports supply-driven water resources management, even in one of the most arid regions in the world.”

Lesotho NGOs monitoring the project’s social problems recently backed down from efforts to delay the next dam, however. Political pressure to support the dam, “the only development game in town” has undoubtedly been intense. Perennially ranked by the United Nations among the world’s poorest countries, Lesotho has a 50 per cent unemployment rate and almost no natural resources that can be turned



Scott Coverdale

This Chieftainess & her entire Lesotho Highlands village will be displaced by the waters if the Mohale Dam is built

into cash – except water. Indeed, Lesotho is now almost totally dependent on royalties from the LHWP to earn foreign exchange, which brings in some 40 million US dollars a year. “If you delay the project even by one year . . . it’ll knock six percent off Lesotho’s GDP [gross domestic product] this year,” said John Roome, the LHWP project manager for the Bank. “They’re going to need to be compensated for this somehow.”

In addition, people living in the Mohale area have already

experienced significant disruption, and a project delay would just add to their woes. A local NGO representative said in June that “houses have already been destroyed by the blasting at the quarry site. Fields have already been greatly affected by the road construction and installation of power poles. Some have already given away their fields.”

The dam revenues contribute to the troubled Development Fund, intended to alleviate poverty in the rural Highlands areas where the dams



Henner Frankenfeld - PictureNET Africa

are built. Highlands communities have benefited from some aspects of project construction, such as roads that now connect the rural Highlands to the capital of Maseru. Temporary jobs from the project have been provided to some local people.

But important aspects of the project's poverty alleviation programs remain unsuccessful or bogged down in bureaucracy. According to Korinna Horta, an environmental economist with the US-based Environmental Defense Fund, the Development Fund has been termed "the sick man" of the project by experts working on compensation issues, and the project requirement of restoring or improving the lot of project-affected people has yet to be realized. Project authorities have made sweeping claims that they have learned how to avoid the social problems caused by the first dam, although many of those problems are still unresolved.

Income-restoration for the thousands of people affected by the first dam has been ponderously slow. In the beginning, the project emphasized training in vocational skills that were virtually unneeded in Lesotho. The program has since shifted to small-enterprise development skills. But with Lesotho's high unemployment and low per-capita income, the goal of creating a new entrepreneurial class from the farmers displaced by the project seems highly unlikely - even within the generous 15 years set by the

Bank. Furthermore, suggests Horta, "The LHWP is likely to overwhelm Lesotho and determine its political economy for generations to come. The sheer size of the project diverts attention from any other possible development programs for Lesotho."

No compensation

The restoration of livelihoods has been a failure in nearly all cases where significant numbers of people lose their homes and lands to dams, and has been a key point of contention in the worldwide struggle against large dams. As many as 60 million people have been evicted for the world's 40,000 large dams. The world's large dams have also inundated 400,000 square kilometres, an area larger than Zimbabwe.

There are three more dams in the LHWP scheme, so the controversy over the project promises to continue for years to come. The findings of a new group whose mandate is to assess the international record of large dams may change the debate considerably. This independent body, called the World Commission on Dams, is an unusual coalition from both sides of the dam debate, chaired by South Africa's head water minister, Kader Asmal, who previously was an opponent of the LHWP and is now an avid proponent. The commission includes representatives from dam-affected people's groups, environmental NGOs, and the dam-building industry.

The group recently had its first meeting, and is expected to issue its final report in June 2000. Dam critics believe that the establishment of the Commission vindicates their claims that large dams have had massively negative social, environmental and economic impacts. These groups have demanded that aid agencies and governments declare a moratorium on the building of large dams until the commission's work is done. "No more big dams should be built until just reparations have been provided to all those who have been affected by dams and until ruined environments have been restored," says Sadi Baron, Executive Coordinator of Brazil's Movement of People Affected by Dams (MAB). Thus far, this call has not been heeded.

As the case of the LHWP shows, the identification of "those affected" might need to be expanded beyond those people forcibly relocated for the project, to include township dwellers being asked to pay higher water bills than they can afford; those whose pipes remain leaky as public funds for water projects dries up or who must wait even longer to get water supply to their homes; and those whose "better ideas" for water management have taken a back seat to a massive engineering works whose time has not yet come.

■■■

Their Hegemony or Ours?

Schild Replies to Barker

BY VERONICA SCHILD

Veronica Schild teaches in the Department of Political Science at the University of Western Ontario.

