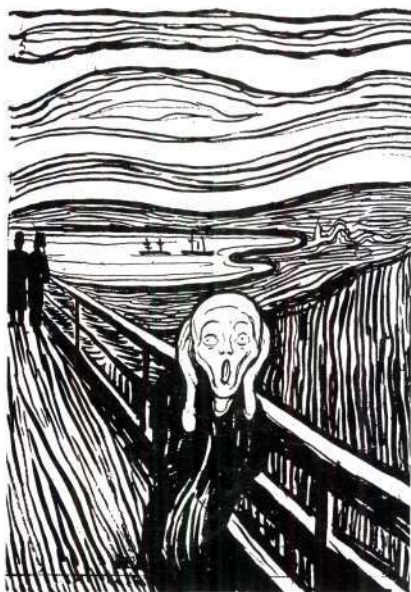


SEARCHLIGHT SOUTH AFRICA

No 7

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Mayhem in the Townships

The Trial of Winnie Mandela

Swapo and the Churches

Colonialism and Imperialism

Sobukwe and the PAC

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A Marxist Journal of Southern African Studies

Editorial – Ethiopia, the Falashas and Kurdistan: A Latter-day Tragedy	1
Baruch Hirson – Colonialism and Imperialism	7

Mayhem in the Townships

Editors – The Dogs of War	19
Paul Trewhela – The Trial of Winnie Mandela The Case of Samuel Mngqibisa	33 48

Baruch Hirson – Review Article: Sobukwe and the PAC	54
James Fairbairn – The Split in the ANC, 1958	60

The Namibian Whitewash

Paul Trewhela – Swapo and the Churches An International Scandal	65
Braam Fleish – Letter from Johannesburg	89

Cover Picture: E Munch, The Scream



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If substantial alterations would improve an article or review, the editors will communicate with the author before proceeding with publication. The editors reserve the right to alter grammar, spelling, punctuation or obvious errors in the text. Where possible, references should be included in the text, with sources listed at the end of the article, giving author, title, publisher and date.

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A Note To Readers

In this era, when the 'death of Marxism' has become the siren call of the media and celebrated by the governments of Britain, the US and many European states, the need to re-establish the values of socialism has become urgent. We associate ourselves with the publications we advertise because we believe them to be interested in reviving serious interest in the problems confronting us.

ETHIOPIA, THE FALASHAS AND KURDISTAN: A LATTER-DAY TRAGEDY

The United States in Ethiopia

Ethiopia once had a special significance for black South Africans. In 1935, when Mussolini's Italy invaded that country there were mass demonstrations in Cape Town and a strike was threatened in the event of any Italian ships being loaded in the port. This was the latest seizure of territory in Africa by a European power and African resentment joined with anti-fascist anger in protesting against the Italians. The South African Communist Party brought out a special newspaper devoted to the struggle against this blatant act of aggression and the (Trotskyist) Workers Party campaigned on the same issue. The western powers in Europe invoked sanctions against Italy and, short of oil, the Italians might have been induced to withdraw. But sanctions have not been known to work. In this case, the USSR, under Stalin seized the opportunity for earning foreign currency and sold oil to the Italian state.

The Italians won in the end, after enduring humiliating defeats, largely because of its access to the most modern armaments of the time. Haile Selassie, upstart Emperor of Ethiopia, went in to exile and started on a round of missions to the League of Nations and the leaders of the Western world. He won nothing from the great powers, but he was the darling of the liberals and the left. These politicians had a champion at last, even if they were generally ineffectual in the metropolitan countries. Little did they know that they were the forerunners of generations of young people who would champion one or other small state, and that they would be the first of just as many generations of disillusioned lefties who believed that their efforts would lead to the uplifting of a poor oppressed people.

Then came the war in Europe of 1939-45, in which Italy was on the losing side. When peace finally descended, the Emperor returned in pomp and glory and for a time Ethiopia dropped out of the news. But no news was not good news for the people in the Horn of Africa. Those subjected to the rule of this petty tyrant saw little difference between domination under Mussolini and domination under the Emperor and his pampered palace retinue. As for the liberal souls of the west, they had found new causes in which to sink their energies. And sink them they did.

After one major failed coup, in December 1960, the Emperor was ultimately overthrown in 1984 and an army junta under Col Mengistu Haile Mariam took over. The event caused little stir in South Africa this time round. Ethiopia was too far away and events at home too pressing to occasion excitement in the townships. Also, the history of post-war Africa had cautioned against undue enthusiasm for yet another army coup. If there was any excitement it was among the Africa watchers in the ranks of the Communist Party. The army became a client state of the USSR, the leaders declared that they were Marxist-Leninists and received arms and money from Moscow. The Derge, as the leadership was called, set about building a new model army, with a

praetorian guard trained in North Korea. Giant stadia and prestige buildings were built; and Ethiopia long the capital of the Organisation of African Unity now gave a new twist to the rhetoric of African liberation. To show the world where their allegiance lay (and whence came their supplies) they also set up a giant statue of Lenin in the capital Addis Ababa. Oh, my countrymen! What a vista that was for the children of Ethiopia. They might go hungry, but father Vladimir was watching over them.

There were other people in Ethiopia who did not have the benefit of Lenin's determined face: and they did not receive arms from the USSR. Yet they too called themselves Marxist-Leninists (which was a bit confusing for those who followed the degraded messages coming out of Moscow). They rose in revolt: the people of Eritrea, of Ogaden and of Tigray, and for this the Communists condemned them. If the Derge claimed to be the 'true' communists (and they did have the statue of Lenin to confirm that fact), then those that opposed them were counter-revolutionaries. What most liberal observers preferred to ignore, was that the conflict had an ethnic or tribal base. The Tigrayans, despite their 'Marxist-Leninist' phraseology, built a tribal army to wrest control from the Amharic people, represented first by Haile Selassie and then by the Derge.

Strangely enough, there was one leading member of the South African Communist Party, Ruth First, estranged wife of Joe Slovo, (who was said to have left or been expelled from the party) who publicly backed the Eritreans. Quite why she felt it necessary to support one set of petty-bourgeois nationalists against another, is one more mystery that might need footnoting one day. But back then she did, and that was discretely ignored in the interests of party unity.

The story of the past decade in Ethiopia has been grim. Civil war, land displacement, then two massive droughts (and several minor ones) left a trail of deaths across the country. Countless thousands died, and many of the survivors owed their lives to hand-outs from western charities. Inside this scenario an even more fantastical event was played out. There is (or was!) a group of Ethiopians, known as Falashas (the 'Outcasts'), who claimed to be descendants of the Queen of Sheba. They were Jews, they declared, who followed the precepts of the Old Testament. In so far as people wish to follow a religion their claim was as good as any. However, there was no other link with Jewry, with Zionism or with Palestine. But, in a scoop out of Hollywood, the Israelis 'rescued' these Falashas in two massive air lifts, the last taking place one day before the fall of the Derge.

About 30,000 Falashas are now in Israel in operations that cost \$30 million each time. The first group has not been integrated into Israeli society as yet and there is no obvious future for them or those who have now followed. Nobody can object to the saving of men, women and children — if in fact they might have been subjected to some unknown terror. Nor can there be any objection to people being afforded better facilities if they are moved. But to do this while Palestinians are denied work, are subjected to curfews, are harried, harassed and expelled is obscene.

However, if there can be no justification for removing these people, difficult as their position in Ethiopia might be, there was one over-riding factor that can explain their flight. The Americans advanced the money for their transportation and will undoubtedly continue to pay for their upkeep in the coming years. The US administration that can find no money for the relief of blacks and Latinos in its own country, that allows millions to live below the breadline, that cannot (and has no desire to) curb race discrimination within its own borders, paid for the removal of the Falashas.

That, of course, was only part of the deal. The Americans also supplied the opposition forces with weapons and ammunition.

Through their State Department, they helped co-ordinate the final assault and stage managed talks in London to coincide with the final push on Addis Ababa. The 'new era' was being ushered in to the horn, as it is being levered into position wherever the US can find the fulcrum. The world is paying the price for the deal reached between Bush and Gorbachev. With the removal of the facade of greatness that was once bestowed on the USSR, the State Department is able to manipulate the situation in diverse states to secure its own grip.

In one respect, the fall of the statue of Lenin was appropriate. It represented the tutelage of Moscow, and that is now gone. The Derge could not survive because the weaponry on which it rested was no longer available. On the other hand, the removal of that statue represents another slap in the face for the left. In one more community the idea of Marxism (and of Leninism) was pulled down with the effigy. It was no more than a cast of a man, a symbol perhaps of what might have been, but not the reality. How were the people to know? They were told by the administration that Marxism had been installed, that Marxism was being implemented. Stalinists and others abroad had fawned on the regime and acclaimed it as another Marxist state.

This degenerate state, that waged internal war, wasted millions on symbolic buildings, persecuted minorities and moved people out of their traditional homes, could neither provide food nor shelter, and that finally imploded: if this was an example of Marxism, then the people could only reject it as the theory of a society that could not function. In so far as there is resistance to the new administration, the struggle is not over 'Marxism', but over tribal rivalries and the control of the state apparatus. Under the circumstances the only winner will be the US — the losers will be the people of Ethiopia.

The United States and Iraq

When this journal last appeared, the grand alliance led by America was about to pulverise Iraq. Using the highly developed technology of the space-craft age, the allies set about systematically destroying the enemy. Saddam Hussein, not to be outdone, poured millions of gallons of oil into the Persian Gulf in an act of ecological mayhem. He followed this with the firing of over 600 oil wells, destabilising atmospheric conditions for the coming decades. The

editors of this journal could support neither side and are proud to have said this before the destruction began.

The tragedy was that there was no means for socialists to intervene to prevent the carnage that followed. Despite all their editorials and demonstrations the little groups of the left were once again shown to be ineffectual — whatever their claims.

The information reaching London from South Africa suggested that most supporters of the ANC, and opponents of the government declared for Saddam Hussein or called on the US to get out of the Gulf. The one-sided position they took had the effect of placing them on the side of a government that treats (and treated) its opposition in a fashion that makes South Africa look like a Sunday School treat. In fact, it did not really matter. The attitudes they adopted were irrelevant because they could not affect what was about to happen. Instead of providing a balanced critique of what was happening, they rushed in with ready-made slogans that explained nothing. Yet there are urgent matters that socialists have to pose. Why did so many of the people of the Middle East support Saddam? What did they expect to achieve under Iraqi control? Why, above all else, has there been no socialist current to which these people could be drawn? Those are questions that need urgent answer.

There are also other questions that must be addressed, in line with the questions that Engels posed so urgently in the 1870s and 1880s: how do socialists hope to counter the growing might of the armies? What can small nations do in the face of modern weaponry and destructive technology? When Engels raised these questions he was accused by some of moving towards reformism because he feared the consequences of young workers being drawn into conscript armies. The critics were wrong then and would be wrong today. Socialists have to take a long and sober look at the nature of modern warfare and construct their tactics on the basis of the force that has become available to the modern army.

Then came the uprising in the wake of defeat. Socialists or nationalists who had tacitly or explicitly supported the Saddam regime had to do a rapid U-turn. They now became champions of the Kurds (and the Shi'ites?) and obviously wanted the defeat of Saddam. Even though the Americans were still there, and even though the anti-imperialist slogans still echoed in their papers, the Kurds were now the issue. What did they say when Bush and his administration refused to support the rebels in the south? And what did they say when the Yanks first refused to come to the aid of the Kurds, and then gave way to liberal voices and provided a safe haven along the Turkish border? Perhaps some did speak sense this time but, if they did, it made little difference. They only demonstrated again their impotence.

One letter-writer from America wrote to us criticising our original standpoint. We should have been gratified. Someone had read us and been concerned. We were condemned for our earlier stand. Now we were asked: were we not going to support the Kurds? Were we going to reject their pleas because they could be accused of being petty bourgeois nationalists?

We have not printed the letter, as much as we welcome correspondence, because it adds little to our knowledge of events in the Middle East or of our understanding of nationalist movements. But our correspondent deserves an answer on the last point. It is the bounden duty of every socialist to offer help and solidarity to every oppressed people. Solidarity comes easily, help is beyond our means or capabilities. But whatever sympathy we offer, there can be no support for the nationalist leaders. Their role as leaders (whether they wish it or not) is to represent the interest of their class — and this is not that of the workers or peasants. More than that, they will come to terms, as soon as convenient, with their erstwhile oppressors. In the case of the Kurds of Iraq that happened almost before we had a chance to read the disc that was sent to us. Barzani (of the Kurds) clasped the hand of Saddam Hussein and declared that all had been resolved. He had nothing to say about the Shi'ites who were mercilessly crushed. He had no programme for the workers of Iraq (whether Kurd or Muslim), no vision for a better society. It is not that we expect him to have such a programme, we only wish to indicate that such leaders do not point a way out for the people they claim to represent. We can only be thankful that they do not have statues of Lenin with them. Imagine lugging such a symbol up into the mountains when fleeing towards the Turkish borders.

Within a few months the US State Department has demonstrated its intentions. Its actions in Iraq and Ethiopia have been the first examples of the 'new world order' it intends imposing on humankind. If this is the scenario it is preparing for the 'new South Africa' the future looks grim. Perhaps we must repeat with the old Griqua Chief the prayer he was once said to have offered up:

*Lord, Save Thy People.
Lord, We are lost unless thou Savest us.
Lord, This is not the work for Children.
It is not enough this time to send Thy Son.
Lord, Thou must come Thyself.*

Wang Fan-hsi

MEMOIRS of a Chinese Revolutionary

(with the chapter that the OUP excluded)

Translated and introduced by Gregor Benton

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COLONIALISM AND IMPERIALISM¹

Baruch Hirson

Imperialism — A Slogan or a Concept?

It is almost impossible to read an article on events in Africa, Asia or Latin America in radical or socialist papers, without being confronted with statements that ascribe the intervention of the major capitalist countries to imperialist machinations. That the interventions take place (economically, politically and militarily) or that they are designed to further capitalist interests is not in doubt. That they are often the work of financial institutions and/or multi-nationals is beyond doubt. But their description as 'imperialist', as defined by Lenin, stands in need of investigation.

The issues raised in this paper are bound to raise concern among people who have used the concept automatically, in the belief that it is firmly grounded in Marxist theory. The belief that Lenin's pamphlet, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism: A Popular Outline*, has provided all the answers usually stops any further discussion even when his text is shown to be faulty. For members of the Trotskyist tendencies there are further difficulties, precisely because Trotsky had a different position on the subject, not well documented, but available, and that itself needs discussion. Without claiming *a priori* that Trotsky's insights are necessarily better, the left has locked itself into a position which stems from the Stalin period: namely, that what Lenin wrote must be accepted without reservation. In this manichaeic world, Lenin is with God, Trotsky is consigned to the Devil. By way of contrast the groups that claim to follow Trotsky always find that what Trotsky said was correct, and that this coheres with Lenin's views.

The faults in Lenin's pamphlet can no longer be ignored. His analysis is invoked to provide political direction in diverse events across the globe, leading fresh generations into mistake after mistake when faced with wars and revolutions. The latest, and most severe, crisis arose from the war in the Gulf. Whatever the slogan, whether it was 'Hands off Iraq' or 'Americans out of the Gulf', the underlying supposition of most leftist and nationalist movements was that the war was the outcome of imperialist aggression.

Lest there be any misunderstanding, let me repeat the theme of an editorial on 'Third Worldism', in *Searchlight South Africa* No 6. There the forces in the Gulf fighting the war against Iraq were condemned. But it was explicitly stated that there could be no support the Iraqi dictatorship. The call had to be for the overthrow of the regime by the toilers of the middle East. There was such an attempt in the wake of the final offensive — and that was what the western powers had anticipated. Consequently, they left Saddam's praetorian guard intact, allowing his army to crush the popular uprising that followed the war.

The editorial was explicit: this was not an 'imperialist' war, and Iraq was not a 'semi-colonial' state — whatever that meant. That is, the origins of the

conflict had to be explained in other terms. Moreover the case of Iraq was not unique: the use of the word imperialism and its significance had to be investigated. Ultimately such a discussion leads to a proposition that the concept of imperialism is confusing. It adds nothing to the understanding of the situation and has become little less than a swear-word, brought into play to avoid the need for serious analysis.

Lenin's Formulation

Unlike many of his opponents, Lenin was clear on what he included in his definition of imperialism. In his pamphlet he laid down five points: the first four considered the stage at which capitalism had arrived by 1900: namely, the *creation of monopolies* due to the concentration of production and of capital; the *appearance of finance capital* through the merger of bank and industrial capital; the increasing importance of the *export of capital*, as distinct from the export of commodities; and the *formation of monopolistic capitalist combines*. The fifth point, which focused on the political rather than the economic, related to the *territorial division of the whole world* among the main capitalist powers.

These points were employed by Lenin to provide an updating of the theory of development of capitalism, and to criticize the theories of Social Democrats, from Hilferding and Kautsky to Luxemburg and the Mensheviks. He also attempted much more. He revived Engels' description of the British working class and its bourgeoisification — and advanced the idea of an 'aristocracy of labour'. Over and above this Lenin wrote the work to prove, as he said in his preface to the English and French edition in June 1920, 'that the war of 1914–18 was imperialist'.

In undertaking a criticism of so ambitious a work, each one of these aspects must be scrutinized. This is a task that has been undertaken by some writers during the past two decades. However, except for an extended essay by Hillel Ticktin², I have not read any work that subjects Lenin's theory of imperialism to a systematic critique, and most of the books and papers that have appeared fail to discuss Lenin's analysis of monopoly and finance capital. But even those authors who consider Lenin's theory do not undertake a systematic critique of his statements on colonialism.³

Before proceeding let me add one rider. Lenin's notebook indicates that he read extensively on the subject, but, as he admitted, conditions at the time meant that he was unable to secure literature from Britain, the USA and Russia. He was also unable to obtain (or did not look for) later editions of the works of J H Hobson⁴, seems to have misread Luxemburg⁵, and had not read Trotsky's work on the role of finance capital in the emergence of capitalism in Russia. The available material on the nature of colonialism, written by bourgeois apologists for the most part, was factually flawed and devoid of analytical content: a deficiency that Lenin did not circumvent. What he wrote ultimately was based on the work of Bukharin whose knowledge of Marxian methodology was imperfect and whose grasp of the subject was

limited, and that in turn was based on the book of Hilferding who concentrated too narrowly on the material he had found on the German banks.

Using such material in 1915–16, together with the early writings of Hobson, Lenin's work showed him to be in the forefront of Marxist thinkers of the time. But this work incorporated faulty information and analyses that stood in need of correction. Even if assumed correct for its time, it stands in need of urgent revision after the experiences of the past seven decades.

On Slogans

AN appraisal of the work on imperialism must start, not with Lenin's discussion of the changes in capitalism, but with its use as a popular exposition to explain the origins of the First World War. Lenin was a master of the political slogan. Having studied the lessons of the French Revolution⁶ he knew that the revolutionary crowd could be moved by the correct slogans at the correct time. His call for 'Bread, Land and Peace' mobilised millions around the Bolshevik party in 1917, precisely because this call expressed the longings of the people he addressed.

By pinning down the culprits that started the war Lenin sought that explanation, embodied in a word, which could be held-up to the people of the conflicting nations and so bring the war to a revolutionary conclusion. This does not show that Lenin's interpretation was right or wrong; it is only meant to direct attention to the importance attached to the word 'imperialism' at the time. It is also salutary to note that the slogans connected with anti-imperialism had little effect on events in Russia. It was not possible to generate large scale movements by this means — or at least not with this message alone. The call for peace was to become far more important by October 1917 than the characterisation of the war as imperialist.

Whatever its use during World War One, the word 'imperialism' is and was not only employed extensively by every socialist group, it was a word used by the Comintern to justify many switches in policy and it became a catchword of the nationalist movements across four continents after the Second World War (and that itself should give pause for reflection). In the 1950s the word was used interchangeably by the Stalinists⁷, first in conjunction with Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, who publicized the concept 'neo-colonialism' (the 'last stage of imperialism!'), and in some cases of dubious parentage with 'internal colonialism' — the stage after-the-last stage? Finally there appear to be the curious 'semi-colonies' for countries that are in no way colonies and which appear to need no definition. These terms appear in several sectarian papers and must be accepted on the nod...because of the authors' say-so. Lenin was not to blame for these dubious usages, but the vagueness of his original definition: 'an epoch of world colonial policy, which is most closely connected with ... finance capital', and his assertion that 'the world is completely divided up, so that in future only redivision is possible, i.e. territories can only pass from one "owner" to another, instead of passing as ownerless (sic) territory to an "owner"', not only proved incorrect, but invited the later addenda.

The origins of the First World War need study in their own right. It was the culmination of a struggle in Europe in which competing alliances set out to control different regions of the world, but the aims of the European powers were by no means uniform. The western allies were barely able to conceal their own disputes, with the two largest colonial powers, France and Britain, in a recently achieved (if patched-up) alliance after a confrontation at Fashoda in the Sudan.⁸ The Germans and Austrians had shown minimal interest in colonial possessions but were involved in a drive to the east to gain control of investment in the lands of the Ottoman Empire, and the Russians who had failed in their Balkan ventures had no interest in absorbing further regions. If anything, Russia was already the subject of extensive investment by the banks of France and Germany and there was no move before 1917 by the central powers to dismember the country.⁹ On the contrary, it was Russia that had taken part in the dismemberment of Poland and set itself as the champion of the Slav people against the Ottoman empire.