The key issue in the exchange between Colin Leys and Jonathan Barker carried out in the pages of this magazine (April 1996, Vol. 11, No. 3, pp. 17-21 and September 1997, Vol. 12, No. 4, pp. 20-23) is what should the tasks be for Left intellectuals in these neo-liberal times. Should intellectuals make a distinctive contribution to the urgent "task of analyzing globalization, alerting our society to its real meaning, and working out and propagating a new post-capitalist social project"? This is what Leys suggests. Or, should they abandon a self-ascribed privileged perspective and rely on the "analysis, information, and moral thought" offered by activist groups already engaged in countering the effects of capitalist fundamentalism, as Barker suggests? Furthermore, without denying the negative dimensions of capitalist restructuring Leys highlights in his text, Barker suggests that markets are not at all bad for democratic politics for they bring people together in non-hierarchical ways and get them talking. What's needed is controlling the market, and "even on an international scale it is worth thinking about the ways market power can be balanced and supervised by social and political controls." But who should do this thinking, and what form should it take?

Barker dismisses Leys' appeal to what he calls the "special Gramscian notion of hegemony," and counter hegemony, as not only not useful but also "totalitarian." For Barker, the notion of hegemony amounts to

the "widespread real acceptance of a set of ideas," and for him "even this usage evades the crucial question: by what political process and under what rules of discussion and what distribution of power is that acceptance achieved?" This is not Gramsci's special notion of hegemony, however, but simply a variant of the dominant ideology thesis. In fact, Barker's argument suffers as a result of his mishandling of Gramsci. Leys answers Barker effectively on the question of counter-hegemony: unless a counter-hegemonic project emerges, local resistances are likely to be easily outflanked and, in any case, very far from emphasis upon such a project being inherently totalitarian there is no good reason why counter-hegemony cannot be developed and sustained democratically.

Equally important, however, is the fact that a more fine-grained sense of, precisely, the nature of hegemony might have led Barker to locate his own discussion of "the local" a little differently. For the primary question preceding Barker's own "crucial" question is one of who sets the rules and under what conditions. This needs to be tackled, and I will seek to do so - cutting against the thrust of Barker's own analysis - through a discussion of the way in which grassroots initiatives and struggles in Chile have been transformed into cultural resources for the neo-liberal state. As I shall show, this is another way of critiquing the assumption, implicit in the celebration of the local to which Barker subscribes, that "civil society" (taken to be a free-standing realm) is what matters for understanding meaningful democratic possibilities.

Indeed, for many disenchanted Left intellectuals the idea of civil society has come to replace older preoccupations with determinants of political action like the state, parties, and class-based organizations in work about cross-class organizations. It is true that the voices of subordinate peoples were often not heard in many of the old-style discussions on the Left, especially the voices of women, who, we may add, were almost always silenced. And yet the celebration of multiple voices in which Barker partakes is coterminous today with a perverse, even willful, forgetting of the centrality of the state and thus of the need to engage with it. I consider this kind of historical amnesia among Left intellectuals (as I will now demonstrate) to be an abdication of our role, and one I find increasingly morally reprehensible.

The Chilean case

I have studied the travails of popular organizations in Chile, specifically poor and working-class women's organizations, for the past twelve years. The transformations these myriad local initiatives have undergone have led me to wonder what has happened to the activism which I, like Barker, found so promising from the point of view of democratizing democracy. These last eight years of civilian rule, with Pinochet and the armed forces still hovering over the manacled democracy they made possible, have witnessed significant changes in the aims, and the discourse of popular organizations. In fact, the expertise of "grassroots" activism and of the supporting NGOs (with their cadre of "organic" intellectuals) - the unsung but oh so pivotal element in most, if not all, grassroots initia-



Lynn Murray

tives which many of us insist on rendering invisible or in collapsing with the grassroots – is being harnessed for projects which have little to do with genuine autonomy and local democracy. Popular organizing is contributing important resources to what the government and international agencies for development (e.g., the World Bank) and for cooperation (e.g., solidarity NGOs) are doing with “the poor” in the names both of sustainable development, and of decentralization and local empowerment. It becomes, in fact, part of a formula designed to make a profoundly inequitable economic system – still premised on

state protection of capital and savage “flexibilization” of labour – politically sustainable. Similar transformations are also taking place in the rest of Latin America’s Southern Cone, and I gather also in South Africa, with parallels in other parts of Africa and in Eastern Europe.