However much the reader tries to discover a *theory* of colonialism in Lenin's work, there is ultimately a blank wall. There is little attempt to situate colonialism in the overall development of capitalism — something that Luxemburg tried in her *Accumulation of Capital* (even if she failed to provide the answers). The definition of colonialism has not been successful because theoreticians failed to periodize its phases. Colonies were taken by European powers for several purposes: for loot, for the control (and later the suppression) of trade, for providing essential raw materials, and for the export of surplus population and of capital. It had different roots in the period of early mercantilism, in the eras of plantation economies, of industrial capitalism and in the twentieth century. The nature of colonialism depended on the uneven nature of capitalist development in Europe, from the 16th to the 21st century and the process differed for Spain, Portugal, Holland, France and Britain.¹⁰

Trotsky did not develop his ideas on imperialism, and changed his vantage point in his later writings. He adopted a view not unlike that of Luxemburg, arguing that the more developed capitalist countries were able to exploit the less developed regions from the very beginning of the capitalist era. This led to the inevitable contradiction in which capital needed to expand beyond national boundaries while the consolidation of the nation state hindered the internationalist drive of modern industry.¹¹ The crucial point is that Trotsky placed at least one aspect of colonialism (imperialism?) at the early stage of capitalist development, and not as the last stage.¹²

By the late 19th century it might be argued that the division of the world outside Europe (and Japan?) was integral to the control of the world market by finance capital. But this would have to be argued and would probably limp or collapse in the case of the biggest apparent carve-up, the so-called Partition of Africa. Was the 1886 Congress in Berlin a show put on by Leopold of Belgium in order to get the Congo? a spectacle to divert attention from the Great Depression? a struggle for the division of the world? or a rush to carve up the world's resources? Or must the events be seen as one further example of conflicting interests of states at different stages of capitalist

advancement? Before such an analysis is attempted it might be salutary to read the agreement reached at the conference.¹³ Whatever conclusion is reached after such a reading it would still be necessary to discover whether any appreciable capital investments were made in Africa outside of South Africa, the supplier of gold in an era when sterling and the concomitant gold standard dominated the money market.¹⁴

It is still possible to argue that the war aims of both sides in 1914–18 included the retention of colonies (or the redivision of existing colonies) and the extension of control into the middle east. In fact, for some statesmen this was an aspect of the struggle, although it seems to have been pursued more by Smuts (of South Africa) than most other members of the British war cabinet. But that would still not prove that there was an essential and direct link between finance capital and the possession of colonies in 1918.¹⁵

Colonies and National Liberation

It is perhaps remarkable, in view of the later debate of the colonial question in the Comintern, that there is no mention in Lenin's pamphlet on possible resistance in the colonies, past or future. The world would remain divided, or would be redivided, and all that the colonial people could do was wait for new 'owners' to appear. If Lenin's perspective on revolution in Russia in 1916 was somewhat myopic, he gave no indication that revolutionary struggle in the colonies (Ireland excepted) was possible. Even in his introduction to the French and German edition in July 1920 he did not hint at the possibility of such a struggle — an omission that is not usually discussed. Yet, during the coming month, Lenin engaged in debate on the question of colonial struggles. And when he intervened he still used the formula of his pre-1917 period. That would make sense, in the years to come, to the followers of Stalin, Bukharin, and even sectors of the opposition. The fact that Trotsky did not intervene in the debates of 1920–22 is incomprehensible. I am not aware of any *theoretical* appraisal (or reappraisal) of Lenin's work on imperialism after 1917 inside the Marxist movement.¹⁶ His pamphlet was taken, inside the Comintern and then in the Fourth International, as the last word on the subject.

The debates in the Comintern on colonial independence never rose above the obviously correct, but essentially simplistic, talk of oppressor and oppressed nations. The debates are notable for the dearth of references to the impact of capital exports on the economies of the countries outside Europe, or for the transformations wrought upon those territories by their incorporation of the world market. These analyses were not provided in the 1920s and where they appeared later in the debates on development and underdevelopment were subsumed under statements that implied that the colonial powers should have exploited their colonies more methodically!

Also, implicit in the discussion on the 'colonial question' was the assumption that the struggle for national liberation would not only provide new allies for the beleaguered Soviet State, it would also weaken the imperialist powers

and provide new impetus for the struggle of the working class in Europe. Out of these discussions came the belief that the fight against imperialism was the most important struggle in the world – and every programme was searched for the inclusion of that slogan, because it was the struggle against imperialism that would lead to socialism.¹⁷ The world has changed since 1920, but the issues raised then stand in urgent need of reappraisal. As Cox has shown, the position held by Lenin in these debates was so interpreted by the Comintern that it led to the disastrous policies pursued in China.¹⁸ Other errors followed, that still cloud contemporary discussions, or were allowed to pass without comment. Predictions about colonial (political) independence were mostly incorrect;¹⁹ the belief that colonial possessions were central to imperialism (in its widest definition) was shown to be unfounded; and the predictions that colonial independence would weaken the metropolitan powers has not been demonstrated.

Trotsky was assassinated in 1940 and consequently did not live to see the emergence of the new states in Africa and Asia. But his statements did not prepare Marxists for what happened after 1945. Nor is it possible to explain the relative silence of Trotsky in the first five years of the Comintern. Despite his penetrating analysis of the role of finance capital in Russia in 1906 and his discussion then of uneven and combined development, he did not bring these tools to bear in any theoretical discussion of imperialism. He used the concept loosely, and his remarks appeared mainly in short letters or articles. In September 1938, in an interview with a sympathiser, on the impending war, Trotsky was reported as saying:

Imperialists do not fight for political principles but for markets, colonies, raw materials, for hegemony over the world and its wealth.:

[He continued...] The victory of any one of the imperialist camps would mean the definite enslavement of all humanity, the clamping of double chains on present-day colonies, weak and backward peoples... The victory of any one of the imperialist camps would spell slavery, wretchedness, misery, the decline of human culture.²⁰

Trotsky's statements in the late 1930s can only be understood in terms of his belief that corporatism was spreading through the states of the western world and could only be stopped by direct working class action. That was a perspective that seemed all too possible at the time and shaped thinking on the impending war. When war broke out in September 1939 this perspective seemed to be borne out but it is doubtful whether that could be sustained as the conflict progressed. The USSR was able to withstand the Nazi onslaught and its eventual victory gave Stalinism a prolonged lease of life. On the other hand, the western allies, after a 'phoney war' and initial collapse fought back and became part of a victorious alliance. World Stalinism vacillated between anti- and pro-war positions and large sections opted for dissolution of local parties and the Comintern. All this requires new analyses if we are to understand where Trotsky's predictions went wrong. To quote statements on the colonies before the war, as guidelines to contemporary events, can only

be condemned as mechanical and insupportable. My concern in this paper is not to accept or reject Trotsky's scenario before the war, but it must form the backdrop to any evaluation of his statement, also in 1938, that he would support a fight even by a 'fascist' Brazil against the imperialists, and his prediction that India could not achieve independence but would be subjected to ever greater exploitation ('double chains of slavery' ... 'no grant of liberties to the colonies') after the war...because, world imperialism was in decline and could 'no longer make serious concessions either to their own toiling masses or to the colonies'. (Writings, op cit, pp 92, 38)

The position after the war in the colonial world negated these predictions: on the Indian sub-continent, and then throughout the rest of Asia and Africa. The states that emerged were deformed capitalist states, mostly impoverished and unable to (or unwilling to) solve any of the social problems bequeathed by the former colonial powers.

Whatever else may be said about the national struggle in the colonies, what needs attention in this essay is the eclectic nature of his definition of imperialism. Although Trotsky no longer used the word 'imperialism' as Lenin had defined it, he did not provide any new theory, did not call for the revision of the old theory, but used the word as a convenient short-hand for attacking all capitalist states.²¹

After World War Two the question became even more opaque. Colonies, in Lenin's sense of the word, no longer existed²² and it was this that led to the appearance of that confusing (and confusing) category, the 'Third World'. The predictions of Trotsky (among others), before the war, that the colonies could not achieve political independence without a working class revolution in the metropolitan countries, was not borne out.²³ Discussions of the nature of the new states in Asia, Africa and Latin America was left open to those who provided interpretations in terms of 'under-development', 'peripheralization', 'unequal exchange' and so on. They offered 'explanations' where others had palpably failed — and in the process were acclaimed as the new Marxists.

Finance Capital

If there are difficulties in finding a forward link between colonies and finance capital, perhaps this connection can be uncovered by looking first, as Lenin did, at finance capital. In investigating this I must enter a plea. Lenin's 'popular outline' extends in my edition to over 150 pages. I cannot hope to undertake a cogent critique in the short space that I have available.

Once again, to avoid any misunderstanding, it is necessary to state that I have no argument with Lenin's contention that capitalist development signifies the move towards monopolies and towards finance capital. This was not an innovation but a restatement of Marx's position in *Capital*. Whether it was the 'highest stage', or in fact a stage in the decline of capitalism, might be debatable.²⁴ But the tracing of the path of finance capital through the

German banks, and the dating of this 'stage' (but why stage?) from 1900 was incorrect and indeed mechanical.

The forms through which capital passes in its various moments can be most effectively examined by studying its development in Britain. There, the establishment of the Bank of England in the late 17th century, and the financing of insurance companies to protect the lucrative shipping (and slave) trade of the West Indies, provided the basis for British control of world trade and the regulation of the money market.²⁵ Exports and imports with the colonies, from the inception, went hand in hand with the expansion of financial institutions. These same institutions were brought to bear in the development of railways and docks, mines and plantations. And it was through a consortium of banks that the price of gold was determined in London and sterling became the leading international currency.²⁶ Every state that wanted to enter the markets of the world went onto the gold standard to establish a firm exchange rate with the British pound. Old usurious institutions of pre-capitalist Europe were transformed into banks in France and Germany and entered into the new relations established by capital. While British banks gave backing to trade in five continents, and built up local infrastructures, the banks of France and Germany poured money into Tsarist Russia to develop its armament factories and railway (itself part of the new war machine). Any attempt at discussing this development without placing it in its historic context is idealistic – and the location of German banks at the centre of the new epoch of capitalism by Hilferding, Bukharin and Lenin was a misunderstanding of what had occurred. The banks were transformed and acted as the first among other funding bodies. They were no longer the providers of funds for feudal lords or monarchs but became the means through which trade was extended, slaves were purchased, mines, industry, transport, and construction works were financed. From this it was just one further step to act as purveyors of money and the export of capital in its money form. The largest banks could be called upon by individuals, institutions and states to finance new projects.²⁷

The financial institutions remained separate from the British state, as did the banks of Europe from the newly emerging national states. In fact these banks forged links with one another, both through extended families like the Rothschilds and interlinking boards of directors. But inevitably, as they were used to fund vast new state institutions, of which the army and the armament industries were by far the most important, the banks became the backbone of the new states, and of their constant outward drive. This was the point to which Lenin aimed – although he took short-cuts in arriving at his conclusions. Consequently, he tied together the five features and because he had already concluded that capitalism was in a state of decay, imperialism, alias finance capital, was the highest and the last stage of capitalism.

There were features that were not answered in his work. If this was the last stage of capitalism and a revolutionary working class was about to challenge the bourgeois state and overthrow it, the failure of the working class had to be explained. Lenin had no difficulty. The parties of the Second International

had betrayed the working class (and this was highlighted by their supine acquiescence to their ruling classes in August 1914). The question was answered in the British case by labelling the members of that class an aristocracy of labour. This seemed an obvious conclusion, given the nature of the British Labour Party and the Trade Unions. But assertions are not necessarily correct and require substantiation. This was not provided and does not stand up to serious investigation. However, even if a case can be made for Britain, it is not easy to see how the same explanation held for the German, French and other working class movements.

It was ultimately the victory of counter-revolution in Europe that led to the turn in the Comintern to the colonial peoples as the last possible bastion of the October revolution. This, as I have argued above, was not grounded in firm theory. Rather, it emerged from the exigencies of the time, despair at the state of the socialist movement in Europe, hopes raised by new stirrings in the east (but not the colonies elsewhere), and a theory that was patched together without solid backing. This is not the method of Marx. Rather it is a pragmatic answer to political events that lacks firm theoretical ground.

There are many problems I must leave untouched, including the nature of parasitical capital. Where does this concept fit into the circulation of capital? Is the use of money 'to make money' a new phenomenon, or was this always an aspect of money as capital? And even more important, what precisely is the relation of finance capital to industry? Any attempt at answering these questions must look both to specific countries at particular stages in their development.

The War in the Gulf

This incursion into the theory of imperialism, was not conceived as an academic exercise. It emerged from many discussions on the board of *Searchlight South Africa* on the nature of nationalism, 'national liberation', and the attitude of the Comintern to colonial independence.²⁸ The focus was always on South Africa, but this led inevitably to surveys of events beyond its borders and to discussions on events in China, India, Latin America, and so on. There were parallels throughout these regions, with insights to be gained from the struggles of the peoples of those lands against foreign oppression.

In every case the issues of national oppression and class division were apparent. And in every case the groups that claimed to be Marxist failed to provide a critique of the political economies of their country and consequently proved deficient in theoretical terms. They fell back on generalities and, acute as their insights often were, failed in three respects: they provided no analysis of the class forces in their own countries, they gave no account of the forces controlling their local economy, and they failed to link their local struggle with the struggles of the international working class.

Any account of what has been happening in the Middle East, at least since 1918, must trace the growth and development of the oil industry and the

interlocking of local and foreign capitalist interests. The accumulation of capital, arising from the development of this one industry and the use of cheap imported labour has led to a particular class formation in which the native working class stands apart from the imported foreign workers. From this has emerged a financially powerful set of rulers whose interests lie more in rentier capital than in local capitalist production. Saddam Hussein and his Ba'ath party are in this respect exceptional. They controlled a state in which fundamentalist Islamic interests were subordinated to a secular state, and in which capital accumulation was used partly to build industry, but also to establish a vast armed force. This was a capitalist state, disproportionately developed, with a foreign policy that focused on local control. Internally it was a dictatorship based on a small clan, with a record of repression in which Communists, trade unions and two large population groups (the Shias and the Kurds) were excluded from political power or exterminated.

This was a regime favoured by the western powers, financed and armed to make it a bastion of reaction in the region. The Iraqi leader was secure in his stronghold. He was also favoured by London, Washington and Moscow. But his eight years war against Iran (backed by the west) left him in need of money to repay his foreign debts. In an effort to gain this by occupying Kuwait he posed a threat to the stability of the region. In so doing he misread the intentions of the US. The State Department was determined that the status quo be retained and destroyed his war machine — or at least enough to prevent further annexations without removing it as an instrument of repression. It was a war such as Europe had not seen since the turn of the century, when small powers still fought over boundaries. But, as in two world wars, the great powers were drawn in and ultimately the coalition of the financially more advanced nations prevailed. This was repeated in the Gulf in 1990–91. To treat the conflict as an example of imperialist aggression is to misunderstand the nature of the war and leave the left without a policy in the events following the failed revolution in Iraq.

Footnotes

1. An earlier version of this paper, written in January 1991 was presented at the Socialist Discussion Group, London, on 24 March.
2. H Ticktin, 'The Transitional Epoch, Finance Capital and Britain', and 'Towards a Theory of Finance Capital', *Critique*, Nos 16 and 17.
3. See however Norman Ethrington, *Theories of Imperialism: War, Conquest and Capital*, Croom Helm, 1984, for the roots of Hobson's ideas and for a discussion of colonialism.
4. Lenin missed the more important **Evolution of Modern Capitalism**.
5. Luxemburg's **Accumulation of Capital** was directed at explaining the place of overseas possessions in the accumulation of capital in Europe. In the 'Junius Pamphlet' she turned specifically to imperialism which, she said, included competition for colonies and spheres of influence, the international loan system, militarism, tariffs, and the dominance of finance capital and trusts in world politics.

6. Lenin's focus on the events of 1789–93 as a model for revolution, as distinct from Trotsky's focus on the events of 1848, was discussed in a paper presented at the August 1990 Aberdeen conference on Trotsky. There was a systematic error following from this that can be traced through much of Lenin's writings which would deserve closer investigation.
7. See J Woddis, *An Introduction to Neo-Colonialism*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1967.
8. The fortress where French and British troops came to the point of war in 1898.
9. Although this was a real threat, both in 1917 and later in 1941, no theoretician has suggested that this was an aspect of the redivision of the world as envisaged by Lenin.
10. I do not exclude Germany, Denmark, America, Japan, Belgium, etc. In each case colonial policies need investigation. How do we explain Leopold's private appropriation of the Congo, or German tardiness in taking colonies and its swopping of territory in Africa for Heligoland?
11. See H H Ticktin, 'Trotsky's Political Economy of Capitalism', August 1990, Aberdeen. This paper will appear in a collection taken mainly from the conference on the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Trotsky (published by the Edinburgh University Press).
12. Unfortunately Trotsky was not consistent. In his last writings, *In Defence of Marxism*, (as Ticktin shows) he defined imperialism as the expansionist phase of finance capital.
13. Besides mapping out Leopold's (personal) holding in the Congo, there was agreement *inter alia* that trade on the rivers Congo and Niger should be unrestricted, that the boundaries of any territory carved out in Africa should be agreed by contending parties and that territories so claimed should be effectively administered.
14. See e.g. *Capital Investment in Africa* by S H Frankel.
15. There are several factors that show that the interest of some of the contests over colonial possessions, including the Franco-German confrontation at Agadir, and the secret Sykes-Picot agreement to carve up the middle East, were based on considerations of strategy. These might have been connected with the needs of finance capital, but that is not always demonstrable.
16. Such critical writings, if they exist, are not easily available. My point is that such writings are neither well known nor quoted in the literature available to me.
17. Victor Serge was one of the few who declared that the fight against imperialism was not the same as the struggle for socialism. (Thanks to Suzi Weissman who has recently completed a biography of Serge).
18. See M Cox 'The National and Colonial Question: the First Five Years of the Comintern, 1919–1924', *Searchlight South Africa*, No 4.
19. Trotsky's attempt within the Central Committee to reverse the policy on China was silenced. His other writings on the national struggle — China excepted — although insightful, did not show the clarity he had displayed on the Irish question in 1916. He never suggested that Lenin's position needed correction.
20. *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1938–39*, Merit, p 91.
21. *Ibid*, pp 92, 39.
22. For a number of reasons the colonial powers found it convenient to allow government to pass into the hands of the bourgeoisie (or aspiring bourgeoisie) after World War Two. Where this did not take place there were bitter struggles, all of which led to the granting of independence. The question of 'economic independence' is a different problem that needs separate discussion.
23. Where, by independence, most inter-war writers meant the ending of colonial status.
24. Ticktin, *op cit*, argues that it is to be understood in terms of the inevitable decay of the capitalist form.

25. There are suggestions in the speeches, or writing, of David Ivon Jones (Comintern 1921), C L R James and others, leading to the work of Eric Williams (*Capitalism and Slavery*), in which the use of the slave trade and its exploitation in the West Indies and the US was seen as central to the financing of the industrial revolution. Although some of William's contentions have been disputed his central thesis on the financing of capitalist production has been ignored by most Marxists.
26. This allowed dealers to buy gold below its value, or below the price of production determined by the average rate of profit in Europe, leading inevitably to the low wages and tight control of mine labour in South Africa. See Marx's comments (from which this parallel is taken) on grain exports from the colonies (*Capital*, Vol 3, Moscow 1959, p 654).
27. e.g. The Rothschilds 'obliged' Disraeli and gave Britain a substantial share in the Suez Canal.
28. The discussions in the early 1920s on colonial independence included countries such as Turkey (itself the former centre of a vast Empire), China (which had been forced to grant foreign concessions but was not a colony) and the peoples of the East. It was later extended to include all colonies and even the blacks of the USA.

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THE DOGS OF WAR

The Mother of All Trials

The trial of Winnie Mandela came mercifully to an end in mid-May. The events recounted in the High Court could only embarrass every person concerned for the fate of the people of South Africa. The lies that were blatantly told to cover up a horrible crime, taken together with the slandering of a priest in order to escape the penalty of the court, could only do harm to all those involved in the struggle to transform that miserable society.

In the end Mrs Mandela was found guilty by the court of being an accessory to the kidnapping and assault of four youths, one of whom was subsequently murdered. It was also said that she was involved in previous events which led to the death of youths at the hands of the gang that was named the Mandela Football Club. That evidence was withdrawn at her trial for legal reasons. But those crimes will not go away and she will always stand accused, even if she was not formally charged or tried.

Her defenders now claim, correctly, that she was tried in a court in which whites predominate. This is the nature of South Africa. Nonetheless, are we to believe that a black judge, faced with the evidence that was laid before the court, and the evidence that was concealed by the abduction of witnesses, would have handed down a different judgment? Before rushing to answer, will her supporters explain how it was that her husband, Nelson Mandela, called for her to be tried so that she could prove her innocence? He knew, as we all do, that the case, if tried, would be before a white judge, with a white prosecutor. He knew that in such a case, a white defence advocate would be called. And if on appeal Mrs Mandela is freed (by white judges), will that change the nature of justice in South Africa? Because if the die is still cast against the accused, why demand an appeal? Or perhaps it is all counterfeit, all an attempt to keep Mrs Mandela out of prison until an ANC government is in place and this woman can go free without the need for a judicial review.

If that is the plan then the future of the country looks even grimmer than we had thought.

For Mrs Mandela we can have little respect, even if she does continue to seek the limelight through her protests. Such activities will no doubt earn her the support of people everywhere who are impatient at the pace of change, but that cannot erase the fact that she has shown callous disregard for the men, women and young people caught in the web of violence that surrounded her. The fight against the authorities, essential as it is, must go hand in hand with democratic control inside the ranks of those who stand against oppression.

Our knowledge of her activities and her brand of politics has been formed after decades in which her views have been recorded in the media that she loved to exploit until it subjected her to criticism. Her personal behaviour over decades has led to murmurings inside the communities in which she

operated; her political utterances have been a cause for concern to her political allies; her endorsement of dubious political tracts (see *Searchlight South Africa*, No) have been the despair of the Congress movement; her connivance with commercial enterprises had to be vetoed to prevent political embarrassment to her husband and the African National Congress. She has known no discipline and has not been bound by the views of those with whom she claimed to work.

Now she stands condemned, and although the final legal outcome awaits an appeal there are few who are so blind as to say that she has done no wrong.

Nonetheless, it is not possible to endorse the prison sentence that was handed down. Those who have seen those miserable prisons in South Africa from the inside or experienced the regime under which they are controlled cannot wish such treatment on the most miserable of human beings. Those institutions should be closed forthwith and people spared the ignominy of such confinement. That is not to say that better prisons should be built. Even if the system were reformed we would still wish to see them closed. Prisons never served any other purpose but to degrade and dehumanize and have no place in the society that must be rebuilt from the bottom upward.

What Mrs Mandela requires is not a prison sentence, but sympathy and understanding for what she has endured as a victim of apartheid, and as a person cut off from her husband and family. With this she also needs counselling to allow her to understand that what she has done is unacceptable. It is this that she finally has to confront. She has to learn that what happened at her home is unacceptable, and that the families of the victims of the Mandela Football Club need her remorse. She has to realise that her guilt demands expiation — whether she was directly or indirectly involved, or whether she only provided the premises on which such deeds could be executed.

If it was only the matter of this one person, irrespective of her status, there would be little more to say. However, Mrs Mandela is not only the wife of Nelson Mandela, who might still hold high office, but also a leading member of the ANC, appointed to control a sensitive region in charge of Social Welfare, and a leader of the Transvaal Woman's League. That makes the crime even more serious and raises doubts about her fitness to occupy office in any political movement. It also demands of the political movements that they delve more deeply into what has been happening in the townships over the past few years and indeed over several generations.

The Curse of Apartheid

Winnie Mandela was born into and has lived all her life in an oppressive system that determined every aspect of her existence. She was discriminated against from the moment of her birth and could never escape the system that determined her upbringing, place of residence, schooling and also her social, political and economic life.

What can be said about her can be repeated for every black person in South Africa. Each one has been blighted by the curse of apartheid, harmed or stunted by a system that was designed to impress on them their inferiority. And they were not alone. The whites were mentally (if not physically) blighted, although in their case it was by an assumed superiority that had no foundation in fact. The skin colour (or the shape of face, texture of hair, or even the expressions they uttered) determined the entire life style of millions of people. Even entry into the petty bourgeoisie, through professional training or trade, did not protect black people or families, even though it eased their life style. The Mandelas, and in particular Winnie Mandela, could only feel more resentful because the status they had acquired gave little relief from the daily irritations of the tightly controlled apartheid system.

Furthermore, Mrs Mandela was the wife of a man who was sent to prison, and kept under the most oppressive conditions for 27 years. This made Mrs Mandela an innocent victim of vicious laws, denied a stable life and harassed by a state that knew no compassion. In her own way she became a redoubtable symbol of resistance. But the defiance she displayed came only at the expense of an inner strain that eroded her sense of values. And the adulation she earned from some sections of the community did not make it any easier for her to come to grips with the personal burden of her loneliness.

It is conceivable that a psychiatrist might provide some relief for a person under such conditions. But even if that were possible, Mrs Mandela is only one among millions whose life has been blighted by the crime of apartheid. Individuals might get support and help from therapists, but it is an entire nation that has been profoundly affected by the conditions under which it was forced to live. Irrespective of what changes are forged in South Africa, it will be a hard struggle to escape from under the shadow of a life-time of degradation.

The problems that face South Africa in the future are vast. We do not refer to the expectations of improvement in every sphere of life, or the alleviation of poverty; nor to the provision of jobs, land, or better living conditions. That cannot be provided for years to come. Within the population there will be tens of thousands of men and women whose entire personalities have been warped by the conditions under which they have subsisted.

Without wishing to force an analogy, there must be grave concern that many South Africans have undergone an ordeal not unlike the experience of ethnic minorities in Europe during the last war. After the experience of the concentration camps, those who survived physically had the greatest difficulty in adjusting to the post-war world. The same must be expected of large numbers of people who will emerge one day from the ghettos of South Africa.

And now, the Comtsotsis

In open letter of 5 April to President de Klerk, Mr Mandela called upon the government to stop the violence in the country. He put forward a long list of

demands, all of which he expected the (white) government of Mr de Klerk to operate. The demands included the ending of township violence; the outlawing of weapons, traditional or otherwise; sacking of Adrian Vlok (Minister of Police) and Magnus Malan (Defence); rustication of all officers of the Defence Force responsible for setting up or management of the hit squads; dismantling and disarming of special counter insurgency units (Askaris, Koevoet, etc) to be overseen by a multiparty commission. He demanded the immediate suspension of all police implicated in the massacres of Sebokeng on 22 March 1990, and those involved in the Daveyton shooting of 24 March 1991, with legal proceedings in Sebokeng and a Commission of Inquiry into the Daveyton episodes. There were also demands for the phasing out of hostels and labour compounds; the establishment of an independent commission of inquiry into complaints of misconduct by police and security services, etc. All this was to be acceded by 9 May or else the talks between the ANC and the government would end.

On 15 May 1991, six days after the deadline had expired, Mr Mandela addressed a gathering called to protest the killing of 27 persons by an Inkatha mob and accused F W de Klerk (the 'man of integrity' as he had once called him), and his administration, of having no concern for the lives of Africans. In this he was correct. The record of recent times bears testimony to the inhumanity of the authorities. Mr Mandela was referring to political protests, and to this could be added the lack of provisions for social welfare, the miserly provision of pensions, the absence of maternity grants, the deaths due to malnutrition, the failure to deal with Aids, and so on. For the authorities the old racist adage holds: 'the only good kaffir is a dead kaffir'.

However what Mr Mandela said skirts much of the present problem. The killings are being perpetrated mainly by blacks, whether they carry 'traditional weapons' or not. They are the work not only of Inkatha but also of gangs who claim to belong to the ANC, to the PAC, to Azapo and, of course, to Inkatha. Add to this the large criminal sector of the townships who have a contemptuous disregard for the lives of people in the townships — in the squatter camps, in the hostels, and in the streets.

Aping their masters, the gangs that have formed in every district prey on the people. For weapons they use any implement available, 'traditional' or otherwise. They are merciless and destructive, and are known to have kept entire families inside houses they have burnt down. The grief inflicted on innocent families is indescribable; the weekly toll is horrendous.

Official figures of crime in 1990 put reported murder cases at 15,000 (a 28% increase on 1989). In graphic terms the *Weekly Mail*, (25 January 1991) said: 'a serious assault occurs every four minutes; car theft every nine minutes; robbery every ten minutes; break-ins every three minutes; a rape every 26 minutes and a murder every 45 minutes.' Startling as these facts are, the so called 'unrest-related crime' rose by 49.9% over the year and illegal possession of arms was up by 44.7%. These figures do not reveal a new trend, even if they grow larger by the year. Every decade, over the past century, new layers of lumpen have been thrown up, who have preyed on their township neighbours. Every decade has seen a refinement in the methods they have used,

but ultimately it has always meant the same: the killing, the crippling, the maiming or the destruction of the personality through the cruellest of assaults.

The older generation is still haunted by the memory of those gangs: the Ninevites who preyed on the gold miners and robbed them of their pittance at the turn of the century; the amalaita gangs who came out at night to terrorise whole districts in the towns; the Msomi gang of Alexandra Township who deserve special mention because some of their members became leaders of the local ANC branch; the 'Russians', the blanketed Sotho predators who terrorised Sophiatown and adjacent regions; the tsotsis, the thugs who took their name from the stovepipe trousers they wore as a uniform; and now the 'Comrades' turned gangster and appropriately named 'Comtsotsis'.

Sporting names taken from B-grade films, these gangs were the scourge of the townships. Stories about their life of crime, particularly from the Transvaal, have appeared in autobiographies and in stories, in journals and newspapers but a full account is still needed.¹ Besides these texts the information available is anecdotal. Doctors stationed at the Baragwanath Hospital in the 1950s and 1960s spoke with concern of the paraplegics whose injury was the consequence of a mugging in which a sharpened spoke of a bicycle wheel was plunged into the victim's spine with surgical precision. Their colleagues in casualty described the stream of maulings and injuries over the weekend, leaving persons maimed for life. Women reported that they were abused or even raped while standing in the packed commuter trains on their way to the urban centre. Young township girls were abducted by gangsters and forced to consort with them.

The tales could be repeated for every African ghetto, and also for the Coloured townships. The centre of Coloured crime was in the western Cape, and particularly Cape Town. Similar conditions of unemployment, overcrowding, social deprivation, inadequate provisions for education and so on gave parts of dockland the highest crime rate in the country.

Cry Havoc!

History has its tales to recount but it is the current situation that concerns us here. In discussing what is happening, it must be stressed that statistics, so important in detailing the extent of what is happening, do not indicate the misery of even one killing. It is the terror that strikes at families and reduces them to pulp that must be appreciated, and the calibre of those that carry out these grim deeds that need exploring. What emerges from the stories that have been gathered by newspaper reporters shows that they include Inkatha supporters; gangs that rally around the political movements; vigilantes who emerged from the nationalist movements to side with the authorities; and now the 'Comtsotsis'.

The 'Comrades' were notorious for their use of the 'necklace' — the motor car tyre filled with petrol — with which people were burnt alive. The necklaces were used against people accused of collaboration with the government, against political opponents and against persons for whom the com-

rades bore some grudge. It was these instruments of inquisition that Mrs Mandela praised for the freedom they would bring.

After having themselves imposed boycotts of shops, the comrades also forced women who broke the boycott to consume the products found in their possession, including soap powder, paraffin, oil or other non-consumables. Other stories of their exploits are even more sickening. There were accounts of their cutting off of ears and forcing their victims to eat the organ, and rape was not uncommon.

Gangsterism and political action went hand-in-hand in the heady days of 1984–86. This was acclaimed by many who once espoused liberal values but saw in these acts just retribution for the inequities of apartheid. It is in this atmosphere that the Mandela Football Club came into existence and was accepted by many Congress followers as a symbol of resistance to the regime and a bodyguard for the Mandela household. The 'Club' emerged from the lumpen youth who otherwise terrorised the township. It was part of the lawlessness and it reflected that violence. Once formed, and shielded behind the Mandela name, it helped orchestrate the terror in the environs. In like fashion, Winnie Mandela reflected the chaos in Soweto and helped reinforce it through her words and her actions. Yet, when the evidence could no longer be denied, the stories about this gang of hooligans, of abductions, beatings, and inevitably rape, were discounted. The anger of the those who protested was silenced or dismissed as government propaganda; the populist media stayed silent; and leaders of the Mass Democratic Movement joined the conspiracy of silence until they could tolerate these activities no longer, and denounced Mrs Mandela. Then, when they dared to speak out, they were removed from their former positions of leadership and forced out of political activity.

What happened in Soweto has been spotlighted by this notorious gang. Yet it was only one instant of a phenomenon that spread across the country, even if at first it seemed to observers to reflect only militant defiance of the authorities. It had to appear in that form because the police, the army and also the local civic authority are clearly seen to represent the main enemy. The police reciprocated by declaring these youth groups as public enemy number one. Anti-authority, and dare-devil to boot, it was all too easy to view them all through rose-tinted glasses. They could not be distinguished by the outside observer and their clashes with the police always placed them in the best of light.

It is not always easy to uncover the stories behind the gangs. What did become obvious was that their members were mainly without schooling, or had a rudimentary literacy. This did not prevent the most remarkable attributes being ascribed to them. Proud acolytes told of little Stompie Moeketsi Seipei, then 11 or 12 years old, being able to recite verbatim the complete contents of the first volume of Marx's *Capital*. If that were even vaguely possible, the reader might only sigh and wonder why that should be thought to add anything to the boy's prowess. Other youths took as their *nom de guerre* names of persons about whom they knew little (like Ghadafi or

Castro), except that they were known to have been disliked by the government. To these young men (many prepubescent) were ascribed wondrous sayings and braver deeds. They were the gadflies of the armed forces, but many of them fed in the swamps of the criminal world. Some played a dual role: as 'freedom fighters' and as police informers. Living as bandits (in the best and worst senses of the word) they took food, liquor and drugs where they could. And these, let us remind ourselves, were not yet (or were perhaps barely) teenagers. They were, as most teenage gangs tend to be, mainly boys. But there were also gangs of girls, every bit as cruel and predatory as their male counterparts.

To get a picture of what has been happening on the ground we turned to accounts in the *Weekly Mail*. We quote almost at random:

On 8–14 February 1991, Eddie Koch and Sarah Blecher wrote on the Comtsotsis waging a bloody war against ANC activists across the country. At Bekkersdal near Randfontein bitter sectarian strife between the ANC and Azapo escalated when local gangs entered the fray. In Sebokeng near Vereeniging, former 'comrades' formed themselves into criminal gangs. At Shatale in Lebowa in the eastern Transvaal, dissident 'comrades' plotted to kill the chairman of the pro-civic organization. At Komga in the eastern Cape, PAC and ANC factions fought and left many casualties. They continued:

It is the renaissance of a familiar township scourge, organized gangs of unemployed township youths, that runs like a thread through each of the trouble spots. These were the shock-troops of the struggle in 1984–86, who conducted a 'people's war' and 'made the townships ungovernable'. Their excesses at the time were at best overlooked and at worst condoned.

The article gave further details. It was these gangs that burned houses at random, stole door frames, windows and geysers; sliced off ears forcing people to eat them; raped girls; stopped people reporting to the police; forced shebeen owners to give them free liquor; forced shop owners to give them free food; hijacked taxis, collected protection fees from householders. After the unbanning of political movements these tsotsis resisted discipline and began organizing themselves as gangs.

When the ANC tried to discipline them in Shatale they claimed to belong to the PAC or to Azapo; they armed themselves with pangas, garden forks, spades, axes, etc, to attack the chairman of the civic association. They burnt down shops, they stole liquor, they attacked taxi drivers and burnt their cars, etc.

In Bekkersdal, wrote Phillipa Garson, the struggle started when the ANC tried to organize in an area that was an Azapo/PAC stronghold. It ended as little more than an anarchic mess.. The gangs have intervened to their own benefit; schools have been disrupted and forced to close. Unemployed miners have joined in the fighting, donning ANC T-shirts but politically ignorant.

In the *Weekly Mail* of 18–24 January 1991, Wally Mbhele told a gory story of a shoot up in Sebokeng between ANC ‘comrades’ and a gang which then allied itself with Inkatha. Thereafter, the ANC activist Christopher Mphikeleli Nangalembe was abducted and killed. The wake for the dead man was raided by the gang. Using AK–47 rifles and grenades 39 mourners were killed and many injured — 26 requiring hospitalisation and others still requiring treatment. Later that day ‘comrades’ went on the rampage in Sebokeng, razing houses where gangsters were said to be living.

So the stories go on and on...

In the issue of 15–21 February 1991 of the *Weekly Mail*, Koch and Blecher reported from Tornado (otherwise known as Modderspruit in Bophuthatswana). It appears that a local ANC branch member, Varo Mashabella, was murdered in January when caught trying to rob the house of a prominent taximan in the nearby community of Bapong. Mashabella was given an official ANC funeral and then rival (youth) factions in the ANC swapped allegations accusing each other of having caused the death. Two youth gangs, each acting in the name of the ANC, threatened civil war. Each group mobilised armed youth and the township was at the edge of war. Only intervention from the ANC regional office averted bloodshed.

Precisely where politics stopped and gangsterism (on all sides) took over is not always certain. But the case of the explosion in Alexandra Township leading to the death of at least 61 people, as reported by Gavin Evans in the *Weekly Mail* of 15–21 March 1991, seems clear. This one incident has all the ingredients of the violence that has scarred the townships.

Evans ascribed the event to the greed and fears of a government-backed black Council, Inkatha aggression, ANC indiscipline and police bias. This story started when the township mayor, ‘Prince’ Mokoena, arranged with developers to build houses on a tract of land on the township’s far East Bank. The Alexandra Civic Organization (led by Moses Mayekiso) met with the Transvaal Provincial Administration and had the five-person, unelected township Council scrapped. The area was placed under the more trusted (all white) Sandton town council.

Several councillors had been threatened in the preceding period and, earlier in the month, community members had marched to Mokoena’s house and dumped rubbish on his property. There was no doubt about the antagonism shown by large sections of the community against the Council and Mokoena in particular. In a provocative move Mokoena threatened that there would be trouble and announced that he had joined Inkatha. He went into hiding shortly thereafter.

Meanwhile forces were being positioned inside Alexandra Township. The old Joint Management Committee — an arm of the National Management System, set up by former President Botha² although disbanded by de Klerk, was in operation in Alexandra, under a different name but with the same personnel. They were supporters of the Councillors and believed to be behind the vigilante attacks on members of the ANC over recent years.

Inkatha was also recruiting aggressively in the hostels, whipping up resentment and preparing for the coming events.

At this stage ANC supporters recklessly necklaced an Inkatha member Ntlanhla Nzuza, and were searching for another member when the violence erupted. ANC supporters did not condemn the necklacing but claimed it was in revenge for the murder of several ANC supporters in the hostel earlier that evening. In the rioting that followed the police were accused by the ANC of playing a blatantly biased role, disarming and shooting their members while refusing to disarm Inkatha.

The Politics of Confrontation

As the mayhem in the townships increased, the editors of the *Weekly Mail* wrote an open letter to President F W de Klerk. (5–11 April 1991) In it they said

We see a strange hand that is turning local conflicts, even family feuds, into massive conflicts between rival political organizations, using professional, highly-trained and well armed hit squads.

We see one obvious source for this activity: the vast teams of people your predecessors in the government trained and used to wreak covert havoc and destruction among National Party opponents.

Saying that they do not know who or where they are, the editors continued:

We do know, however, that they still exist somewhere and they are not the sort of people to retire gratefully.

We also know that they have been sheltered from public scrutiny or accountability and are therefore free to continue their destructive work, with or without official sanction.

We know there was a vast sub-continental network of such people who operated through Renamo, through Zipra dissidents, through the As-karis [captured MK guerrillas who became assassins for the state], through military intelligence, through security police, through the CCB and through countless other fronts that have not been exposed.

We know these people were capable of bombing, poisoning, shooting, kidnapping and sabotaging at home and in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Swaziland, Angola, Zambia and even France and England.

We know that inside the country, they did similar work with even greater impunity: killing, burning and bombing. When the work got even too distasteful for them, they used vigilantes who set fire to whole squatter camps because they had become strongholds for your opponents...

By pointing a finger at the security services, the paper expressed the obvious. What has to be determined is what lies behind the manoeuvres of the recent period

Power is, Where Power Lies

Negotiations between Congress and the government began well before the release of Nelson Mandela in February 1990. While still inside prison Mr Mandela was already a celebrity and a 'diplomat', meeting with leaders of the Mass Democratic Movement, his legal advisers and church leaders. While still a prisoner, he saw President P W Botha at his own request and obviously prepared the way for talks that would be convened publicly, even if conducted privately. Simultaneously, in a set of discussions in Zambia, West Africa and elsewhere, financiers, business leaders and academics met with the external wing of the ANC.

The talks were conducted more openly after Mr Mandela's release. The conditions in the country were such that the government could not continue without signalling overtly to the outside world that it was prepared to talk to the Congress leaders, and the ANC, confronted by the defeat of the revolt of 1984-86 and its inability to mount a military campaign inside the country, could not establish a base for itself inside the country without entering into talks with the government. Conditions were also more propitious for the talks to commence. The whole process had been made possible by the withdrawal of the USSR (and its satellites) from Southern Africa. With the government assured that the 'Soviet threat' was removed, and that the Cuban troops would be withdrawn from Angola, thus stripping the ANC/SACP of its Soviet backing, talks about talks could proceed.

These were obviously not idle talks. The aim, it was proclaimed from all sides, was about change. But it was to be change inside the existing social and economic structures. Nonetheless, change meant that there would have to be agreement on a new government — and this too was to be a controlled change that kept the old structures intact, with modifications to meet the aspirations of some of the communities. Cynicism within the political movement (as expressed in the 'Letter from Johannesburg' in this issue) is a reflection of the acceptance of this new reality, even by many of those who had once spoken in bolder terms of socialism, of nationalization, and of an equalizing of wealth.

From the beginning it was apparent that there were more than two players, even if the members of the ANC/SACP alliance tried to close their eyes to the obvious. Besides the government and the ANC there were several other contending parties. Among the whites there were the right-wing parties who could even, under certain conditions, gain majority support in the white electorate. Among the Africans there were the Mass Democratic Movement (that had not been fully integrated into the ANC) and several splinter groups (who could always prove an embarrassment). There were also the Homeland leaders, including KwaZulu with its prime minister and political leader, Gatsha Buthelezi.

A twin process was at work, some of it having commenced before the possibility of talks had been raised openly, preparing the way for new alignments. Some of the previously liberal whites found shelter in the ruling National Party (and gave it moral support), while the National Party also

opened its ranks (at least as a gesture) to all ethnic groups. This prepared the way for the government to attract the support of sizable sections of the Coloured people — starting with members of the Labour Party who control the Assembly currently set aside the Coloureds — and the Indians. Whether such groups will enter the ruling National party in large number might be open to doubt, but it will certainly allow for electoral alliances. The Nationalists also sought an alliance with (if not absorption of) large African communities that adhered to independent religious denominations. The jokers in the pack were the Homeland's leaders. They were possible factors in the talking phase, and even more importantly, had the means to manipulate a large portion of an electorate that might be called upon to elect a Constituent Assembly or a Parliament, and could play a determining role in 'round table talks'. In this game of political placement there can be no doubt that the government of President de Klerk had all the odds stacked on its side: it was more astute than the opposition, better endowed financially, and in the final analysis it controlled the army and the police force.

Ignoring the reality of power and the wiles of the government, the ANC presented a different perspective. Or at least two different perspectives. On the one hand stood Mrs Mandela who is quoted as saying at Bekkersdal in February (in both English and Xhosa), that 'Your spears should be pointed in the direction of Pretoria. Our enemy is in Pretoria. We have never had enemies within ourselves. We are all here because of our fight for freedom. The enemy come here to exploit our differences'. (See the accompanying article on the trial of Mrs Mandela by Paul Trehwela). As if orchestrated, Chris Hani, Mrs Mandela's closest supporter in the kidnapping trial, also speaking at Bekkersdal proclaimed:

We are all black people who are oppressed. We are not oppressed by other black people. Who is the enemy? The whites from Pretoria and Cape Town are the enemy of the black people...you have nothing whatsoever but you are fighting yourselves. Did we go to Robben Island for years so we could kill each other?