A good example of this transfer of capacity from grassroots organizing to the state is the new, innovative social programmes aiming to “help the poor help themselves.” These include a panoply of initiatives including technical and financial support for micro-enterprises, skills training, and a range of pro-

grams inviting inhabitants of poor communities (read here, as usual, mostly women) to participate in community self-development. This transfer of expertise has also involved the migration of “experts,” both from NGOs and from the popular organizations themselves, into those government agencies and private foundations (e.g., party and church-based) in charge of developing and implementing neo-liberal social policy agendas. Committed Left intellectuals engaged in action research during the dictatorship, much of it funded by agencies from abroad, have found a new home in government. So have many of their “foot-soldiers”: working-class people, predominantly women, who were always the direct link between these NGO professionals and their clients, the popular organizations.

With the turn to civilian government, most international funding agencies and solidarity NGOs shifted the bulk of their funds to other “needier” parts of the globe – a story repeated in other countries of Latin America. Those funds still available are now channelled through the government with the purpose of strengthening “civil society.” Their real purpose, however, is to make the model of capitalist accumulation imposed by Pinochet’s dictatorship politically sustainable. As a result, many NGOs were shut down, and those that survived did so by turning themselves into private corporations and consulting firms. Today they compete with each other to supply the government, and the private charity world, with technical expertise on topics ranging from popular education, gender sensitive analysis, and innovative urban planning to community health. Others specialize in developing and evaluating government social programs, and yet others have become “executive agents” for many of the government’s newfangled, decentralized social programs.

Working-class people, meanwhile, are busily engaged in projects

of "self-development," most of which they have to compete for from an array of *fondos concursables* (competition-based funds), made available by private foundations, local governments, ministries, and social agencies. According to these programs, "the poor" take responsibility for their own development by complementing with their free labour the offer of funds made by various levels of government. This work takes many forms. *Micro-empresas* (micro-enterprises), for example, are very widespread. Vast numbers of people are making a go of them, typically recruiting the whole family, including children as young as five or six, and hiring friends and neighbours to help with the chores. Government-sponsored community self-development projects are the most celebrated. Men and women are volunteering their free labour for projects designed to improve the quality of life in their own neighbourhoods: paving streets, creating green areas and soccer fields, and building community and day-care centres. It goes without saying that they have to manage these activities on weeknights and weekends, when they are not at work improving the neighbourhoods of the better off.

Why?

What few people want to do when talking about these changes taking place in Chile in the name of "modernization" and self-development, of autonomy and empowerment of the poor, is to ask the question: Why? Why must poor communities subsidize their own development while others do not? Why is the government, with the support of foreign donors, and increasingly the World Bank, so keen on promoting so much effort in exchange for such meagre resources? Why are so many committed professionals, formerly of the NGOs and presently engaged with the agencies of the state, so enthusiastically supportive of these initiatives? And lastly, why are poor and working-class people, who aimed so high with their efforts to organize for

a meaningful democracy, for empowerment and autonomy, on the whole not resisting this appropriation of their initiatives for other ends?

What is clear to me from these transformations underway in Chile is that the agencies and practices of neo-liberal states are deeply implicated in the constitution of a common discursive framework, including the grammar which enables women and men to talk and to struggle for a better life. Whether or not people "believe" the line about autonomy and empowerment pushed by private and public sector agencies peddling much needed resources, assistance, and work opportunities is beside the point. The real point is that, by and large, these new terms of participation are not changing the very material and cultural contexts in which people's lives and struggles are framed. To return to Barker's image of markets, the very existence of such spaces, which he

values highly, depends on a series of rules, regulations, permits, and fees controlling who can use the space to sell goods, when, and for how much. These enabling structures (and the hegemonic framework they provide) may tend to get lost from view (and from analysis) in the hustle and bustle of people going about their daily business, but must we also ignore them? It was Antonio Gramsci who reminded us that civil society is inconceivable without the state, that civil society and the state are two sides of the same coin, and that both are implicated in hegemonic projects. Their hegemony, or ours? It is impossible to sweep that question aside. Today, perhaps more than at any other time in this twentieth century, Gramsci's culturally rich notion of hegemony is crucial to helping us grasp the magnitude of the transformations afoot in our world.

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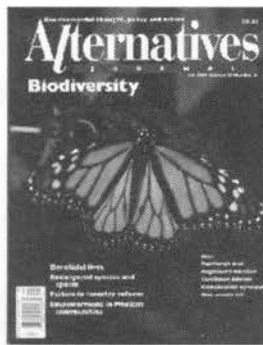
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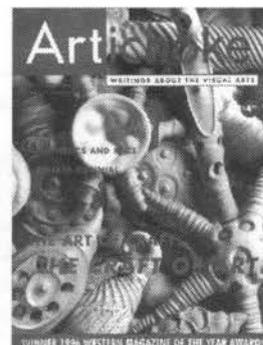
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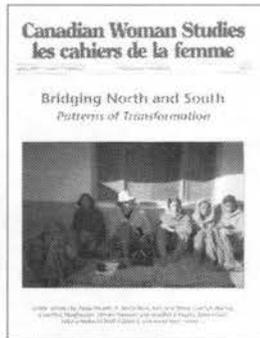
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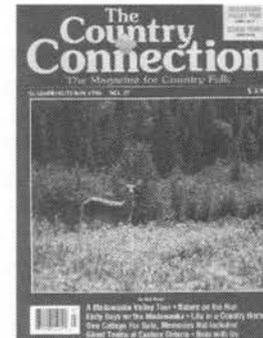
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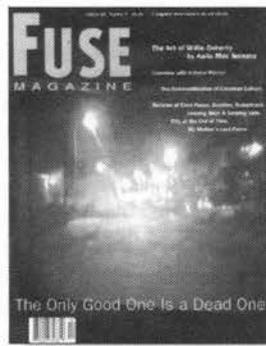
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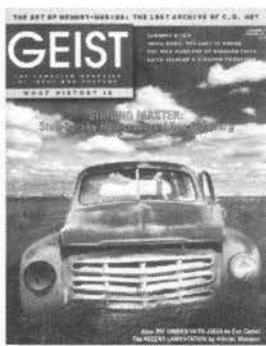
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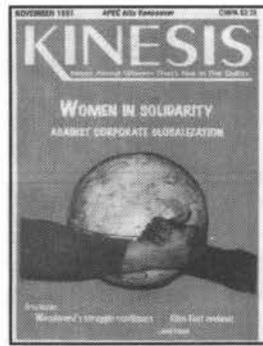
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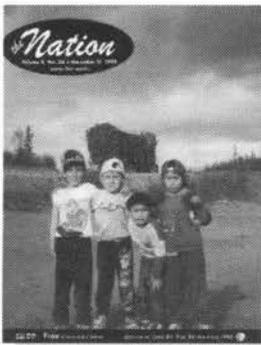
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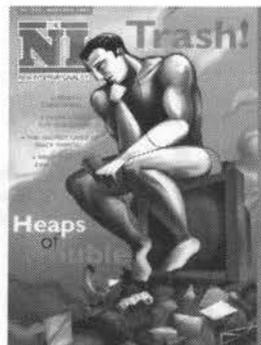
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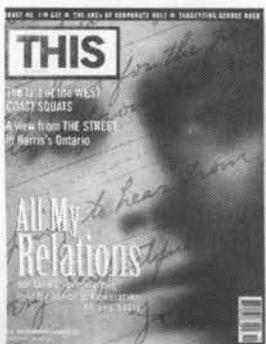
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Faith, Hope and Clarity

The History of TCCR

A REVIEW BY LINDA FREEMAN

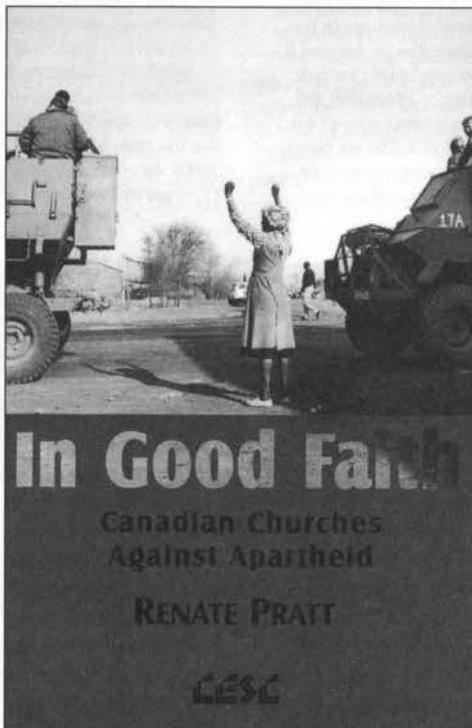
Linda Freeman is the author of the recent bestseller, *The Ambiguous Champion: Canada and South Africa in the Trudeau and Mulroney Years*.