He also said that the time was right 'to take power from the whiteman'. Not to be outdone, Lybon Mabasa national project co-ordinator of Azapo, repeated the theme, saying: 'Your knives are misdirected if aimed at (our organization). Your knives should be aimed at Pretoria...If we waste our energy on each other when the real enemy confronts us we will have no strength. (Weekly Mail; 8-14 Feb 1991) Any comment on the crude appeal to race would be superfluous.

Mr Mandela preferred to direct attention elsewhere in a television interview conducted by Donald Woods in mid-April. Then he said, addressing the BBC's audience, that the ANC was 'not a party but a government in waiting'. This might indeed be the way in which he views forthcoming events. He might genuinely believe that all that is required is the abdication of the National Party and the taking of office, with all its appurtenances, by the ANC.

To achieve Mr Mandela's aim, the ANC sought first to absorb the opposition bodies. Cosatu, was co-opted onto the ANC machine with the assistance of trade union officials. The Pan Africanist Congress leaders, after three decades of antagonism in which they threatened as violently as Inkatha, but proved incapable of action, met with and declared their allegiance to Mr Mandela's machine. The Mass Democratic Movement (or its predecessor, the United Democratic Front) proved to be more difficult, and although it disbanded in favour of the ANC there were many who wanted to retain the movement they had constructed with strong grass-root support. The one-time street and area committees, that had campaigned against rent increases, Urban Bantu Councils, and a host of repressive measures, despairing now of the ANC's preoccupation with talks at the expense of local campaigning, could be revived to give new direction to a struggle that lies dampened at present. In fact it is this very possibility that could force the hands of both government and ANC and make them revive the faltering talks.

The position in the Homelands is less certain and must surely depend on who holds the strings of power in those blighted areas, and where they see their interests best represented. Several of their leaders opted for collaboration with the ANC, but the reliability of these men must remain in doubt. Despite their real poverty of resources, they control a police force and an army and, provided they can keep these forces under their control, they act as possible foci of parochial self interest. That makes them men who can swing their favours where it suits them best. Their support for the ANC can be chalked up as a victory for the Mandela team, but it remains a hollow victory in the absence of an alliance with the two largest population groups, that of Bophuthatswana and KwaZulu. In the course of changing alliances there were coups in the Transkei, Ciskei and elsewhere. In these cases the government could not or did not prevent the deposition of the existing governments. In Bophuthatswana the stakes were too high and the government was ready. Troops were dispatched to save President Mangope and the rebels routed. In KwaZulu there was no problem. Buthelezi has the reigns of power firmly in his hands and he means to maintain that position.

The stage is therefore set for hard bargaining, and whether the ANC threatens to resume an armed struggle that it cannot mobilise, or break off talks, it has no other option but to resume negotiations. Except that after each break it is shown to be less capable than ever of presenting a real threat. The militant stance (of April/May 1991) is more likely to impress the delegates at the forthcoming ANC conference in July than signal a new course. The ANC leaders and the National Party administration need each other to survive and will find their way back to informal and formal talks. Like the famous Duke of York, Mr Mandela will march his men to the top of the hill, in order to march them down again.

The harsh reality of the current situation demands a radical rethink. It needs little imagination to see where campaigns must be mounted, whether in the workplace, the community centres, the schools or the land. There are pressing needs now for more employment, for better working conditions, for

higher wages. The continuation of a ghettos for different race groups can no longer be sustained; the slums that are called townships must be eradicated and proper housing substituted; meanwhile economic transport must be laid on for people still forced to live in those shacklands. Schools must be fully integrated and provisions made for remedial teaching for the disadvantaged.

There must be immediate action to return those people removed from the rural 'black spots' in the name of apartheid, and their rehabilitation as living communities. They need houses, water, seed and implements to compensate them for the wrongs of forced removal. The larger land question also needs redress but that needs careful planning and must wait until plans are drawn up. But the issue cannot be wished away and needs urgent attention from those that claim that they stand for meaningful change.

None of these problems are open to instant solution. Nobody can claim that the answers are readily available, but these are matters that demand a solution. The alternative is to pass the initiative to big business and lead the people into decades of new servitude.

There has to be active campaigning, not to keep the talks on track, but to gain basic changes in the lives of the million of people whose situation has grown desperate. Yet this seems to be beyond the capabilities of the ANC, or indeed any of the other political movements.

And yet, these are the people who talk about 'being the government in waiting'. Indeed, 'Nkosi Sikelele Afrika!'

Footnotes

1. Accounts of gang life appeared in *Drum*, in the *Bantu World*, and in *Golden City Post* in the 1950s. An account of the 'Russians' and of other township violence can be found in Trevor Huddleston, *Naught For Thy Comfort* (various editions); Michael Scott tells of violence in the Shantytown squatter camp in *A Time To Speak*, Faber, 1958; Bloke Modisane has an account of a brutal killing in *Blame Me on History*, Thames and Hudson, 1963. Charles van Onselen, *A Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand*, Vol 1 (1980), tells the story of the Ninevites and the amalaitas. See also Paul la Hausse, in numerous articles and in his M A thesis, for the social background of the 'amalaitas' who were by no means all involved in crime. See also Don Mattera, *Gone With the Twilight*, for an insider's story of Sophiatown gangland.

2. See *Searchlight South Africa*, No 2, for an examination of the role of the JMC.

ZULU MANHOOD?

Tragedy became farce, and farce became tragedy on Sunday 27 May when Inkatha staged a show of strength at the Soweto Soccer City stadium. Despite the ban on 'traditional weapons', 40,000 heavily armed men gathered to hear King Goodwill Zwelithini, dressed as a Zulu warrior in leopard skin and carrying a spear. He accused the ANC of having insulted his manhood and 'the manhood of every Zulu man'. In an attack on Nelson Mandela he warned:

'Stop this ugly vendetta against the Zulu people and their Zuluness'. The rally rose and cheered. These men, confined to single-sex hostels were determined, no doubt, to assert their manhood in the most appropriate way.

In the middle of this orgy of epithets, up rose the British zoo keeper and casino boss, John Aspinall. He wore a dark suit but he was at home among men who wore leopard skins and lion's tooth necklaces. He also struck the 'right' note when he turned on those groups that 'made it their play to goad and taunt the Zulu nation, relying on their historic courteousness and forbearance...' The Zulu giant had been awakened, he declared, before ending in a royal salute to the Zulu king.

The voice of John Aspinall has been added to those romantic liberals who see in the Inkatha movement the resurrection of the days of King Shaka. The myth of the noble savage, once the theme of Rousseau, is being revived around these strutting warriors who are enroled, cajoled and forced to do battle in the townships. Much more needs to be said about these underemployed, unemployed, or underpaid labourers than space permits. They are as much the victim of Inkatha ambitions as they are the predators of the township. But what they do not need is the romantic rubbish, taken from the novels of Rider Haggard, to justify their behaviour. They certainly could do without the exhortations of Aspinall and the nonsense he spoke when he declared:

In my childhood I made two vows. One was to model my life on the values of the ancient Zulu nation. The other was, when the time came, to come to KwaZulu and try to pay back the debt I owed your ancestors for giving me a model of how a life should be lived and also how somebody should die. (All quotations from David Beresford, *Guardian*, 27 May 1991)

Rider Haggard, that apologist for colonial conquest, who gloated over the defeat of Lobengula in what was to become Rhodesia, has much to be condemned for. He can now add, from beyond the grave, one more reactionary acolyte to his string of admirers.

The role of Rider Haggard in spreading myths about colonial conquest and noble savages is discussed by Tim Couzens in 'Literature and Ideology: The Patterson Embassy to Lobengula, 1878, and *King Solomon's Mines*'. (The Societies of Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th Centuries, Vol 5, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 1974)

THE TRIAL OF WINNIE MANDELA

Paul Trehwela

A Change in Perceptions

The prosaic spirit of the 1990s has torn the veil from the most glamourized iconography of the 1980s. In the trial of Winnie Mandela, the recent past of the African National Congress is displayed in a manner to write *finis* to many of the heroic myths of the period when her husband and his colleagues defied the apartheid regime in the Rivonia Trial, 27 years earlier.

Then, the mystique of revolutionary violence was exalted as the antidote to the all-saturating violence of the state. Now, the balance-sheet of the past three decades of nationalist politics is drawn up, and payment must be made.

This was recognized outside the courtroom before being recognized in it. The law imitated life. As the once putative First Lady of a future South Africa, Winnie Mandela was repudiated by members of her own organization before she was convicted by the white judiciary. In finding her guilty of the kidnaping of four black youths and as accessory to their assault, the verdict of the court followed an implied act of censure by a major section of the ANC membership, which decided a week earlier by 400 votes to 196 against electing Mrs Mandela to the presidency of the ANC Women's League. This election result, an index to ANC affairs in the second year after its unbanning, was not merely a prophylactic against political contamination. It followed the open denunciation of Mrs Mandela by the most influential members and supporters of the ANC within the country in February 1989, a year before its unbanning. Within the ANC inside South Africa during this period, two souls contended in a single breast, that of Nelson Mandela — in isolation on Robben Island — confronted by the fury of his wife.

As she strode out of court following her conviction, an image flashed across the world of an old man held hostage by a younger wife, more sinned against than sinning. The contrast in faces: she, manic, exultant, wilfully impervious to her own humiliation; he, drawn, ashen, grieving almost, a bitter taste in the mouth after the decades of honourable endurance. That famous noble head, turned grey, his name soiled, an aging Antony married to a vulgar Cleopatra. Was it for this so much was dared, and sacrificed?

How little this portrait of a marriage was purely personal was given point by the threat of Chris Hani, chief of staff of the ANC military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), that there would be mass protest action if she were convicted, in contrast to her husband's insistence, shortly after sentence had been passed, that the matter be left to the courts. In the event, it was the sober realism of her husband and not the giant-killing rhetoric of Hani or of Peter Mokaba, leader of the ANC Youth League, that was closest to the opinions of the people of Soweto. Their reserved response to Mrs Mandela's conviction, their implied acknowledgement that she was indeed guilty of serious

abuses, speak of a profound longing for some kind of civic peace after so many years of appalling tension. This emphasizes in its own way that the period of revolt is well and truly over, and that the ascent of the period of negotiations corresponds to a profound decline in the curve of general social rebellion. It heralds the wish for a period of order, characterized by a strong state clothed in the toga of constitutionalism. The rhetoric of the clenched fist employed by Mrs Mandela outside the court after her conviction and sentence, like the rhetoric of combat fatigues and hammer and sickle headgear sported by her co-accused, Mrs Xoliswa Falati, marks the aggrieved reaction of the doomed stratum of township lumpenism in a period of serious upward social mobility (for some). It suggests the bad grace of the drunk evicted from a dinner party. Just as she misread the limits to her own immunity to prosecution by the state, so Mrs Mandela misread the very widespread desire among blacks for an end to criminality as the normal condition of life in the townships.

Drum magazine in South Africa has published an account of the criminal associations of Jerry Richardson, head of Mrs Mandela's team of killers, the Mandela United Football Club (October 1990). Formed by her in Soweto at the end of 1986, the football club, which never played a single match, conducted itself in full view of everyone as a kind of brigandage feeding off the society. Mrs Mandela was its pirate chief. It is precisely this convergence of criminality and politics that her trial established as a fact of recent South African history, against the grain of decades of effort to remove political struggle from such accusations by the state.

The iconic exceptionalism of the ANC, a sacred isle in a corrupt world, is gone. Mrs Mandela's house, the house to which Nelson Mandela returned after his 27 years' incarceration, the house from which the 14-year-old 'boy general' Stompie Moeketsie Seipei was dragged off to be murdered only one year earlier, was at the vortex of a psychopathic fusion of political terror, a social vigilante movement and ordinary township gangsterism. Protected by the international aura of the Mandela name and the cunning of the South African state – which calculatingly left events to run their course – the famous residence at 8115 Orlando West in Soweto served simultaneously (among other purposes) as a safe house for returned MK guerrillas, a weapons dump, a barracks for the Mandela football squad, a prison for recalcitrants, a punishment yard in which innumerable beatings were administered and a transit camp from which the executioner set forth.

A South African Gothic

Attention in the trial was focussed on the abduction to Mrs Mandela's house of four youths from a church manse on 29 December 1988 by her team of enforcers, the Football Club. On New Year's Day, one of the four – the teenager, Seipei – is taken out of Mrs Mandela's house, battered and left dead in a field, his throat slit.

Some time after the abduction, a Soweto doctor is consulted by Mrs Mandela and Mrs Falati, previously housekeeper at the manse. Mrs Falati says she fetched a young man from the manse on Mrs Mandela's instructions on the same day that the four victims in the case were abducted. (*Weekly Mail*, 15 February 1991) The priest at the manse is Rev Paul Verryn, whom Mrs Mandela and Mrs Falati accuse of homosexual abuses with homeless black youths sleeping in overcrowded conditions at the manse. The young man is Katiza Cebukulu, who later gives damning evidence to the press about the football club and who is charged alongside Mrs Mandela and Mrs Falati.

On 27 January 1989, Dr Abubaker Asvat – 'Hurley' to his friends, the 'People's Doctor', secretary for health in a political organization rival to the ANC, the Azanian People's Organization (Azapo) – is shot dead in his surgery. Two men are later found guilty of Asvat's murder and sentenced to death, maintaining throughout that their motive was robbery. Yet a strange coincidence: the doctor's appointment book for the day of his death as well as for the day preceding it show meetings with Jerry Richardson, the head of the Football Team. (*Weekly Mail*, 15 February 1991) A year later, Richardson is himself arrested, tried and condemned to death for Seipei's murder.

Before the abduction, followed by the murder of Dr Asvat, two murder trials with important implications take place in the Supreme Court in Johannesburg in 1988 and 1989. Though she is never summoned as a witness, Mrs Mandela is mentioned by name in both trials in testimony agreed between prosecution and defence. This states that her house was used for hiding a murder weapon, that the killers set off on their deadly assignation from, and returned to, her house in her car, that her daughter Zinzi was involved in exchanging the murder weapon and that the killers then continued to operate from the house as members of the football club. No charge is ever brought against Mrs Mandela or her daughter because of these allegations, and they are not made public at the time, either in the South African or international press – even though the facts are well known to journalists. This at a time when Mrs Mandela is a world media star, on a scale to relegate Evita Peron to a mere footnote in the annals. The trial results in the imposition of the death sentence on a trained ANC guerrilla returned from abroad, Oupa Seheri. Leading a charmed life, Mrs Mandela is not called in for questioning.

In the second of the two murder trials, the joint statement between defence and prosecution reads that 'a decision was made by Mrs Winnie Mandela and the football club to kill' two former members of the club, Sibusiso Chili and Lerothodi Ikaneng (quoted by John Carlin, 'Blood Soccer', *New Republic*, 18 February 1991). The court finds that Maxwell Madondo, a member of the club, had been 'mandated' together with another member of the club to murder Chili and Ikaneng, but that the gods had thrown the dice otherwise, and the 'mandated' murderer was himself murdered by Chili, his intended victim. Mrs Mandela is not called, even as a witness.

Madondo was killed on 13 February 1989. Two days later, the police identify the body of the murdered Stompie Seipei. On 16 February 1989, Mrs Mandela's closest political associates in the Mass Democratic Movement –

'the most senior trade union and political leaders loyal to the ANC' (according to Carlin) — publicly dissociate themselves from her. Murphison Morobe, a former activist of the 1976 Soweto school students movement from his time at Morris Isaacson High School alongside the student leader Tsietsi Mashinini, states at a press conference:

We have now reached the state where we have no option but to speak publicly on what is a very sensitive and painful matter. In recent years Mrs Mandela's actions have led her into conflict with various sections of the oppressed people...In particular we are outraged by the reign of terror that the [Mandela United Football] team has been associated with. Not only is Mrs Mandela associated with the team, in fact the team is her own creation. We are outraged at Mrs Mandela's complicity in the recent abductions and assault on Stompie. The Mass Democratic Movement hereby distances itself from Mrs Mandela and her actions. (Carlin, *New Republic*; and Carlin, BBC Radio 4, 27 November 1990)

Morobe, general secretary of the United Democratic Front, makes his statement denouncing Mrs Mandela alongside Archie Gumede (co-president of UDF) and Elijah Barayi (a long-time ANC stalwart, president of Cosatu). As Carlin observes in the *New Republic*, Morobe's phrase 'recent years' suggests a long history of terror in Soweto emanating from the Mandela household; but this cryptic pointer is never elaborated.

Breaking the Silence

Time passes. Richardson, the 'coach' of Mrs Mandela's Football Club — a club whose metier in leather lies more in sjamboks than in footballs — is convicted and sentenced to death for the murder of Seipei. Her husband is released to world acclaim. No awkward questions are asked by the world's journalists and statesmen as she and her husband circle the globe in one glittering reception after another. For the Mandelas it is Hollywood all the way; for Richardson, death row.

Meanwhile, Morobe wisely distances himself by taking up a scholarship for study at Princeton University in the US. As one of the most important political leaders of the period when the ANC was gaining popular sanction through the UDF to return as apartheid's avenging angel, he removes himself from the scene of battle at the moment of triumph. To remain in South Africa while Mrs Mandela is in full cry is not politic.

At last a journalist dares to publish the suppressed testimony of the courts. On 21 September 1990, an account by John Carlin of the Supreme Court trials in 1988 and 1989 (involving statements about events in Mrs Mandela's house) appears in the *Independent* in Britain. This act of honest reportage follows the example of the *Weekly Mail* in Johannesburg, in the early weeks of 1989, in printing the first report of the kidnapping of the four youths to Mrs Mandela's house. Carlin later reveals that he and his assistant, Mandla

Themba — presenter of a programme on BBC Radio 4 on the chaotic conditions among 'the youth' in South Africa — is the recipients of a series of menaces from Mrs Mandela, most recently on the steps of the Supreme Court in the middle of her trial. 'He's an SB', Carlin reports Mrs Mandela as saying about Themba, whom she had summoned to approach her retinue. (*Independent*, 13 April 1991) To be accused in South Africa of being 'an SB' — a Special Branch policeman — is equivalent to a death sentence.

Two months after Carlin's initial scoop, BBC Radio 4 broadcasts a programme by him in which a founder member of the football club, Lerothodi Ikaneng, describes how Mrs Mandela 'often participated' in beatings administered by her personal punishment battalion. Ikaneng describes how as a member of the football club, living in her house, he witnessed the murder of a friend carried out by the chairman of the Mandela FC disciplinary committee, Sizwe Sithole. How Ikaneng was then himself brought to Mrs Mandela and her daughter, Zinzi, (Sithole's lover before his death in police custody); how he was accused by them of being a police spy; how he was punched by Winnie Mandela and ordered by her to be taken to her house at Diepkloof Extension; how, afraid of being killed, he escaped his captors, and fled the area. Six weeks later he returns to Soweto, having run out of money, is seen by Stompie's murderer, Jerry Richardson (still coach to the Mandela team), is taken to a field, stabbed in the neck with a blade from a garden shears, and left for dead. Richardson continues living at Mrs Mandela's house, where he is eventually arrested before the eyes of the television cameras.

A week before Mrs Mandela is convicted, at a crucial point in her trial, a second attempt is made on the life of Ikaneng. He is shot and seriously injured outside his home in Soweto on 6 May by three men whom he later identifies as Matthew, Theo and 'Marlboro'. A second eye-witness, who says she had been beaten by two of the men while four months pregnant in 1988, identifies the three by the same names. A third witness states that Matthew was carrying a large rifle. All three assailants are identified as former members of the Football Club. According to the witnesses, who know them well, at the time of the assault they are part of the guards outside the new Mandela residence in Orlando West, known as 'the Parliament', which sits in glowing lights like a jewelled crown on the top of a low hill overlooking Soweto. They sleep in the smaller Mandela home, also in Orlando West, from where Stompie was taken to his death and where Mrs Mandela's co-accused, Mrs Falati — like her, convicted of abduction — continues to live. It is this house which at the time of the second attempt on the life of Ikaneng is at the focus of the court case then proceeding, before the eyes of the world, in the Supreme Court in Johannesburg.

The second murder attempt on Ikaneng suggests that members of the football team continue to function during her trial as a bodyguard for her and Nelson Mandela himself. Ikaneng ascribes it to revenge for his evidence against Richardson. (*Carlin, Independent*, 8 May) This does not prevent the ANC from issuing a statement six days later, after the conviction of Mrs

Mandela, stating that it had decided following the release of Nelson Mandela in February last year that all members of the club should be removed and barred from premisses associated with the Mandela family. (*Times*, 14 May)

Nelson Mandela was indeed involved in the affair of the kidnappings, but in a manner different to his wife. Following the murder of Seipei, the three survivors of the kidnapping from the manse were Gabriel Pelo Mekgwe (then aged 20), Thabiso Mono (also 20) and Kenneth Kgase (then 29). All three, still confined to Mrs Mandela's house, had been forced by their captor, Richardson, to hold Ikaneng while he cut his throat. Nelson Mandela's intervention in the lives of these young men emerges with some interesting implications. According to a report, news of the kidnappings and assault

first became public on 4 January 1989, when Mr Kgase escaped from the Mandela house...

Mr Kgase went first to the Johannesburg Central Methodist Church and [Rev Paul] Verryn [the white priest alleged by Mrs Mandela to have been responsible for homosexual child abuse of young black boys at the manse]. A full investigation was launched by members of the Soweto crisis committee. Committee members visited Mrs Mandela and demanded the release of the other victims.

When she refused to comply, they threatened writs of habeas corpus. But it was not until Mr Mandela was told of the incidents during a prison visit by his lawyer, Mr Ismail Ayob, that Mrs Mandela allowed Mr Mono and Mr Mekgwe to be released. (*Daily Telegraph*, London, 14 May)

This is confirmed by another report, which states that 'Nelson's intervention was eventually successful' in securing the release of the two kidnapped youths, following Seipei's murder and Kgase's escape. (*Observer*, 19 May) Mandela's intervention from prison — which might even have saved the lives of the two youths, one of whom later gave evidence against his wife — corresponds to the consistently humane example presented by him during his decades in prison, a matter attested by fellow-prisoners not members of the ANC.

In a statement delivered at a crowded press conference on the first anniversary of his release from prison, within days of the start of his wife's trial, he declared 'no hesitation whatsoever in asserting her innocence'. (*Guardian*, 9 February) His prison intervention however would indicate that Mr Mandela knew more of the truth concerning his wife's conduct than he would later concede. The inter-relation between husband and wife in this strangely matched couple remains one of many conundrums in this dark night of the soul in southern Africa.

Two Women

A week before Mrs Mandela is convicted, Sibusiso Chili leaves prison after completing a sentence of one year for the killing of Maxwell Madondo, one of the team who had been 'mandated' by the football club to kill him.

Chili is the son of Mrs Dudu Chili, an office-bearer in the Federation of Transvaal Women (Fedtraw). In 1988 Mrs Chili was a close ally of Mrs Albertina Sisulu, one of the presidents of the UDF and wife of Nelson Mandela's most senior prison colleague on Robben Island, Walter Sisulu, former secretary-general of the ANC. While Mrs Sisulu's movements were restricted by banning orders, Mrs Chili had acted as her deputy in finding shelter for young men and boys wanting to leave the murderous circle of the Mandela football club. Older than Winnie Mandela and an honoured figure in Soweto, with a much longer history of political commitment, Mrs Sisulu worked as a nurse in the surgery of the murdered Dr Asvat. While Mrs Sisulu has not commented either to the press or in court on her own relation to the events in Mrs Mandela's house, Mrs Chili states that:

Some of the children who had started fleeing from Mrs Mandela's place would flee to Mrs Sisulu's place. Mrs Sisulu, as a restricted somebody, according to the South African law, would not be in a position to move around and help these boys. She would call upon me and say, 'Dudu, please, can you get some places where we can keep these children temporarily until we remove them from Soweto for their safety?'

Those were precautions which we took to help the children who were terrified, who were very scared, staying at Winnie Mandela's. And of course, they would relate to us what was happening there. (Carlin, BBC Radio 4)

ANC politics in Soweto over this period revolves around Mrs Mandela and Mrs Sisulu, these two women of formidably different temperament, each the wife of one of the imprisoned leaders on Robben Island. In the election for presidency of the ANC Women's League at the time of Winnie Mandela's trial, it is primarily the caucus of support for Mrs Sisulu that bars the way to Mrs Mandela. Mrs Sisulu conspicuously fails to give evidence for Mrs Mandela in her trial, or even to appear in the visitors' gallery in court.

On 22 February 1989, nine days after the killing of Madondo, Mrs Chili is arrested and charged with complicity, though she is later set free before the start of her son's trial. That evening, while she is under arrest in the police cells, her 13-year-old niece, Finkie Msomi, is killed in a firebomb and shooting attack on Mrs Chili's house carried out by 'Winnie's boys'. Charles Zwane, one of the Mandela FC, is later sentenced to death for this crime, having been charged with 11 murders and 22 attempted killings. Zwane had previously received a suspended sentence as an accessory to murder in the Seheri murder case of 1988. The motive for the attack on Mrs Chili's house is revenge for the death of Madondo, and a generalized hatred for the role of the family in opposing the whim of the great lady. At this point there was near civil war among supporters of the ANC in Soweto, and Mrs Sisulu must herself have been in danger.

Sibusiso Chili is put on trial in 1990 for Madondo's death alongside Cebukulu, one of Madondo's colleagues in the botched attempt on Sibusiso's life. After their trial, in which the judge gives token sentences, Cebukulu is

interviewed. (Carlin, BBC Radio 4) He tells of a meeting in Winnie Mandela's office in Orlando township on 13 February 1989, the day of Madondo's death, attended by himself, Richardson, Zinzi Mandela and others at which Mrs Mandela 'mandated' the gang to 'get rid' of Chili and Ikaneng. Mr Justice Solomon, the judge, declares he believes Cebukulu's evidence.

Cebukulu is one of the seven people charged alongside Mrs Mandela in February this year. On the opening day of the trial it emerges that four of the accused have skipped their bail and gone into hiding. Cebukulu is one of the missing accused. The following Sunday, pictures appear in the press of Cebukulu standing in the crowd outside the Johannesburg Supreme Court, watching the opening of his own trial. The farce is repeated in the second week of the trial. No effort is made to arrest Cebukulu, and he does not reappear in the dock. The trial proceeds in the manner of *el realismo magical* in the fiction of Gabriel Garcia Marquez, with the accused looking on at his own trial from the outside, cocking a snoot at the massive police presence. The insouciance of this former hit-man would be funny if the circumstances were not as grim.

An Imperial Triumph

Initially, the principle of imperial suzerainty is triumphally asserted by Mrs Mandela and the ANC executive ('the sovereign can do no wrong'). Despite the burning of Mrs Mandela's house in Diepkloof Extension by outraged Soweto school students in July 1988 (following beatings by members of the football club, in connection with a rape), despite the murder of Stompie, despite the statements agreed between prosecution and defence in the murder trials of 1988 and 1989, despite dissociation from her 'reign of terror' by the MDM, the leaders of the ANC at first stand by their royal consort. In particular, Mrs Mandela is supported by the ANC secretary general, Alfred Nzo, one of the top leaders returned from exile (and deeply discredited among the exile rank and file). Within the ANC she rises, as Carlin reports, 'without trace'. At the time of her trial Mrs Mandela holds even more portfolios than her husband. 'She is chairperson of her local ANC Soweto branch; she is on the executive of the ANC's regional branch for the Pretoria-Johannesburg area, the most populous in the country; she is interim head of the Women's League of the ANC; and she is the ANC's head of social welfare' — the beneficiary of a 'collective decision taken by the ANC, right down to township branch level, to close ranks behind her'. (*Independent*, 4 February) Under conditions of an Angolan, or Mozambican, or even Zimbabwean 'people's republic', she would have been as invulnerable as Madame Ceaucescu in the decades before the floor collapsed beneath her.

Seipei is in no position to give evidence. Nor is Dr Asvat. Of the other three witnesses, one — Mekgwe — fails to give evidence after having been seen leaving the church manse in Soweto from which he was kidnapped in 1988, in the company of 'three African National Congress men', one of the them 'a senior ANC man'. (*Guardian*, 13 February) Mekgwe disappears. Of this, more later. Concerning the other two witnesses, Kgase and Mono, the state

prosecutor declares: 'They are scared because their mate [Mekgwe] had been kidnapped'. Kgase says: 'I very much fear for my life...I think my life is at stake'. (*Guardian*, 14 February) For a period at the beginning of the trial it appears as if it will collapse, due to absence of witnesses. It portends what the US journal *Newsweek* suggestively describes as a 'Sicilian-style outcome – acquittal by kidnapping'. (25 February)

The attorney-general of the Witwatersrand declares he will act with vigour against any attempt to coerce witnesses. According to the *Times*, a 'psychosis of fear' surrounds the proceedings, the central subject of the affair sitting demurely in the dock alongside her three remaining co-accused, the other four having vanished. (13 February) She is relaxed, confident, and jokes with her defence team. Her husband, the expected future president of the country, and the ANC top brass pack the visitors' gallery, while paramilitary squads of uniformed ANC youth parade outside the courtroom door. Under threat of imprisonment, the two remaining witnesses are eventually induced to talk. The case comes to life.

As the trial runs its course, the perception of Mrs Mandela both within the country and internationally undergoes a profound change. This trial provides the occasion for a major learning experience about the reality of southern African conditions, in which judgements are reassessed within the country and across the world. The ANC leadership takes a decision 'to distance the organization from the trial'. (*Independent*, 15 May) Top-level ANC and SACP leaders no longer crowd the visitors' benches, as in the first days of the trial. Three weeks before the verdict, the paragon of national motherhood has been redefined in the *Guardian* in Britain by its political columnist as a 'Medusa'. (Hugo Young, 25 April 1991) It is a view widely shared in Soweto, if not expressed in such classical imagery. On the day when she is found guilty, of the ANC leadership only her husband is present. The following day, when she is sentenced (to six years in prison), even he is not there.

A Radical Confusion

The affair requires comment from a further point of vision. During the trial itself, defence cross-examination makes it appear that the two main witnesses, Kgase and Mono, rather than Mrs Mandela are the accused, and that the crime of which they stand charged is...homosexuality. It is argued by the defence that Mrs Mandela and her co-accused had rescued the youths for their own good from alleged homosexual advances by Rev Verryn, the priest in charge of the manse in which they had been living. The issue of homosexuality becomes the 'key' to Mrs Mandela's defence. (*Weekly Mail*, 8 March) Posters held up by her supporters outside the courtroom read: 'Homosex is not in black culture'. (*Weekly Mail*, 15 March)

One need merely substitute the adjective 'Aryan' for 'black' to appreciate the ideological climate in which the defence of Mrs Mandela is organized. A serious effort is made to convert a trial for kidnapping and assault into a trial of alleged homosexuality of prosecution witnesses, the victims of that kidnap-

ping and assault. The defence argument is characterized by a systematic confusion of concepts: of child abuse relative to the right to freedom of sexual orientation among adults, of the culpability of child abusers relative to that of their victims, and of counselling rather than brutality as the appropriate response towards the victims (and perpetrators) of sexual abuse of children. The murder of Stompie Seipei, a matter of child abuse of the most extreme kind, throws its shadow over the effort of the defence to represent Mrs Mandela as motivated solely by repugnance at the abuse of young people.

This blurring and fudging of concepts relating to sexuality and violence, by the accused, their counsel and their supporters, is an ominous indicator of the tone of thought to be expected in a 'new South Africa'. A heavy dose of sexist poison is spilled into public affairs during the trial, both within South Africa and abroad, with damaging effect given the international importance of its leading personality and her husband. The character of the defence, let alone the events which form the focus to the charges, in all respects typical of a period of deep reaction.

Under these circumstances, it was a brave act of the *Weekly Mail* — a liberal journal normally sympathetic to the ANC — to open its columns to a critique of the sexist brutality of the defence case, just as it did in exposing the apparent connivance of state and ANC in the disappearance and hijacking of witnesses. The *Weekly Mail*, to its honour, was also the first to expose the kidnappings in January 1989. It may later emerge that the decision of the prosecution to proceed with the case at the critical moment in mid-February owes much to the readiness of this journal to incur the wrath of Mrs Mandela, rather than see a double standard of justice — one for the families and friends of political leaders, another for the rest.

The most sensitive analysis of the character of Mrs Mandela's defence was made by the Gay and Lesbian Organization of the Witwatersrand (Glow) in an open letter to the national executive committee of the ANC, protesting at its homophobic character. Glow described this as an attempt to capitalize on 'reactionary prejudices against homosexuals', and pointed out that the argument of the defence contravened the ANC's own draft Bill of Rights. It was alarming that the NEC had 'failed to respond to the level of homophobia' that had arisen both within and outside the court, the letter said. The ANC's failure to respond raised 'doubts regarding its stated commitment to the recognition of lesbian and gay rights'. A black gay activist, Simon Nkoli, who had been defended by Mrs Mandela's senior counsel, George Bizos, in a major political trial in 1987, charged with having conspired to overthrow the state, now said of Bizos: 'It is very sad for me to see him using the gay issue in this trial'. (*Independent*, 18 March 1991)

Whether or not sexual abuse of young people did in fact take place at the manse could not be verified from the trial. Nor was it the issue. The character of the defence case, funded from abroad by the International Defence and Aid Fund (like the trial of Richardson) on the grounds that this was a political and not a criminal trial, marks the end of an epoch in which the state, not the accused, was overwhelmingly judged guilty in political trials by a majority

within South Africa and abroad. By the character of her defence, Mrs Mandela affronted a basic principle underlying support for the ANC both within South Africa and internationally. This was the principle of the critique of prejudice. She proved unable to grasp the point made by the sociologist Peter L. Berger, that the persecution of homosexuals

fulfils the same function of 'bad faith' as racial prejudice or discrimination. In both cases, one's own shaky identity is guaranteed by the counter-image of the despised group...The white man despises the Negro and in that very act confirms his own identity as one entitled to show contempt. In the same way, one comes to believe one's own dubious virility as one spits upon the homosexual. (Berger (1975), *Invitation to Sociology. A Humanistic Perspective*, Pelican, p180)

The violent and deeply prejudiced nature of South African society was given sharp focus by the trial. That the trial nevertheless proceeded to its conclusion was a small augury of hope for the future.

The Oration at Bekkersdal

It was not only South Africa's homosexuals, however, who felt a cold wind at the back of the neck. On 7 February, three days after the trial had begun and was remanded, Winnie Mandela addressed a rally in the black township at Bekkersdal, about 25 miles southeast of Johannesburg. In what the London *Times* describes as a 'chilling threat' to whites, Mrs Mandela states: 'Any white person who comes here to interfere with us or who comes to preach peace — that person must not leave Bekkersdal alive. Their wives and mothers will have to fetch them as corpses'. (8 February) As the *Times* correspondent notes, this is the 'most vitriolic speech' by the First Lady since her classic call in April 1986 that 'together, hand in hand, with our sticks of matches, with our necklaces, we shall liberate this country'. (Carlin, BBC Radio 4)

Shortly after her Bekkersdal oration, Mrs Mandela delivers a passionate implied justification of the occupation of Kuwait by the regime of Saddam Hussein of Iraq. (Carlin, *New Republic*) Not out of character, Saddam's secret police introduce the necklace to the streets of Iraq a month later as a means of control over the revolt of their own citizens. (*Observer*, 24 March)

The significance of Mrs Mandela's threat at Bekkersdal is that, like so many of her utterances, it is a blind intended to obscure the politics of the organization of which she remains a leading member. The rally in Bekkersdal is convened to call a truce after a weekend of slaughter in which a dozen people are killed and scores left homeless: victims of political factioneering between supporters of the ANC and those of the successor to the black consciousness movement of the 1970s, Azapo.

Like the killing of Scipei, the deaths in Bekkersdal are not an unfortunate act of god, and have a human history which requires investigation. The blood rhetoric of Mrs Mandela relates here to the antagonism of the ANC towards

Azapo, which has a strong following in Bekkersdal. The tone and content of her threat, and the political reality underlying the slaughter, reach back beyond her words of April 1986 – captured by the sound camera – to the period in 1985 when supporters of the ANC began a pogrom to wipe Azapo from the map of political life.

A murderous campaign was launched against Azapo in 1985, after it had dared to humiliate the UDF through its strident campaign against the visit of Senator Edward Kennedy in January of that year. The cycle of township violence of this period requires its own detailed investigation. In his acclaimed book, *My Traitor's Heart*, the South African journalist Rian Malan has described in chilling detail the murder-hunt against Azapo members in Soweto by supporters of the UDF in Soweto in 1985. He quotes George Wauchope, an Azapo leader and former close colleague of Steve Biko, as stating that Morobe, Albertina Sisulu and Patrick 'Terror' Lekota, the leaders of the UDF, 'didn't see anything...they never ever acknowledged that there was this internecine warfare. They never ever tried to stop it'. (*My Traitor's Heart*, Vintage, 1991, p 324)

Lethal violence against anyone with different opinions enters into the body politic at this time like the Aids virus, erupting five years later in the massacres launched by massed Inkatha members on the people of the townships. To be a township resident, or to be a Zulu speaker in the wrong place at the wrong time, or even erroneously to be thought to be a Zulu speaker, then becomes a fatal error. If the carnage of Inkatha is the vengeance of the despoliated countryside on the township, then the violence centred within the ANC and its supporters is the vengeance of the despoliated township on itself. Despite declarations of harmony at Bekkersdal at the rally on 7 February, in a joint platform appearance by speakers from the ANC, Azapo, the Pan Africanist Congress and Inkatha, South Africa is experiencing a pogrom tending towards low intensity civil war, in which the sources have not been clarified and in which the ANC has signally failed to lead the way to civil peace. It was the place of Mrs Mandela, even at this late stage, to be an exponent of the rhetoric of violent militancy.

The Selling of a Celebrity.

The day before her speech at Bekkersdal, Mrs Mandela implied outside the courtroom – standing beside her husband – that she was being persecuted by the press. As the international media star runs out of hype, she turns on her former sources of publicity. Her husband declares: 'My wife is subject to trial by mass media, before her trial in the court'. (recorded by Carlin, BBC Radio 4)

Yet another media romance of the 1980s now wears out. Not long before, Mrs Mandela was the beneficiary of one of the most spectacular campaigns of hype in modern times. But those whom the media creates, it also frequently destroys. 'As I write', observes Rian Malan on the first day of her trial, 'the

skies above Johannesburg are dark with flying reporters, coming in to cover the trial of Winnie Mandela, and it seems that a journalistic feeding-frenzy is in the offing...' (*Guardian*, 4 February)

All this is in stark contrast with the abject deference accorded to Winnie Mandela in her 'Mother of the Nation' heyday. Her deification began in 1985, when she returned to Soweto in open defiance of a government banning order and resumed a leading role in the freedom struggle. The world press — the US press in particular — was entranced. Here was a genuine heroine, headstrong, fearlessly outspoken, and enormously telegenic to boot.

Mrs Mandela was the subject of 22 *New York Times* stories in 1986, and made 70 appearances on network television. Scores of flattering magazine profiles, and at least three books, were written. She was showered with movie offers and honorary degrees, even nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. She became one of the most celebrated women on the planet.

But now the enthusiasm of the international radical chic is becoming jaded. There is a fly in the unguent. A little worm of doubt creeps into the minds of true believers, some of whom might even previously have wished that someone would 'preach peace' in the townships. It is now Mrs Mandela who most prominently illustrates the ugly face of 'national liberation'. Witness to this is the description of the 'imperious and enigmatic' Mrs Mandela in the *London Times*: she appears to be 'stalking South Africa's political stage like some latter-day Lady MacBeth'. (11 February) The *Guardian*, previously the most pro-ANC of the major daily newspapers in Britain, with a well-tested mechanism for blocking stories critical of the ANC, now declares itself 'appalled by the evidence of intimidation of witnesses' in the Mandela case. The reputation of the ANC itself is at stake because of this 'single, flawed individual'. Her case is a 'disaster for the ANC' which, together with Nelson Mandela needs to distance itself 'very fast, very openly, from this deeply disturbing affair'. (14 February) This editorial, in a newspaper which gave minimal coverage to revelations about the Swapo and ANC prison camps in Angola, marks the turning on its axis of late 20th century liberalism in relation to the ANC.

By April this year it appears that, for the moment, the career of Mrs Mandela has been held in check not only by the disaffection of the world's media but by the women of the ANC. At its first congress inside South Africa for 30 years, the ANC Women's League on 27 April rejects Winnie Mandela as its president in favour of Gertrude Shope — a national executive committee member from the exile, who had acted with humanity to stop executions, torture and humiliation of ANC members held prisoner in Angola after the mutiny in Umkhonto we Sizwe in 1984 (see *Searchlight South Africa*, No 5, p 53). Mrs Shope's victory, and Mrs Mandela's defeat, had according to the *Times* been 'engineered' by Albertina Sisulu, who stepped aside as candidate in order to let Mrs Shope win. Most significantly, Mrs Shope appears to have

been 'strongly supported by women still in exile' (*Times* 29 April), who have felt the methods of political authoritarianism from the ANC at first hand, on their own persons.

As such, this was the first practical intervention of the exiles through democratic means in the internal life of the ANC within the country. It expressed the concerns of those members with deepest experience of despotic forms of rule within the ANC, and the deepest hostility to them. It indicates a possible consensus or coming together of that section of the ANC which resisted the thuggery of the Mandela FC within the country and the exiles who opposed the Stalinist regime of the security apparatus abroad.

Mrs Mandela's speech at Bekkersdal in February had been a *Pie Jesu* of Third Worldist rhetoric. Addressing the crowd in both English and Xhosa, she declared: 'Your spears should be pointed in the direction of Pretoria. Our enemy is in Pretoria. We have never had enemies within ourselves. We are all here because of our fight for freedom. The enemy come here to exploit our differences'. (*Times*) Yet it is 'the Boers and the apartheid government' — accused of having instigated the violence at Bekkersdal — with whom the ANC is peacefully negotiating for a place in government. There are no spears pointing in the direction of Pretoria, only briefcases, while a never-ending catalogue of deaths in the townships belies Mrs Mandela's glib nationalistic phrase about blacks in South Africa never having had 'enemies among ourselves'.

The Nation of the Mother

Since 1985 — the incubatory period leading to the township slaughter of the 1990s — responsibility for legitimating violence as a primary means of political control 'within ourselves' has lain first of all on the ANC and its supporters, with its leading text in Winnie Mandela's homily on the liberatory authority of necklaces and matches. This must be the subject of another article, which investigates the conditions which nourished the use of executions against political opponents and caused the transfiguration of South Africa's Saint Joan into a Medusa.

Mrs Mandela herself endured 27 years' loss of husband, following a first few years of marriage when her husband was absorbed in mainly illegal political work; 16 months' imprisonment, mostly in solitary confinement; and more than 17 years of banning orders, many of them served in banishment. Her return to Soweto in 1985 (typically, in defiance of her banishment) coincided with the most sustained period of near-insurrection in the country's modern history, when all nerves were strained to breaking point. It was the last years of the old order, when tens of thousands had decided that one final, violent push would consign the regime of racial discrimination to oblivion. Great sacrifice was called for, and great sacrifice was taken.