Renate Pratt. In Good Faith – Canadian Churches Against Apartheid. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press for the Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion, 1997, xii and 366 pp. ISBN 0-88920-280-X

Some of the finest memories of the anti-apartheid struggle in Canada come from the Taskforce on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility (TCCR). Year in and year out, Renate Pratt, Bill Davis, Moira Hutchinson, and a range of church and other leaders braved annual meetings of Canadian banks and corporations, pressing the case for disinvestment or a halt to loans in the face of abuse, condescension and ridicule.

It was the persistence that was awesome; this ecumenical coalition (which included the Anglican, Catholic, Lutheran, Presbyterian and United churches) kept coming back. Indeed, the importance of maintaining church commitment “even through periods of public disinterest, government indifference and corporate hostility” is one of the lessons for social action from Renate Pratt’s *In Good Faith – Canadian Churches Against Apartheid*.

A slight demur on the title: this study focuses exclusively on TCCR, and leaves out the broader spectrum of Canadian church involve-



ment in the struggle against apartheid. In particular, a second church coalition, the Inter-Church Coalition on Africa (ICCAF) also liaised closely with African churches and conducted broad development education work on this issue in Canada.

However, a third church organization, the Confederation of Church and Business People, was on the other side. Composed largely of senior business and even some church leaders, the Confederation was established in 1977 to neutralize TCCR. It claimed that Taskforce activities were not representative of mainstream church views. Therefore, the Taskforce was scrupulous to confine its initiatives to those mandated by its member churches, so as not to be dismissed as fringe activists.

Pratt’s account of the Taskforce’s experience has rightly been called “a primer for others wishing to engage in similar struggles.” She was centrally placed to write the history, a task she took on with a “sense of gratitude” that she had lived to see the day that Mandela walked free.

Her active engagement began in the early 1970s with her contribution to a YWCA of Canada study of Canadian economic links with South Africa, *Investment in Oppression*. Two years later she began an eleven year stint as the first coordinator of TCCR.

It is no exaggeration to say that the detailed primary research which she helped co-ordinate on the Canadian state as well as private sector activity in South Africa provided a treasure trove second to none for the anti-apartheid movement, the press and even, at times, for the Canadian government to draw upon.

The richness of *In Good Faith* also lies in the detail – the accounts of private encounters with corporate executives which varied “between tense hostility and condescending bonhomie”; and the meeting upon tedious meeting with officials from the Department of External Affairs.

Her deconstruction of the approach in Ottawa is devastating. With a few exceptions, government officials knew less about sanctions and South Africa than Taskforce representatives, and tried to fob them off with evasive, misleading, poorly-researched and contradictory responses. Indeed, for a brief period in 1985, the Mulroney government looked to the Taskforce, rather than to its own officials, for detailed proposals when policy on South Africa began to change.

TCCR's prominence meant that, from time to time, it became the recipient of intelligence from inside the state - with government documents arriving anonymously and a source close to the Privy Council Office offering a private briefing. However, its most important sources, by far, came from its close links with Canadian churches, their South African counterparts, and with South Africa's black majority.

In terms of the last, it added greatly to have a young woman from South Africa's Crossroads settlement drop into the Taskforce office to describe the way Massey Ferguson bulldozers levelled her squatter camp. South African and Namibian workers affected directly by Canadian companies joined the Taskforce in meetings with the Canadian private sector. Pratt herself visited South Africa in January 1986 as a member of a church delegation under the sponsorship of the Southern African Catholics Bishops' Conference.

No wonder the Taskforce came up with such a different analysis than the Canadian government and private sector who relied, for far too long, on the white elite in South Africa as their sources of information.

Indeed, this account pulls out and emphasizes the significance, for Mulrone's South Africa policy, of changing reformist inclinations in South Africa's white community. In Pratt's view, the call for reform by

the private sector and white liberals in South Africa was fundamental in motivating the decision of the Mulrone government to impose sanctions, just as their subsequent retreat on reform moved Mulrone to stall on sanctions from 1987 on.