In the end, Mrs Mandela succumbed. In the endemic violence of South African society, raised to fever-pitch in the mid-1980s, the complementary

norms of white and black brutality became hers. She acquired the characteristics of the regime she opposed, as of the gangster milieu in the purgatory of the townships. She became truly South African.

Alongside so many horrors, three events from the same month as Mrs Mandela's conviction give a pointer to South African political conditions in the middle of 1991. One is the closure by the ANC of its prison camp at Mbarara in southern Uganda and the release of its inmates, in all probability in response to pressure from the British Foreign Office and the campaign of the pressure group, Justice for Southern Africa. There will be a report on this in the next issue.

Second is the shooting by the South African police of a former Umkhonto activist Tumi Padi and his girlfriend Nokuzola as they lay in bed in Soweto on 19 May – slaughter in the old fashion, following the torture of Padi's father (for information) at Protea police station in Soweto in February. (*Independent*, 1 June)

And third: confirmation from a Zambian government official that Mekingwe, the missing witness in the case of Winnie Mandela, was being detained by the ANC in Zambia, after being moved there from Zimbabwe. Cebukulu, Mandela's co-accused, who delighted in attending his own trial from the outside, had earlier been reported in the Zambian press as being held in Kamwalaremand centre at Lusaka, 'apparently under ANC authority'. (*Guardian*, 30 May) These two men, both scarred by their experiences in the Mandela house, thus remain effectively prisoners of the ANC. The lesson from the trial of Mrs Mandela is that in South Africa the rule is: *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*, the more things change, the more they remain the same.

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THE CASE OF SAMUEL MNGQIBISA (ELTY MHLEKAZI).

The Chief Representative,
African National Congress of S.A.,
Dar Es Salaam,
07/02/1991

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that I, SAMUEL MNGQIBISA, alias Elty Mhlekezi, am resigning from the ANC from the date above. This follows my detention and harassment by the Security Officers of the ANC based in Plot 18, Dakawa, Morogoro. The officers are Daffter and Cliff. They accuse me of propagating against the ANC. I was detained at the ANC prison in Plot 18 from 19/01/1991 without trial. I managed to escape on the night of 05/02/1991. I am presently in hiding afraid of the ANC Security hyenas.

The conditions at that prison are horrible. My cell was two and a half by two metres and I was provided a two gallon plastic bucket as my toilet. I bath and eat in that cell. The sponge and blankets to sleep [on] are terribly dirty and smelling very badly. I was not allowed to talk to other prisoners or anybody passing by my window outside. The door is locked with a steel bar across.

My Tanzanian wife was barred from visiting or talking to me. She always manoeuvred even during the night to come and say hello. I decided to stop her coming there, avoiding further repercussions. Permission was also not granted for my four-year-old daughter to enter my cell so that I kiss and talk to her. I usually spoke to her through my cell window. She always insisted my step-daughter to accompany her to the prison to see her daddy. This was my chance to forward messages to my wife through them.

During my interrogation I was told to cooperate so that other methods are not applied to **extract** information from me. I cooperated in order to save my skin from these two-legged hyenas. This was a threat against my life in a democratic liberation movement. I was forced to write things I didn't say in what they termed 'MY OWN CONFESSION'!

I must acknowledge you that if I happen to disappear, your Security organ will be held responsible. I mention this because of my experience in the ANC. I have served the ANC for six years in the Army [Umkhonto we Sizwe] and eight and a half years in the civilian field. I feel this is enough and have observed stagnation for too long in the ANC. I am also asking for my protection from the Tanzanian Government, the UNHCR and the British Embassy. Thank you.

Former ANC Member

ELTY MHLEKAZI

cc Home Affairs Minister, Tanzania

cc UNHCR, Dar Es Salaam

cc British Embassy

cc To my Father, South Africa

Deputy President, ANC of SA, Sauer Street, Johannesburg, South Africa.

PRESS RELEASE FROM JUSTICE FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA

ELTY MHLEKAZI

Ely Mhlekaazi, a member of the ANC in exile, is in hiding in Tanzania. He was arrested by the ANC security department on 19 January 1991 at Dakawa Development Centre near Morogoro in Tanzania. They questioned him about friendship with people who had participated in the mutiny in the ANC in Angola in 1984 and had been imprisoned in Quatro camp.

Mhlekaazi is his 'travelling name' as a former member of the June 16 Detachment of the ANC army, Umkhonto we Sizwe. His real name is Samuel Mngqibisa, he is in his mid-thirties and comes from Dobsonville at Roodepoort in the Transvaal. His wife is from Tanzania and they have a daughter, Bonhle, aged four. He was taken to the prison in Dakawa at Plot 18, Ruth First Centre, also known as the Reorientation School, where he was forced to make a written 'confession' or his interrogators would use 'other methods.' He was asked to explain why he was friendly with ex-detainees and why he was not loyal to the leadership. He was asked to explain his relation to 'the askari, Khotso.'

This was particularly ominous. 'Khotso' was the 'travelling name' of one of the leaders of the mutiny, Mwezi Twala. After being released from Quatro prison along with other former mutineers, Twala was elected organising secretary of the Regional Political Committee representing all the ANC exiles in Tanzania in September 1989. He returned to South Africa with a group of fellow former detainees in April 1990. One of them, Siphon Phungulwa, was shot dead in an open political assassination after leaving the ANC office in Umtata in the Transkei on June 13. On frequent occasions — as in the *New Nation* newspaper on 21 December — the ANC has accused those who called for democracy in the ANC of being 'askaris,' i.e., assassins working for the police. ANC supporters drove Twala out of his parents' house at Evaton in the Transvaal last year and he lives in hiding.

The chief interrogator of Mhlekaazi was Daffter Nkadimeng, a member of the ANC security department, and the son of John Nkadimeng, a leader of the SACP and of the former South African Congress of Trade Unions, and a member of the National Executive Committee of the ANC. Mhlekaazi had reason to think that he was about to be sent to an ANC prison camp at Mbarara in southern Uganda. Former ANC prisoners from Quatro camp believe that the functions of Quatro have been transferred to Uganda, and that ANC members continue to be imprisoned there.

Mhlekaazi escaped at night on 5 February. He resigned formally from the ANC in a letter dated 7 February, in the hope of placing himself outside its jurisdiction. His wife and children are destitute. He wishes to place himself under the protection of the Tanzanian government, the UNHCR or the International Red Cross.

London, 21 February 1991

**LETTER TO THE ANC SECURITY DEPARTMENT FROM THE
TANZANIAN POLICE CONCERNING ELTY MHLEKAZI**

MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS

MOROGORO REGION. MAZIMBU SETTLEMENT,

P.O. Box 602,
MOROGORO.

Ref.No. US.MAZ/SMG/7/208

19th January 1991

Comrade Doctor,
Leader of P.R.O.,
MAZIMBU/DAKAWA.

RE: ELTY MHLEKAZI

The above named person has reported at this office asking for Tanzania Government protection, after he refused to repair water pipes in Dakawa.

We therefore allow Comrade Elty Mhlekezi to come to your office to answer all questions as requested, also we would like comrade Mhlekezi to report to this office every after two days (2 days).

(O. Kipande)

SETTLEMENT COMMANDANT

MKUU WA MAKAZI

MAZIMBU

c.c:The Principal Secretary, Prime Minister's Office, P.O.Box 2366, DARES SALAAM;
The Principal Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, Refugee Section, DARES SALAAM.
The Regional Commissioner, P.O.Box 650, MOROGORO.
The Regional Police Commander, P.O.Box 644, MOROGORO.
N.O.O.: Afisa Usalama wa Taifa (M), MOROGORO.

A Brief History

Samuel Mngqibisa registered with the UNHCR in Dar Es Salaam as a refugee on 8 February. Having resigned from the ANC the day before, he no longer qualified for rations from the ANC. How were he and his family to eat? He was told by the UNHCR that he would only qualify for material help from them if he moved to a refugee camp situated far from Dar Es Salaam. That was impossible for Mngqibisa, as he is married to a Tanzanian woman and is responsible for children. His family thus found itself destitute. In addition, he states in a letter of 23 March that he does not 'feel 100% safe here [in Dar Es Salaam] because I might be kidnapped at any moment.'

In the same letter he gives an account of events leading up to his imprisonment by the ANC security department, now renamed P.R.O., on 19 January 1991. Mngqibisa makes clear that the Tanzanian government is guilty of serious dereliction of responsibility in securing the safety of its residents.

He sought asylum from the ANC security apparatus at the premises of three successive officials of the Tanzanian state: the police station commander at

Morogoro, the settlement commander at Mazimbu and the commander of the Field Force Unit at Mazimbu. The letter from the settlement commander at Mazimbu – reprinted above, and written on the day of Mngqibisa's imprisonment – could not be more clear: he had reported at the office 'asking for Tanzania Government protection.' This protection the settlement commander conspicuously failed to give.

The nature of Mngqibisa's offence, according to this document, was that he had 'refused to repair water pipes at Dakawa' (He had trained as a plumber at the Vocational Training Centre [VTC] in Dakawa). This throws light on the attitude of the ANC security department, and of the Tanzanian police, towards trade union rights. A refusal to repair water pipes merits the attention of the security police, imprisonment, the threat of torture and a forced 'confession'.

At the urging of the ANC security police ('Comrade Doctor, Leader of P.R.O.'), the settlement commandant informs said Comrade Doctor that it will 'therefore allow comrade Elty Mhlekezi to come to your office to answer all questions as required...' A strange concept of protection! The Tanzanian state 'allows' the desperate and utterly isolated individual refugee to 'come' to the 'office' of the security police which this individual has appealed to the government to protect him from. The title 'P.R.O.' for the ANC security department means literally...Public Relations Office.

The letter from the settlement commandant at Mazimbu is a classic of a certain kind of prose. Strange and tortured syntax of the police-bureaucratic mind, for whom the security official and his victim are both alike 'comrade!' In fact it is not Mhlekezi whom the settlement commandant 'allows' to 'come' to the office of the PRO (in fact, it is not an office, but a prison cell and a potential torture chamber). It is the security man, Comrade Doctor, who is allowed to remove Mhlekezi from the sanctuary he had sought. The two police officials quibble over the living body of Mhlekezi, who is disposed of between them. The statutory authority of the Tanzanian commandant is abjured in favour of purely token assurances from the non-statutory authority of the ANC security department, which enjoys unspecified and unpublished but no less real extra-territorial powers of coercion, by permission of the Tanzanian state.

The formal authority of the Tanzanian state makes strange deference to the informal, shadowy powers of its guest. This guest police 'requests' its Tanzanian host that its intended victim will 'answer all questions.' *All questions*, mind! And the Tanzanian state, in the person of its settlement commandant, 'allows' this courtly ballet of cat and mouse to proceed, 'as requested'. It even appears, since comrade Mhlekezi will be permitted to 'come' to the secret policeman's office, that the progress of the mouse into the cat's claws is an entirely voluntary affair, a purely formal, everyday, business affair. In the same way might the South African state explain how the hanged man 'comes' to the noose overhanging the trapdoor in Pretoria Central Prison.

The victim (and survivor) of the Nazi death camps, Victor Klemperer, silently and patiently researched the mind of his captors during his stay at Auschwitz, and after the war wrote his study, *Lingua Tertii Imperii*, 'Language of the Third Reich'. It appears that the language of South African 'liberation' requires a similar textual analysis.

No less ritualistic — reeking of the pomade, the powder and the lace of 18th century diplomatism — is the final passage: 'and we would like comrade Mhlekezi to report to this office after every two days (2 days)'. The commandant expresses himself with delicacy. He 'would like' Mhlekezi — as if the poor man were a person with rights, a solid burgher, or at least a secret policeman — to 'report'. This is a strange country, where the commandant informs a rightless stranger in the grip of a faceless autocratic power, that he 'would like' this individual to do this or that, as if it were a matter of coming or not coming to somebody's tea-party. The South African police were in the habit of speaking more plainly.

But it's all to no matter. The words of the commandant's letter — uttered, typed, photocopied and handed in duplicate to Mhlekezi before his final walk to Comrade Doctor's 'office' — are a mere form, an awkward diplomatic game played around the real business of power. These words don't mean a thing. Mhlekezi/Mngqibisa disappears into the good doctor's consulting room, and fails to reappear for fourteen days. There is no inquiry from the worthy commandant as to why he had failed to present himself, 'as requested'. Comrade Mhlekezi has ceased to occupy the mind of the Commandant from the moment he steps out the door. For police-bureaucratic purposes, he has ceased to exist. When on the fifteenth day (in fact, at night), Mngqibisa escapes from the Comrade Doctor's office — two and a half by two metres, with some very unmedical facilities — it is as a hunted ghost fleeing through the bush in the darkness.

And this formalistic quadrille performed in front of the commandant's typewriter, a kind of *danse macabre* before the victim's descent into the pit, is at once meaningless and yet so important that these weasel words must be sent in duplicate not only to the hapless Mhlekezi — the subject of the whole process — but to the office of the prime minister, to the principal secretary at the Ministry of Home Affairs, to the regional commissioner and to the regional police commander, as well as to what might well be the Tanzanian security police: Afisa Usalama wa Taifa (M).

However, it is good to know that the bureaucratic fetish of the truly classic despotisms — Hitler's Germany comes first to mind — is flourishing in impoverished Tanzania. The episode in the commandant's office has been preserved in the files for posterity. It is good to know that the prime minister's office and the principal secretary to the Home Affairs ministry were informed about this crime in the office of their servant, the settlement commandant at Mazimbu, against the South African refugee, Mngqibisa. From the top of state down to the lowliest ANC security 'hyenas' (as Mngqibisa calls them), all have their hands in the blood and offal of the torturer's chamber. And the

torture chamber, in its turn, is named after the martyred heroine of the ANC and the SACP, Ruth First.

Mngqibisa's fate as a pawn in a game played by others emerges from his account of the two days in which he sought in vain for protection. As he states in the letter of 23 March,

I first reported my problem to the Morogoro Police Station Commander on the 18/01/91 after harassment in Dakawa by two ANC security officers. The station commander referred me to Mazimbu as the matter was supposed to be handled by the Settlement Commandant.

On the 19/01/91, the ANC's regional security man called Doctor was invited to the Commandant's office in my presence, to listen to my complaint. After a lengthy discussion between us, Doctor insisted that I must go to Dakawa to answer questions. I told him in front of the Tanzanians that I am afraid and am not prepared to go to Dakawa. He continuously insisted that I go to Dakawa. I told him that I am not going there altogether. He then stood up angrily before the meeting ended and said that he is going to fetch a policeman from Morogoro, to force me to go to Dakawa. He never came back. It is [then] that the Commandant wrote him that letter, gave me my copy and said I should go to them in Dakawa.

Before I went to their office, I informed my wife about it. I then reported this to the Tanzanian paramilitary police (Field Force Unit) commander based next to the ANC security officers' house. He later accompanied me to these guys and they invited him inside the house. After their meeting, I was harshly interrogated and forced into a cell, until the day of my escape. The Settlement Commandant never bothered to make any follow-up about my whereabouts after issuing me the copy of Doctor's letter.

This is the story of an honest man who grew tired of political cynicism and weasel-wording, who wanted to live in peace with his wife and his children, and who wished to speak his thoughts to his friends. Thousands of miles from his own country, he is forced to become a double and a treble refugee. In the feeding frenzy of the would-be *nouveaux riches* in the hunt for jobs and money in Johannesburg, what is to be the future for Mngqibisa who has given quarter of a lifetime to 'the struggle.' Struggle, for what? For whom?

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Review Article : Sobukwe and the PAC

Benjamin Pogrud, *How Can Man Die Better...Sobukwe and Apartheid*, Peter Halban, London, 1990, pp 406, £14.95, board.

Until April 1991 there seemed to be only two nationalist movements in South Africa outside the African National Congress that wielded any influence among the African people: Inkatha, the KwaZulu based movement and the Pan-Africanist Congress. Recently, the PAC, after a lengthy period of inactivity caught the headlines with its startling slogan: 'One Settler, one Bullet!'. This was only a gimmick. Even if it had been intended, the PAC had no means to mount a peaceful campaign, let alone a shooting war.

The PAC, which might have had a good measure of grass-root support, proved incapable of campaigning in the townships. Perhaps they had given up because of the township wars in which they suffered many casualties. They certainly lost a number of leading members in unexplained car accidents and suffered heavy losses at the hands of gangs claiming allegiance to the ANC. Not that they were innocent victims. The PAC was also involved in township violence, but whatever happened the leadership was tired. It was thus not surprising that their newly elected president, Clarence Makwetu, met with Nelson Mandela in Harare in mid-April. A joint statement stressed the need for continued sanctions and demanded an elected constituent assembly which would draft a new constitution. It was agreed that a conference of anti-apartheid groups would be held in August. This foreshadows the merger of the two organizations.

Ultimately the PAC has failed to develop any alternative strategy in the current situation. They had no answer to the needs of the vast majority of the population and, if they had, they had no means of mount any sustained campaign. In the light of that impasse, more than a few of the top leaders might have decided that there was no future for themselves outside the gray trail if they stayed out of the ANC. That is the cynical view, but until more is disclosed it is as good a guess as any. Yet, it is hard to believe that nothing more will be heard from the grassroot supporters of the PAC. If, as is possible, the talks and negotiations extend over a lengthy period with little to show for it all, the discontent must swell up and give rise to a new Africanist-type movement. That is not something I would necessarily welcome, but predictions and desires do not necessarily coincide.

To examine the possible fortunes of such a movement in the future I turned towards its past — a subject that has received scant attention from scholars, and even less (to date) from among its members.¹ Yet this was the movement that split dramatically from the ANC in 1958, called the anti-pass campaign in 1960 that led to the shooting at Sharpeville and Langa in the Cape; the march on the centre of Cape Town; the declaration of the state of emergency; the attempted murder of prime minister Hendrik Verwoerd; the burning of the hated pass and the banning of the PAC and ANC. The entire course of

nationalist politics in South Africa was forced into new paths as a result of that campaign and could have been expected to produce a host of scholarly theses and several books (if not in South Africa because of the political climate, then at least in the US or Britain).

Perhaps that is unrealistic. The PAC was only in existence for two years before it was banned. Its members and its committees published little during those years and not much more during the long years of exile. If there were internal documents they are not easily accessible and until police files become available, there is little on which to base a definitive account. It is in this light that the new book by Benjamin Pogrund must be assessed. Here at least is an account written by a well-informed journalist who occupied important posts in one of South Africa's more liberal newspapers and, who was moreover, a close personal friend of Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe, the acknowledged leader of the PAC. Who better to reveal those aspects of the story that might throw light on the origins of the movement, its leadership, and its subsequent fate. That would be the least of the readers expectations. There are also reasons to expect much from Pogrund's pen. He had spent years in South Africa collecting and filming documents, some of them unobtainable at present, and devoted his energies in the late 1950s to covering the townships and occupied a unique place, alongside the journalists associated with *New Age*. It was therefore not surprising to find that he had been present at the ANC conference in November 1958 at which the PAC split from the ANC, and that in the course of his duties he was present at Sharpeville when the police opened fire, killing 72 persons and injuring 186. Once again, grounds for believing that he had a unique story to tell.

The book that has now appeared does not meet all these expectations. However, it must be said at the outset that Pogrund did not set out to write the book that I was looking for. I had hoped that a book in which Sobukwe was the central figure would provide some of the answers that are needed for a fuller understanding of the movement for which he gave his life.

What then will the reader find in this book? Firstly there is an account of a young person in his parent's home, growing up, apparently unaware of the impact of segregation on his own life, or on that of the blacks in South Africa. He went through school, learning at the table of missionaries, absorbing many of their ideas and, brilliant as he was as a scholar, quite virginal in his understanding of the world around him. His school success demanded of his mentors that they find money to send the young man to college. By this time he was much older than the average white student — whom he could not, and had not, met in the segregated institutions of the country. He was soon to be a leader among the students, but not yet in the world of politics.

It was only when Sobukwe entered the South African Native College, Fort Hare, that he showed an interest in politics and entered the Congress Youth League. He attracted considerable interest first in 1948 and again in 1949 for his speeches at the annual 'Completers' Social'. On the latter occasion he spoke of 'financial and economic imperialism under the guise of a tempting slogan "the development of backward areas and peoples".' Opposed to this

he said was the 'uncompromising Nationalism of India, Malaya, Indonesia, Burma and Africa...The great revolution has started and Africa is the fields of operation...' These sentiments were part of the rhetoric of the day when revolution seemed to be flaring through Asia, through to the stirrings in west Africa, and the mineworkers' strike in South Africa. But the language came from George Padmore's book in the College library. Pogrund makes no mention of this influence, nor the fact, that was to prove so important, that after Padmore changed his language when he moved to Pan-Africanism, Sobukwe followed in his tracks.²

Yet, even though he was President of the Student's Representative Council, and revered as the political spokesman of the campus, he was drawn only reluctantly into taking a stand on behalf of the nurses at the adjoining hospital when they came out on strike. The rhetoric of 'revolution' and active intervention in politics did not converge easily for Sobukwe — and this was probably the key to the man even when he seemed to move precipitately into action in 1958–60.

After graduation Sobukwe retired to the sidelines. He considered himself a Congress radical, but as a school teacher in Standerton, where the ANC had no branch, he was not called upon to enter the political arena. Teachers were barred from overt political activity and even calling a meeting in support of the Defiance Campaign in 1952 led to his suspension. It was only when he moved to Johannesburg to take up a post as a language assistant at the University of the Witwatersrand that he re-emerged as a politician. But even then he seemed to be half-retired. He was not known on the campus as a politician because he was not heard in that role. His status as an assistant was an aspect of the segregation that he had once denounced, but which he accepted without apparent protest.³

It was only in 1958 that Sobukwe's name came to the fore again. There had been a simmering dispute inside the ANC that was to lead to a split at the end of the year and the formation of the movement that took the name, the Pan-Africanist Congress. Pogrund provides details from his own observations in November 1958 — and although these were printed in his reports in the *Rand Daily Mail* and *Contact*, at the time, they are not readily accessible. Having this (shortened) account is invaluable. However, the events leading up to the split had started long before. Little of that is discussed in the book, and as a sample of what happened — inside the Transvaal ANC in particular — I append the story cabled to *Contact* in March 1958 by James Fairbairn. The lack of democracy in the ANC through the last few decades, as described in *Searchlight South Africa*, Nos 5 and 6, is shown to be endemic in that organization, and not a temporary aberration. It was this kind of documentation that I sought in Pogrund's book.