Once the South African state regained control in the mid-1980s, bullying white "reformers" back into line, Pratt's Privy Council source confirmed that the Canadian state became extremely pessimistic about change, envisaging a long and bloody struggle ahead.

However, at this point, no-one in senior policy-making circles in Canada was prepared to follow through on the logic of sanctions or to ally wholeheartedly with the black majority. Although Mulrone had promised in 1985 that, unless the apartheid state began to reform, Canada would impose total economic and diplomatic sanctions, the reality was that his government stopped further action once things became worse.

This understanding of the political analysis behind shifts in the official approach in Ottawa on South Africa is a useful addition to the range of other forces - both external and internal - which came to bear as the policy evolved.

Indeed, there is little within this study with which to disagree. At the end, perhaps, Pratt overstates the case in her desire to have the last word with those who had found the Taskforce's campaign

for sanctions "an indulgence in self-righteousness." After popular struggle, she concludes, "economic sanctions were the most important reason why that resistance led to the negotiations that ended apartheid."

While there is no question that sanctions played their part in raising the cost of apartheid, the fundamental structural crisis within apartheid itself, its sheer unworkability, must be factored in, along with the fiscal crisis of the South African state, changes in the region, the end of the Cold War, and the transformation of the state and National Party under de Klerk.

However, this is small stuff compared to my general respect and admiration for the Taskforce's activity and now its record. It is somehow a fitting, if perverse, tribute that the Liberal government would not include Renate Pratt on the Canadian team to observe the 1994 elections which formally ended the apartheid state.

Finally, one is left with some sadness that the Taskforce's commitment to the struggle of the South African majority ended with the collapse of apartheid. For many, life in South Africa became more dangerous in the transition, and the post-1994 years have not been easy. While the struggle for economic and social rights is a much more complex phenomenon than the struggle for basic civil and political rights, who is better placed than the churches to take it on?

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In Good Faith Canadian Churches Against Apartheid

Renate Pratt

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In Good Faith

Canadian Churches
Against Apartheid

RENATE PRATT

CEC

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- from the Preface by
The Most Reverend Desmond M. Tutu

"A significant recent contribution, Renate Pratt's *In Good Faith*...describes how the Task Force on Churches and Corporate Responsibility used ethical investment strategies to help bring about the end of apartheid in South Africa."