The split in the ANC was the direct consequence (as Pogrund shows) of the arrogant disregard of Congress leadership for any dissenting voices. Its attitude characterised by Duma Nokwe, Secretary-General of the ANC, in the opening words to his response to an article by a member of the PAC executive, Peter Raboroko. Dismissively, he began his riposte:

It is a pity that one has to take the Africanists so seriously. Left to their prose, they inject an unconscious comedy into a political struggle that stays uniformly savage, very much as though a one-act Victorian melodrama was being performed in the middle of a battle.⁴

The shooting at Sharpeville took place on 21 March 1960. It was followed by shootings in Cape Town and the march on Cape Town, led by a young PAC student, Philip Kgosana. Even if the article by Nokwe was written before the event, it was no 'Victorian melodrama'. Pogrund was present at the site of the shooting and repeats part of what appeared (from his pen) in the Johannesburg press. What he does not even explain was the reason for the PAC's precipitate change of tactic from a 'status campaign', in which Africans were to demand equal treatment when served in shops, to an anti-pass campaign. Perhaps the nature of policy decisions in 1959/60 cannot be easily retrieved, but the reader does require some attempted explanation of so serious an event. It is possible, as some suggest, that the PAC embarked on this campaign, hopelessly unprepared, in order to pre-empt an ANC campaign. But the ANC was also totally unprepared for so enormous a task. Obviously, they were both unable to tackle this issue and, if that is all, there is little more to be said.

However, there are several suggestions that need investigation. Jordan Ngubane, a member of the Liberal Party, and also a supporter of the PAC, has said that the reason can be traced back to Ghana. In his unpublished autobiography, says Lodge, Ngubane claimed that the Ghanaian leadership, urging a showdown with the government, had promised the PAC financial and diplomatic support if they embarked on an anti-pass campaign.⁵

The promise of money would have been an attraction that could not be ignored. But there were other factors that would have led the PAC to listen to Ghana, and in particular to George Padmore's Africa Bureau in Accra. Sobukwe was an admirer of Padmore and his work, *Pan-Africanism or Communism? The Coming Struggle for Africa*, published in 1956, was required reading for the leading members of the PAC.⁶ It fitted neatly with the anti-Communist stand of the PAC, with its African Nationalism, and its radical stance. The logo adopted by the PAC had a star shining out of Ghana on a map of Africa, and the speeches of PAC leaders were redolent with phrases pointing to Ghana as the centre of the coming struggle for liberation. (See Gerhart for quotations from PAC leaders of the time)

In the same way as Patrice Lumumba of the (then) Belgian Congo left the All-African Peoples' Conference in Accra in 1958, intent on pursuing the struggle against the Belgian administration for independence, the message was taken up by the PAC. Their admiration (and gratitude?) was also shown by their adopting Padmore's and Nkrumah's Pan-Africanist message and incorporating it into their name.

Pogrund does mention the impact that events in west Africa were having on members of the PAC, but there he leaves the matter, neither confirming

nor dismissing Ngubane's claim, and not exploring in sufficient detail the influence of Accra on the shaping of the PAC policies.

The events of 1960 need one further comment. When the PAC embarked on their campaign their thinking was simplistic. Within three months the movement, which claimed a membership of 30,000, but whose monthly income of £40 belied this claim, launched a campaign in which it was hoped that tens of thousands of men and women would surrender at police stations with the demand that they be arrested for not carrying their passes. This would clog the courts and the prisons, stop the shops and the factories, and lead to the repeal of legislation that was universally detested. From that it would be a short step to defeating the entire system of segregation and discrimination.

It was a campaign that could not succeed. It also confirmed that besides being carried away by successes elsewhere in Africa, the PAC had no understanding of the power of the state. Pogrund recounts a retrospective judgment by A P Mda, one of their mentors, in which he outlines the many problems that confronted the PAC in embarking on the campaign. Among these he mentioned the existence of an all-white army. But the PAC discounted the army as a threat. For reasons still unknown to me a visit was arranged at my home at which I met the National Committee of the PAC. At some stage I asked how the PAC, if it hoped to overthrow the government, could win over, or at least neutralize, the army. It was an issue that had not occurred to them and which they dismissed as unimportant. I took the matter further and spoke of the role of the army in any revolutionary situation, citing the books I had read on the problem. They were not moved. The same matter was raised elsewhere by others, but the message never got through. Within six months the police at Sharpeville and Langa clarified the issue.

The PAC and the ANC were banned, thousands were arrested and interned over a three month period, and the leaders of the PAC were jailed. Sobukwe was given a three year sentence, and then, under special legislation, was kept jailed and isolated for nine years. Pogrund was allowed to visit Sobukwe on six occasions after this prisoner, who was no longer a 'prisoner', was kept on Robben Island, away from society and away from the other prisoners. His presence was known to the Islanders and he was greeted, particularly by PAC men, with affection. There were few comforts, but Sobukwe was treated better than other prisoners. In fact, conditions on the Island were bad, and members of the PAC were treated worst of all. Strangely, Pogrund has little to say about the conditions, despite the appearance of two books, written by members of the PAC, who served time in that grim jail.

Nonetheless, the accounts in the book of this period are new and are rich. Some of Sobukwe's ideas become available through accounts of their correspondence and discussions. What emerges are the thoughts of a well read man with very unformed political ideas. Where else could one find a 'revolutionary' who believed that John Kennedy, Harold Wilson and Lyndon Johnson were progressive politicians. Wilson he thought had 'the well thought out ideas of a critical, limpid intelligence' (and was to be applauded for his

victory in 1964); Johnson's domestic policies in the US were enlightened, and the roots of their enlightenment could be traced to Kennedy.

In reading the book the question that arises again and again concerns the basis of Sobukwe's belief in black nationalism. What did he mean when he propagated his Africanism? Why did he join the PAC rather than remain within the folds of the ANC? Why did he, and his organization, reject whites as members, while seeking white sympathizers (and eventually one white member)? And why did he originally lambast white liberals, but say after 1960 that the PAC could form an alliance with the Liberal Party?

The story of the PAC is seen almost entirely through the life of this one man and the subsequent story of the PAC is treated lightly. That is, perhaps, understandable. This set out to be a biography and after 1960 Sobukwe was never free to engage in political work. Such was the consequence of failing to realize the power of the state. Nonetheless, the story of Sobukwe is also the story of the PAC and more could have been expected. That the reader will have to find elsewhere.

Pogrud was not the only white to admire and befriend Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe, but he certainly offered more assistance, rallied more support, and was the most steadfast of those who became Sobukwe's admirers. This book stands testimony to that relationship and, even if it leads to some very uncritical appraisals of the PAC leader and some rather naive thoughts on future relationships inside South Africa, the story of the association between the two men rings true.

Footnotes

1. One book, written by a leading member of the PAC who resigned, apparently in disgust, was ready for publication when a threatened lawsuit led to all copies being pulped. I do not know if it included an account of the origins of the PAC. A second account, written by Zolile Hamilton Keke, one time PAC representative in the UK, has yet to be published. There is one unpublished MA thesis, by Nana Mohomo, on the origins of the PAC; Tom Lodge provides a short account in *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*, Longman, 1983, but the fullest treatment to date can be found in Gale Gerhart's *Black Power in South Africa*, University of California Press, 1978.

2. This is discussed in B Hirson, *Year of Fire, Year of Ash*, Zed, 1979.

3. Open dissent would have achieved little, but he had to be persuaded (by myself) to use the staff canteen lest he be rejected.

4. *Africa South*, Vol 4, No 3, Apr-June 1960. Raboroko's article, printed in the same issue, is indeed incomprehensible. But the tone of the reply is reprehensible.

5. See *Black Politics*, p 203. This story was current in Johannesburg in 1960. Although Ngubane's story cannot be verified, I can vouch for the fact that the Ghanaian government gave a substantial sum of money to a group of Liberals in 1961/2 when they were about to embark on a campaign of sabotage.

6. This was the only work referred to by Sobukwe in his opening address to the inaugural conference of the PAC in April 1959.

THE SPLIT IN THE ANC, 1958.

James Fairbairn

James Fairbairn (Jack Halpern) filed a number of reports in the period 1957-60, covering political events in South Africa in a number of journals including the *New Statesman*, *Reynolds News*, *Africa South* and *Contact*. These included the rural revolts in Zeerust and Sekhukuneland, the Treason Trial, issuing of passes to African women, and so on. On 23 February 1958 he was one of the two white reporters who attended at least part of a special Transvaal Congress [ANC] Conference at which the possibility of a split loomed large, leading to the formation of the Pan-Africanist Congress.

James Fairbairn's Cable

The crisis within the Transvaal African National Congress will reach a new intensity this Sunday March 9, when a Provincial Conference, called by the Africanist/Petitioners dissidents is due to meet in Lady Selborne, Pretoria. This step follows the chaotic ending two weeks ago of an 'official' special Provincial conference, forced upon the Transvaal executive by the National executive, to answer charges of misadministration.

Having failed to obtain satisfaction after a day of shameless procrastination and inspired confusion for which both sides were to blame, a section of the dissidents seized the Province's official car after assaulting its driver. Next day they raided the Provincial offices and seized furniture and records. Two days after the conference the Provincial President, treason suspect Elias Moretsele, resigned, stating that 'there can be little or no doubt that [after last Sunday's conference] the present Provincial executive does not enjoy the confidence of the majority of the active membership of the ANC in this province'.

Emergency sessions of both the National and Transvaal Provincial executives have been in progress during the whole of last week, and it has been agreed that the National body is to intervene, though not how and when.

Thus only one week before the much heralded National conference, the organization upon which it depends both for its successful staging and for the implementation of its resolutions stands divided. What lies behind the present smoke screen of accusation and counter-accusation?

Although blurred at present, there were initially two lines of division: organizational and political.

The critics of the Transvaal administration, known since last September as the Petitioners, claim that Congress up here has fallen into the hands of 'machine' politicians whose primary aim is to stay in power. To achieve this, claim the Petitioners, the leadership has seen to it that only caucus-rigged elections have taken place since 1953. When leaders who were in power were named, banned or arrested on treason charges, replacements were appointed from above and, at last October's annual Provincial conference in Pretoria, a reelection of the Executive **en bloc** was pushed through as a demonstration of 'faith in our leaders'.

This, linked with what appeared to be an unsatisfactory report, led to the drawing up of a petition which called upon the Executive to resign because, in the signatories own words: 'Item 1) We submit that the conference was not fully representative; 2) The Northern, Eastern and Western Transvaal was not notified; 3) We are not satisfied with the financial statement submitted at conference; 4) We submit that the conference was not procedural; 5) We submit

that the elections at this conference were in violation of clause 6 of the constitution; 7) We submit that the speaker was biased.'

Submitting that 'it is high time the ANC is properly and democratically run', the petitioners called for a special conference within twenty-one days, i.e., by the end of November. They were led by men like Segali and Jerry Mbuli.

On 23 February the Transvaal Executive admitted that this petition had been signed by the secretaries of ANC branches at Sophiatown, Orlando East, Meadowlands, Western Native Township, Alexandra, Evaton, Roodepoort, Lady Selborne (Pretoria), Kwa-Thema, Atteridgeville (Pretoria), Mofolo and Botsabelo. In addition the secretaries of branches at Eastwood (Pretoria), Rustenburg, Mabieskraal and Newclare No 2 claimed to have signed. The executive either denies that they received these additional petitions or claims that there is no properly constituted branch in some of these places. This question of branch constitution is not a new one — there are some ninety official branches in the Transvaal and at least twenty are not as yet recognized.

The executive ignored the petition completely.

The petition was, of course, only the end result of long-standing dissatisfaction. In finding this way of ventilating their apparently legitimate grievances, the petitioners had made common cause with that group of ideological dissidents known as the 'Africanists', who today dominate their joint faction.

As Africanist has become something of a swear word and bogey of late, this group bears closer examination.

African nationalism is no new thing in the Congress movement, having been directly endorsed by the national conference of 1949. This conference, which decided on a boycott of all government bodies for Africans, also adopted 'the creed of African nationalism as a basis of the fight for National Liberation.' This nationalism has its roots in the Congress Youth League which was formed in 1944. In its declaration of basic policy, which is today a rare document,¹ the Youth League differentiated between two kinds of nationalism, the extreme kind which would drive the white man into the sea and leave Africa for the Africans, and the moderate kind which believes that only Africans can win freedom for themselves but acknowledges that the other racial groups are here to stay. This latter kind, under which the Africans would dominate by force of numbers, was the kind espoused by the Youth League.

It is worth remembering that many of the present leaders of Congress, committed now to a 'responsible' multi-racial line, were leading members of the League and vehemently espoused its ideology. Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo — as well as Petlako Laballo, the present Africanist chief theoretician — were foundation members of the League. Its leading founder, Dr Peter Tsele, remained an Africanist to his death.²

The original theme has now been embroidered, and was expressed to me recently by a leading Africanist as follows:

Even if we grant the sincerity of the Whites, Indians and Coloureds who want to collaborate with us, the fact remains that the only way in which white domination will ever be broken is by black force. Protests, petitions, conferences, press publicity — all these, however excellent, have availed us nothing in the past and will certainly avail us still less in the future. Blood will have to flow in the streets before we are free — and, when that day comes, [if] we have to stop and ask ourselves whether a particular white man was a friend of ours in the past, we will never be able to act. To bring freedom we need hate in the hearts of the Africans — after it is all over we will grant all those who accept African hegemony their full rights as private citizens of an African state.

That is the theory. How much of it would change should the very evident desire for office be gratified I cannot tell. For both reasons, however, the Africanists today resent the very real influence which the Congress of Democrats and also the Indian National Congress wield in the ANC. For the same reasons they reject the **Freedom Charter**, which they regard as a foreign document, and the multi-racial commitments which the present leadership have made.

And here they link up with the Petitioners, who hold COD largely responsible for the continued retrenchment of the Transvaal leadership. The Africanists were only too happy to take over wholesale the criticisms made by the Petitioners who, in turn, began to absorb Africanist ideas. Thus Segale, the highly emotional leading figure amongst the Petitioners, has been known to come out with virulent anti-white slogans. He is a huge excitable man whose feelings of frustration often seem to affect both his oratory and his reasoning of calmer moments. To this day he refuses to carry a pass, and has served several terms of Bethal farm labour — one for assaulting a policeman.

On the requisition committee in which the Africanists and petitioners have fused, Segale is outstripped as a public figure only by [Josias] Madzunya, the bearded 'fire eater' of Alexandra. Dressed invariably in a heavy black overcoat, Madzunya is a fiery spell-binder who took a leading part in the Alexandra bus boycott. More recently he struck the only jarring note at the multi-racial conference when he warned that it was 'stoking up the fire in a boiler which had no safety valve'. Leballo, who is also on the requisition committee, is an ex-school principal who was dismissed for his five participations in the Defiance Campaign, for which he spent eleven months in jail. The other members of the committee are the two Malapo brothers, M Mlonzi, S Mahopo and Jerry Mbuli, the last named prominent in the Youth League but not an Africanist as yet. But the **eminence gris** of the committee would seem to be Peter Molotsi, a light coloured, medium sized man with a particularly vindictive verbal delivery. Refused a hearing by the Transvaal executive, this group organized so effectively that a split was expected by the National Executive at last December's national conference in Orlando. An attempt to call a truce for the duration of the conference was unsuccessful and it was only through the astute intervention of Port Elizabeth's Govan Mbeki that disaster was averted. More — Mbeki seemed to have found a way to heal the split proving his rapidly growing reputation as one of Congress's most capable leaders. His tactics were simple: he satisfied the petitioners by getting the National Executive to guarantee that if the Transvaal executive did not call a special conference within twenty-one days it would be arranged at National level. Then, having isolated the Africanist element, he allowed a full ideological debate in which rank and file participation led to an overwhelming defeat of Africanism — only five Africanists were on their feet at the end.

The crisis seemed over. Open ideological discussion had succeeded where vendetta, boycott and even expulsion had failed, and the charges of maladministration were to be answered at last.

In the event, the twenty-one days stretched to more than sixty-one, but last month it became clear that the National leadership had decided that their Transvaal colleagues were expendable in the interests of unity before the Workers Conference and the white election.³ **Liberation**, the leadership's journal of the Congresses, devoted almost the whole of its February issue to the crisis in Congress. Admitting that last year's **en bloc** Transvaal elections had been a mistake, the journal pointed out to the Transvaal executive that the noble thing to do was to resign, standing for reelection as individuals if they wished. **Fighting Talk**,⁴ took up the theme with a two-voiced discussion of Africanism which, after dragging some very obvious — though not red — herrings across the pages, marked some of the Africanists as 'loyal leaders of the future'.

The heat was clearly on and, just before the special conference, the National Executive 'persuaded' the Transvaal leadership that, after rebutting the Petitioner's charges as best they could, they should resign and call for elections.

That undertaking was, however not kept. The conference, held once more in Orlando, got off to a bloody start just after nine o'clock. The dissidents were antagonized even further when they learned that 'volunteers' to keep order were being recruited only from 'loyal' branches. Although instructions had gone out shortly before the conference that only official delegates were to be admitted, a large crowd of ordinary members turned up at the hall. Many of them were from the Africanist branches of Alexandra, Sophiatown and Orlando East, and there can be little doubt that the Africanists intended to pack out the conference, a tactic which Madzunya has employed before. Several heads were bloodied before these 'observers' forced their way into the hall and, even in the presence of Chief Luthuli as guest of honour, chaos reigned for some time.

The pattern was now set for the whole conference. Luthuli's deputy, who was in the chair as a neutral from Natal, allowed the arrangement of seating of delegates and intruding observers to drag on till lunchtime and the subsequent squabbles over delegate's credentials to proceed until five in the afternoon. He seemed to make no effort to control the proceedings but, on the other hand, the requisition committee's followers seemed to be so poorly led that they often added to the confusion and delay.

Delegates grew increasingly incensed by the blatant stalling to which the platform resorted. At one stage Madzunya tried to get onto the platform, and a brief scuffle ensued. This provided a pretext for the temporary disappearance of the signed petitions, and it was well after five when Jerry Mbuli finally made the Petitioners' case, on the financial irregularity charge, on behalf of the requisition committee. A personal intervention by National Secretary Oliver Tambo, who suggested that the executive might concede some of the points raised and concentrate on the ones still relevant now that the special conference had been called, was rejected by Mthembu, acting Transvaal president. Mthembu, in addition, challenged the accuracy of Mbuli's figures and began, as dusk was falling, to read a long and rather irrelevant statement. The Requisitioners called for immediate elections, and were largely cheered by the majority of the delegates.

Shortly after this, chairman Nyembe announced that they had to vacate the hall and closed the meeting with the singing of 'Nkosi Sikelele Afrika (God Save Africa) — which was ignored by perhaps three quarters of those present. Last week's sequels to this chaotic ending have already been related.

There can be no doubt that Segali's raids have lessened sympathy for his group, but the majority of delegates must have returned to their branches thoroughly fed up with the Transvaal executive. How many of them respond to the call for another conference this weekend (March 9) remains to be seen — travelling to conferences from outlying corners of the Transvaal is a tiring and expensive business.

In a special interview for *Contact*, Petlako Leballo told me that this conference will elect a new executive with a view to taking over the leadership of the national Congress. And when he succeeds, he and his group will call for a strike a few days before the white elections. 'We want the Nats back in power', he told me, 'and such a strike will scare the white voters into putting them back. With another Nat government the day of reckoning will be brought rapidly nearer. We Africanist leaders are not afraid of going to jail and do not worry about legalisms like many of the present Congress leaders — if we, the people will carry on with action'.⁵

But will the African people follow men like Leballo? I do not think so — at present. The National leadership of Congress is firmly wedded to multi-racial endeavour, and the overwhelming defeat of the Africanists at the last national conference convinced me that the

rank-and-file back the leadership. But if the national leadership appears to endorse an unwanted and discredited executive in the Transvaal, then the Africanists will be given an ideal chance of power. 'It has been decided that the National Executive is to intervene', national secretary Oliver Tambo told me last weekend, 'But we haven't yet decided how or when it is to [do] so'. The National Workers' Conference and the white elections are almost here.

Footnotes

1. The Programme of Action (or at least the version generally accepted) can be found in Thomas Karis and Gwendolen Carter (eds) (1973), *From Protest to Challenge*, Hoover Institute Press, Vol 2, pp 337-39. When Halpern wrote this account there was no general history of the ANC or its Youth League. To this day many aspects of the history are still untold. There is a dispute over the date of founding, with some claims that the foundation was in 1943. The accepted leader at the time was Anton Lembede (not Peter Tsele as stated below).
2. Killed in a car crash before the commencement of the anti-pass campaign.
3. A conference called to implement the suggestion of the South African Congress of Trade Union's call for a one pound a day campaign. The sponsorship of this conference was never clearly stated and eventually the entire campaign was converted into a stay-at-home to persuade the white electorate to remove the National Party from office. This was held by the Africanists as a further reason for breaking with the ANC.
4. Originally the journal of the (white) Springbok Legion, the journal became a Congress paper, expressing the views of the whites in Congress, most of whom were in the Communist Party.
5. Ironically, it was the ANC that called for a stay-at-home to 'influence' the election — but in their case to secure the defeat of the National Party. If anything, it helped secure the return of the government and this led to some criticism of the tactic among Congress members.