- *Globe & Mail*

Under the Tongue

A New Novel from Zimbabwe

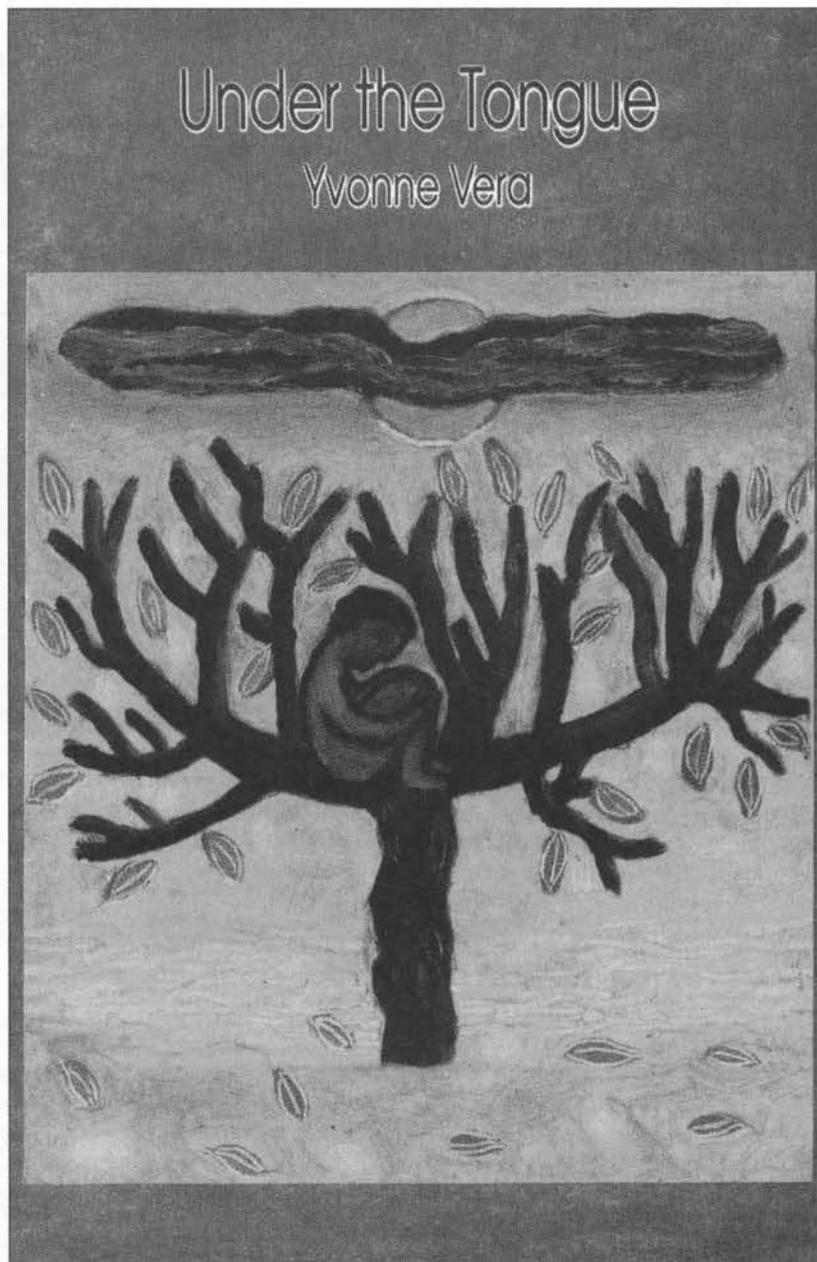
A REVIEW BY JULIE CAIRNIE

Julie Cairnie, whose doctoral thesis is titled 'Imperialists in Broken Boots': Poor Whites and Philanthropy in Southern African Life Writing, studies in the English Department at Toronto's York University.

Yvonne Vera. Under the Tongue. Harare: Baobab Books, 1996. 113 pp. ISBN 0-908311-93-1

In October 1997 I travelled by bus from Johannesburg, where I was doing doctoral research, to Bulawayo, where I would visit an old friend from university. This would be my first time in Zimbabwe since 1989, when I taught English in Mutorashanga, a chrome mining community north of Harare. It would also be the first time I had seen Yvonne Vera since she left Canada in 1995. Yvonne is currently director of the National Gallery of Zimbabwe in Bulawayo and, most recently, recipient of the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best Book in the Africa Region. The book which won her such acclaim is *Under the Tongue*, her fourth and most compelling book to date. I looked forward to reaching my destination, to hearing Yvonne's reflections on these exciting changes in her life. Little did I know that the bus journey would be not only a memorable experience in itself, but that it would prepare me to read Yvonne's innovative and daring book.

The bus passengers were a microcosm of Southern African society in the 1990s: there were two white women, a mother and a daughter, anxious to return home in time to join their bridge club; a migrant worker and his family from Durban following the promise of a job in the mines across the border; several Zimbabweans returning from shopping trips in South Africa; a few South Africans en route to Victoria Falls; and me, a foreign scholar doing research in Southern Africa. While we were a diverse group (a diversity highlighted when we



laughed during different segments of "Addams Family Values," the film our hostess played for our entertainment), I was struck by our comradeship when confronted with border bureaucracy, and,

especially, by the depth of some of our conversations.

As soon as I sat down a solitary man from Kimberley, on his way to the Falls, tapped me on the shoulder. "Are you a

tourist?," he inquired. I replied that I was travelling to Bulawayo to visit a friend and that I was in the region doing research for my dissertation on Southern African literature. "Ah," he exclaimed, "I prefer literature to fiction." Intrigued, I asked him to explain the difference. He told me that "literature encourages you to think; fiction doesn't expect you to think at all." While his distinction seemed somewhat elitist (he used canonical European texts as examples of literature), his emphasis on thinking, with the expectation of intellectual and emotional effort on the part of the reader, resonated when I came to read *Under the Tongue*. But that was still in the future.

After fifteen hours of travel and border inspection, we finally arrived in Bulawayo. I remembered, then, the wide avenues and blooming jacarandas which characterize that small, neat city. I remembered, too, Yvonne's penchant for striking colours when I spotted her at the bus stop, dressed in vibrant pinks and purples. Her hair was different: she now wears it in dreads – particularly unusual for a woman in sleepy, conservative Bulawayo. Our greeting was prolonged, the greeting of friends eager to communicate a two years' absence. Over the next few days Yvonne took me to places that meant a great deal to her: the gallery where she works, Matopos, and, perhaps most importantly, her grandmother's house in the township. Yvonne is close to her grandmother, and I appreciated the depth of her gesture to bring us together. Neither of us spoke the other's language, but we managed to communicate through Yvonne. Relationships – chosen and familial, and especially between women – are central to Yvonne's life and to her most recent novel.

Under the Tongue is the story of how young Zhizha finds her voice and reckons with her past. The plot is simple: Zhizha is reticent, until her grandmother's love and compassion enables her to divulge that she has been raped

by her father. The book conveys emotional depth rather than action, and this is largely what makes it such a challenging read. The reader is invited to immerse herself in Zhizha's emotional experience, an unpleasant immersion given that Zhizha is struggling towards an articulation of her rape. At least one critic has expressed anger towards the writer for drawing him into such a horror story. There is no room for readerly passivity or objectivity in *Under the Tongue*; complete emotional involvement is required. The grandmother, however, provides balance, helps Zhizha, and the reader, cope with the horrifying discovery of incest. Zhizha learns that she is not alone.

Relationships between women are presented as healing relationships, while relationships between women and men are often abusive. Zhizha is not the only victim of male violence: grandmother is cruelly taunted by grandfather for failing to produce a healthy male child and Zhizha's mother is imprisoned for murdering her daughter's rapist. The book proposes that language and communication facilitate healing from such violence. It revises Freud's "talking therapy" to include reciprocity, particularly between women: grandmother, for example, tells her life story to enable Zhizha to tell her own life story. Furthermore, this healing is not solely personal, but political as well. In the end, the reader learns, Zhizha's abuse occurred at the moment of Zimbabwe's independence from Britain. There is an implicit correspondence between a broken personal promise, the implicit promise that a parent will care for a child, and a broken political promise, the promise of something better after the demise of the colonial regime.

While making its own unique contribution, *Under the Tongue* fits into a pattern of Zimbabwean writing. It is tempting to draw comparisons between Yvonne's novel and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous*

Conditions. Both are written by young, educated Zimbabwean women, and both focus on the psychology of young women in a transitional period, personal and political. Yvonne, however, eschews the conventions of realism in favour of the subtlety of lyricism. Although Zhizha moves towards voice, that voice is cracked, fissured; there is, the book makes clear, no way of matching exactly the experience of incest to language. In this respect, *Under the Tongue* most closely resembles the works of Dambudzo Marechera. Marechera, who died in 1987, defies authority in his writing – the authority of realism, the authority of political regimes. And, like Yvonne, he challenges taboos, quite often sexual taboos. The difference, however, is that Yvonne is primarily concerned with women – throughout her oeuvre – and is far more interested in establishing community, in being responsible to a community of readers, than the disturbingly solipsistic Marechera.

Under the Tongue redefines relationships – between grandmother and granddaughter, between writer and reader – to include reciprocity, exchange. Many readers of the book describe the experience of being pulled in, of being forced into a relationship with Zhizha and her grandmother. This experience mirrors Zhizha's own experience of finding her voice with the help of her grandmother. The writer manages to make readers think, to process emotional and intellectual experience, a requisite for (good) literature according to the man on the bus. Yvonne does not speak exclusively to an educated audience, but she does have high expectations for her readers. They, like Zhizha, have to work hard to discover meaning in relationships, in language, and in broken promises. And, again like Zhizha, Yvonne finds her own voice in *Under the Tongue*, a voice which promises to be with readers of Southern African literature for a long time.

SAR

Whose Agenda?



Global corporations are the main beneficiaries of the trade agreements being negotiated by our government today.

- MAI (Multilateral Agreement on Investment)
- APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation)
- FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas)

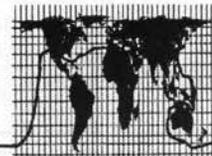
All are driven by a narrow trade and investment agenda. They are strong on corporate rights but show a marked deficit when it comes to labour, environment and social protections.



What can we do to make sure these trade agreements include our agenda? Get informed! Become active in organizations fighting to put labour, environment and social rights on the negotiating table. There are alternatives to competitive globalization.

"We are convinced that the Americas does not need free trade. It needs fair trade, regulated investment and a conscious consumer strategy..."

Final Declaration, Peoples Summit of the Americas
Santiago, Chile, April 1998



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