The account printed above is a copy of the cable sent to **Contact**. I was shown Halpern's notes on the February conference and had a copy which I subsequently destroyed. These notes are also included in his surviving papers. Although I had strong disagreements with the Africanists, I thought that a split at that time in the ANC would lead to a further weakening of the forces opposed to the government. Being a member of the Transvaal executive of the Congress of Democrats I took the report to its next meeting and moved that steps be taken by the COD representative on the Joint Congress Council to prevent the impending split. My attempts were blocked, first by claims that there was no report, then by claiming that the report could not be authenticated, and then by the chairperson arbitrarily ending the meeting. My intervention might have come to nought no matter what steps were taken, but it was the callousness with which it was dismissed that provided insight into the way the COD, and its Stalinist mentors, operated. — BH.

SWAPO AND THE CHURCHES: AN INTERNATIONAL SCANDAL

Paul Trewhela

'Swapo has the right to protect her people from those who are collaborating with the enemy... Yours in Jesus Christ.'

— Dr Abisai Shejavali, General Secretary of the Council of Churches in Namibia. ¹

'The illegal occupation of Namibia has been facilitated by Namibians who have collaborated with South Africa and have been traitors to the cause of a free Namibia. Yet SWAPO is willing to accommodate these people in a free Namibia and forgive their misguided behaviour.'

— Report of the World Council of Churches, May 1988. ²

'So it goes'

— Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five*.

The Problems of the Text

On 14 November 1989, Pluto Press published *Church and Liberation in Namibia (CALIN)*, edited by Peter Katjavivi, Per Frostin and Kaire Mbuende. The book contains a number of documents on the relation between the churches and political conditions in Namibia, from 1958 to 1988, with individual essays by each of the editors and three others. David Theo Goldberg, assistant professor at the School of Justice Studies at Arizona State University, has described the book as 'crucial for anyone wanting to comprehend the role of the church in the promotion and realization of Namibian independence'. (*Southern African Review of Books*, Jan/Feb 1991)

Goldberg's review is characteristic of the ignorance combined with tunnel vision of the international liberal/left establishment relating to southern Africa. The book in fact makes it impossible to comprehend the role of the churches in one of the most important episodes in the recent history of southern Africa: the cycle of wholesale arrests, torture, imprisonment and murder of Swapo members on the orders of their own leaders, dating from at least 1976 until the release of survivors in May 1989. The emergence of Swapo's prisoners from their dungeons took place six months before publication of *CALIN* and more than 18 months before Goldberg's opaque review.

The complicity of the churches — their refusal to speak out, and the sanitary screen they provided to the torturers — is continued in this book, which serves to perpetuate the offence. Like the churches, the editors of the book are culpable. Their book is a knowing deception, offered to readers at the moment when the truth could no longer be concealed. To throw light on what the book obscures, I append, at the end of this article, two letters from innumerable texts available to the editors, which they omitted to publish. These stand in criticism of the book and, more important by far, of the whole spectrum of official Christianity.

The foremost editor, Peter Katjavivi, author of *A History of Resistance in Namibia* (1988), is described in a biographical note as 'Namibia's leading historian'. (p v) He is currently Vice Chancellor at the university in Windhoek, and is also a member of the National Assembly. For many years he was a leading representative in Western Europe and the US of Swapo, during its long guerrilla war against the South African regime. Frostin is a Swedish academic and theologian. Mbuende, who holds a PhD from the University of Lund, is described in the book as a leading Swapo activist since the 1970s. In 1989 he was a reader at the Institute of Future Studies, Stockholm. The editors represent the historical working together of Swapo and the Christian churches, the subject — from very different perspectives — of *CALIN*.

Black Theology and the Pits

Swapo's purges of its members have been described in 'A Namibian Horror' and an interview with Panduleni and Ndamona Kali, published in *Searchlight South Africa* No 4, February 1990, and in Trehwela (1990/1). It is characteristic of the cover-up disseminated by the nationalist parties, the churches, the liberals, the stalinist states and the left internationally — including nearly all the trotskyst sects — that *CALIN* should be prefaced by additional clouds of incense in the form of a preface by one of the pillars of black theology in South Africa, Rev Nyameko Barney Pityana, director of the Programme to Combat Racism of the World Council of Churches (WCC), based in Geneva. In the period of the formation of the black consciousness movement in South Africa in the late 1960s, Pityana was secretary general of the South African Students Organization (SASO) when Steve Biko was its first president.

It was Pityana's view in the early 1970s that 'a study of Black Theology is a study of black consciousness or self-awareness'. (Pityana, p 58) The quality of his awareness may be judged from his encomium on the relation of Swapo to the Christian virtues. 'The church is the life and soul of the people of Namibia', he declares:

In times of sorrow, of struggle and in times of joy, Namibians have known their church leaders to stand alongside them.

...Swapo pioneered the programme of providing chaplaincies among Namibians in exile. The Swapo leadership petitioned the church to ordain some among their number who would symbolize the presence of the church among them as they struggle for liberation. Such was the foresight of the Swapo leadership and their insight into the needs of the Namibians in the diaspora...The Swapo team of chaplains has direct access to the President of Swapo, Dr Sam Nujoma, who is ready to listen to the needs of his people. (pp viii-ix)

This intimate and subservient relation of a team of priests to the leadership of a nationalist political party, with its own army, secret police, prisons and torturers, throws an interesting light on the New Testament text that distinguishes between the obligations owed by Christians to God and Caesar. It is

precisely this identity between nationalist politics and religion that Pityana, following the practice of Swapo and the Christian churches, seeks to idealize and promote in his laudatory comments on the Council of Churches in Namibia (CCN), a kind of popular front of Christianity in Namibia.

The development of the CCN — set up in 1978 — was for Pityana a ‘very significant step’. It meant that

through CCN, Namibians maintained a unity of perception of the social reality of Namibia. Not only was it being demonstrated that there was no dichotomy between the gospel and politics but it was shown by the example in CCN projects and staff who were active in the liberatory movement either as SWANU [South West Africa National Union, the smaller nationalist movement in Namibia — PT] or Swapo. (p x)

The word about ‘no dichotomy’ between the churches and Swapo became flesh in Swapo’s torture pits, as the churches in Namibia and internationally turned their eyes from the maimed body of the victim and like Pharisees strode past on the other side of the road. Or, like Pilate, washed their hands and delivered sentence. Or, like the Sanhedrin, called for exemplary justice to be delivered on the heads of those who, in the words of Dr Shejvali, quoted above, were ‘collaborating with the enemy’. Swapo members who succumbed to its internal purges were victims of a totalitarian ‘unity of perception’ (in Pityana’s phrase) between the nationalist leaders, the independent African states, the stalinist bloc and the churches. Their experience illuminates with a garish light the nature of world society in the three decades before the crack-up of the Berlin Wall.

It is Pityana’s opinion that ‘under CCN, Namibians were liberated to experiment, dream and have visions about the future of their country’. He states that during this period ‘a distinctive theology of Namibia could be said to have emerged’. Between the candy floss of the priests and the torture chambers of Swapo lies a distinctive theology of complicity. One recalls Pityana’s comment from his days in SASO that the ‘first step’ was to ‘make the Black man see himself, to pump life into his empty shell; to infuse him with pride and dignity, to remind him of his complicity in the crime of allowing himself to be misused and therefore letting evil reign supreme in the country of his birth’. (quoted in Hirson, p 110)

A Special Relationship

Pityana’s preface gives an adequate reflection of the character of the book as a whole, supposed by him to offer insight into the ‘soul of Namibia’ (whatever that might be). (p xi) His preface is dated Geneva, June 1989. By this time, about two hundred Swapo members detained in the region of Lubango in southern Angola had already been released from the pits in which they had been held. Agence France Presse reported the first meeting between journalists and the released prisoners, still held under Swapo guard, on 27 May

1989. The AFP correspondent, Marie Joannidis, reported: 'One after another the ex-prisoners undress to show marks and scars — most of which are old — left by torture.' (*Call Them Spies*, hereafter referred to as *CTS*, p 87) On 9 June, a freelance photographer, John Liebenberg, reported in the pro-Swapo weekly, *The Namibian*, published in Windhoek, that he had met many detainees held by Swapo who had apparently been subjected to 'severe beatings, rape, mental torture and extreme deprivation'. There is no reference to any such reports in Rev Pityana's preface of June 1989.

The introduction to the book by its editors Katjavivi, Frostin and Mbuende is dated July 1989. On 4 July, a planeload of about 150 former prisoners of Swapo arrived back in Namibia at Oseri Kari camp, immediately followed by extensive reports in the international media of their allegations of torture. Outside southern Africa, reports appeared in the *New York City Tribune* (5 July), the *Daily Telegraph* (London, 5 July), the *Independent* (London, 5 July), the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (7 July) and the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (Switzerland, where Pityana was based, 7 July). There is no reference to these reports of torture and imprisonment in the introduction to *Church and Liberation in Namibia*, despite the editors' warm references to Swapo and 'Namibia's own experience and contribution to liberation theology'. (p xvi)

In his essay on 'The Role of the Church in the Struggle for Independence', Katjavivi speaks delicately of a 'special relationship' between the churches and the nationalist movement in Namibia, noting that some individual church leaders held 'key posts' in Swapo. (pp 25, 3) One that he mentions is Dr Zephania Kameeta, vice-president of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in SWA/Namibia (Rhenish Mission, known by the initials ELK), whose poems and other writings are quoted extensively throughout the book. Rev Kameeta is an executive committee member of Swapo. Another pastor, the Rev Hendrik Witbooi of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), is vice-president of Swapo. Daniel Tjongarero, who is not a priest but was director of the communications department of the CCN at the time of publication of the book, was also at the same time Swapo's deputy national chairman. The overlap between Swapo, the leadership of individual churches in Namibia and the executive of the CCN was a primary fact of Namibian national life throughout the period of the purges.

The Christianizing of a Horror

In a more crudely conceived essay entitled 'Church and Class Struggle in Namibia', Mbuende drops pearls of wisdom. For example:

We are living in the epoch of imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism. Therefore, our crisis is the imperialist crisis and our problem is imperialism and capitalist exploitation. (p 43)

For Mbuende, nationalism as a 'non-class ideology' could be used to 'articulate the interests of the bourgeoisie in one historical setting and those

of the working class in another setting'. (p 41) He develops the fantastic conception of a future 'third church, which will be proletarian' (in opposition to the old missionary-colonial church and the current 'petty-bourgeois' reformist church with its bourgeois ideological basis), and of a future struggle in which 'only the proletarian church will be able to succeed'. (p 45) For him, the church is 'linked to Swapo and other popular forces by the struggle against foreign domination' (p 40), a struggle which somehow through Swapo will 'lead to the building of socialism and not capitalism'. (p 44) The notion of internationalism is alien to Dr Mbuende in this heady atmosphere of millenarian futurology. The suggestion of this Christianiser of leftist rhetoric is that in some way Swapo was a party of socialism.

The essay by Frostin is a paean to a 'holistic' theology of liberation. The writer appears to be unaware that a leading proponent of the philosophy of holism was the former South African prime minister, Jan Smuts, who made a serious attempt at the holistic incorporation of Namibia (then South West Africa) into South Africa in the 1940s. Frostin polemicises against a 'dualistic theology', by which he means one in which religion is compartmentalised away from political and social life: again unaware of the 'dualism' by which the issue of Swapo's torture system is evaded by Swapo's supporters. It is not my province to judge between the clerical proponents of abstention or participation in political causes. What is noteworthy, however, is that Frostin's essay is specifically critical of the 'dualistic understanding' of a statement issued in the early 1970s by a conference of pastors of the German Lutheran Evangelical Church (DELK), published in a work edited by Pastor Siegfried Gröth, of the Vereinigte Evangelische Mission (VEM) based in Wuppertal in Germany. (Gröth, 1972) In this statement, DELK was explicitly hostile to political action that 'obviously oversteps the bounds of the church's competence'. (*CALIN*, p 53)

Enter Pastor Gröth

Gröth had been adviser on southern African affairs to the VEM since 1961, and was prevented from entering Namibia by the South African regime from 1971 to 1987. In the early 1970s he was asked by the two black Lutheran churches in Namibia (ELK and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia – ELCIN) to tend to the spiritual needs of the refugees, especially in Zambia and Botswana. Significantly, Gröth was the only priest of note who attempted to save the Swapo detainees in the purges of the 1980s. The problematical character of his intervention is discussed later in this review. Familiarity with the work of Gröth is shown in *CALIN* not only by Frostin but also by Emma and Zedekia Mujoro, principal at the Lutheran Theological College at Otjimbingwe in northern Namibia, in an essay 'Namibian Liberation Theology and the Future'. Yet *CALIN* preserves scrupulous silence on the central place of Gröth in the relation of the churches to the spy drama.

Gröth spoke and wrote extensively to his many church contacts about the horrors taking place in the Swapo camps, to no avail. In a letter to a Namibian

priest in July 1985 he wrote that his visit to Swapo exiles in Zambia in March 1985 was the 'most difficult trip to Africa for me since more than twenty years'.³ Shortly afterwards Gröth suffered a breakdown in Zimbabwe, brought on by his discovery of what was taking place in Swapo. He returned to Wuppertal on 13 May 1985, where he gave a full account of the purges to Rev Kameeta, Mujoro's predecessor at the Theological College. Gröth's letter continued:

[I] had the chance to discuss this serious issue with Brother Kameeta. I informed him about the emergency situation in Zambia and Angola and mentioned the names of my friends and brothers who are in such a dangerous situation...I told Brother Kameeta that responsible Christians and Swapo-members are appealing to the churches for their support and help. (CTS, p 42)

Gröth also urged the matter on Pastor Hendrik Frederik, the Preses (president) of the ELK, at a confidential talk on 14 June, and with Bishop Kleopas Dumeni, head of the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambo-Kavango Church (ELOK). Between them these two churches have over half a million members, an enormous moral force in a population of less than a million and a half. As Gröth confirmed in a letter to the director of Amnesty International: 'They know about the present difficult developments in Zambia and Angola'. (17 September 1985. CTS, p 43) Yet despite representing through their churches the majority of blacks in Namibia, whether individually or collectively the church leaders Kameeta, Frederik and Dumeni did nothing. Yet for Pityana, it is Kameeta through his eucharistic prayers and verse who best represents the 'distinctive theology' and the 'soul of Namibia'. (pp x,xi)

The Scandal in the CCN

At the time of publication of *CALIN* the CCN represented the following churches:

- * Evangelical Lutheran Church in SWA/Namibia (ELK)
- * Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN, formerly ELOK)
- * Anglican Church in Namibia
- * African Methodist Episcopal Church
- * United Congregational Church in Southern Africa
- * Roman Catholic Church
- * Methodist Church in Southern Africa
- * Evangelical Reformed Church in Africa.

The German Evangelical Lutheran Church (DELK) withdrew from the CCN in 1987, on the grounds that the body was too politicized. DELK's membership, which was exclusively white, expressed the strongest reservations about church identification with the political struggle in Namibia in the early 1970s. These reservations appeared in the book edited by Gröth in 1972.

The highest policy-making body within the CCN is the general meeting of church representatives, convening every second year. Between these meetings the executive committee governs the CCN as a whole and is responsible for policy implementation. All church members are represented on the executive committee. When *CALIN* was published, the president of the executive committee was Bishop Hendrik Frederik whom Gröth had met on 14 June 1985. The vice-presidents were Sister Irmgart, OSB, of the Roman Catholic Church, and the Rev. Matti Amadhila, assistant to Bishop Dumeni, (whom Gröth had also approached).

The chief official of the executive was its general secretary, Dr Shejavali. He acted throughout the purges as chief hatchetman of official Christianity in Namibia on behalf of the Swapo torturers. His former associate general secretary, Vezera Kandetu, contributes a brief essay to *CALIN* on 'The Work of the Council of Churches in Namibia' in which there is no word on the grimmer side to the work of the CCN, or on the character or conduct of his immediate superior, Dr Shejavali. With the coming of independence in March 1990, Kandetu ascended unto government as assistant to the new deputy minister of Information and Broadcasting, Daniel Tjongarero, also late of the CCN. So it goes.

Pilate in Africa

Two episodes irreparably stain the record of the CCN, which courageously offered assistance to the huge numbers of victims of the South African regime. The first was the murder of a former director of the Christian Centre in Windhoek, the predecessor of the CCN, about which church leaders and the CCN kept silent. As reported in *Searchlight South Africa* No 6, the director of the Christian Centre in the 1970s, Tauno Hatuikulipi, was murdered in Angola, apparently in January 1984, on orders of fellow members of the Swapo central committee. After arrest, trial and constant harassment by the South African regime in Namibia, Hatuikulipi had escaped to join the Swapo political and military leadership in Angola, but clashed with the security apparatus when it set out to express its dominance over the military.

A report by the Committee of Parents — formed in 1985 to attempt to defend Swapo's victims in exile — noted that Hatuikulipi's wife, Magdalena, who had remained in Windhoek, was

kept in the dark by the internal leadership about the fate of her husband. In May, 1984, she was still cheering the Swapo delegation, which left for the [Lusaka] Conference [at which delegates from Namibia learnt at first hand for the first time of the terrors abroad]. A few weeks later a friend informed her about her husband's murder. She confronted the internal leadership who admitted that he was dead but they claimed that he had committed suicide. She is left with five children.⁴

Neither the CCN nor the churches protested the murder of Hatuikulipi, their own former top-level representative, and direct predecessor to

Shejvali. The Committee of Parents described the reaction that followed inside Namibia, as delegates to the Lusaka conference brought back accounts of the atrocities abroad.

Parents went up in arms. They chose the most logical thing to do under the circumstances. They went to the church leadership to affect at least moral intervention into the maltreatment of their children...

But the expectations turned out a painful nonetheless revealing experience. They found that in exercising their trust in the institutions which for generations they had considered their friends, they had instead created violent enemies. Priest and pastor slandered them, called them agents and destroyers and accused them of spreading malicious rumour. (ibid)

After keeping their campaign out of public scrutiny for a year and a half — ‘to give the spiritual leaders and their supporters the chance to mitigate the Swapo tragedy’ — the disillusioned relatives set up the Committee of Parents in Windhoek in March 1985 to campaign directly on their own behalf. This led to the second specific instance of clerical connivance with the Swapo torture machine: the dismissal from the CCN of two active members of the Committee of Parents, under the ever-beneficent hand of Dr Shejvali.

From the Churches to the Parents

At the beginning of 1985, Erica Beukes, an activist in the Swapo Youth League during its most militant period in the mid-1970s, worked for the CCN in Windhoek as head of the health section in its development department. Her brother, Walter Thiro, one of Swapo’s prison victims, died painfully in a Swapo labour camp at Kwanza Sul in southern Angola. On hearing of her brother’s imprisonment, Erica approached the local priest, Pastor Nakamela, for assistance. He in turn consulted Rev Kameeta. Rather than take up this matter, despite his position as one of the leading churchmen in Namibia, Kameeta referred the petitioners to Nico Bessenger, Swapo’s foreign relations secretary: a truly Pilate-like referral to Caesar.

Having no confidence in Bessenger, Erica Beukes arranged to see the most respected of all Swapo leaders, Andimba Toivo ya Toivo, who had himself been tortured by the South African police and imprisoned on Robben Island for 16 years. She met Toivo in August 1984 and

expressed her concern on behalf of her family for the safety of her brother. She told him that they had received information that he was languishing in jail in Angola, and she expressed grave criticism of the leadership of Swapo. He thanked her for the trust the family had shown to approach him on so grave a charge. But, he pointed out that the South African regime had launched a concerted propaganda campaign against Swapo to discredit the movement...He could not promise to free

her brother, but would investigate the matter and report back. He did not return.

It was after meeting ya Toivo, and still feeling relatively reassured, that Erica Beukes and her immediate superior in the CCN, the director of its development department, Attie Beukes (no relation to Erica), toured Europe in February 1985 to raise funds for the work of the CCN. They met church leaders and supporters of the struggle against the South African regime who gave them disquieting news of the purges in Angola and Zambia. Namibian refugees gave them copies of letters to church leaders and pleaded with them to do something when they returned to Namibia.

Some requested them to again try to move the church leadership to action. Others were sceptical, reasoning that they were fully informed about the reign of terror unleashed by the Swapo leadership. The latter turned out to be right. (ibid)

On 21 March, the same day that they returned to Namibia, Attie Beukes, Erica and Erica's sister Bertha Yon met with Bishop Frederik to press for action. Attie and Erica approached him both as individuals and as officials of the CCN, on whose behalf they had travelled to Europe. They later met Pastor Kristof Shuya, general secretary of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of South West Africa (VELKSWA). Attie Beukes also informed Bishop Bonifatius Haushiku, head of the Roman Catholic Church in Namibia, and then reported to Dr Shejvali, his immediate superior in the CCN. Mr Beukes 'stressed the urgency for the church leadership to convene a meeting to plan action. But, no-one would commit himself to such a course of action'. (ibid) The response of the Namibian activists to this dereliction by the churches was to set up the Committee of Parents.

The Church Militant

On 2 June the Committee of Parents delivered a memorandum to the church leadership: it received no reply. A month later, a delegation from the Committee met with Bishop James Kauluma, head of the Anglican Church in Namibia, in an attempt to get action on the proposed meeting. The bishop's response was forthright. He was incredulous at

the insolence of the committee to level charges at a respected leadership. He refused to take part in further discussion about the topic. He suggested that the committee should take up the matter with the Swapo leadership, because it had nothing to do with the church leadership. He charged that the women reacted without factual information, but he refused to read the letters offered to him by the delegation. (ibid)

The Committee, represented by 24 delegates, finally met with the church leaders on 9 September, almost six months after the first approach to Bishop

Frederik. The churches were represented by Bishop Frederik (ELK), Dr Shejvali (CCN), Bishop Dumeni (ELOK, now called ELCIN), Pastor Matti Amadhila (assistant to Dumeni in ELOK), Bishop Haushiku (RCC), Father Nordkamp (RCC) and Pastor Prinz (Methodist Church). The Committee made a full report and Bishop Hendrik showed he was aware of the testimony of Pastor Gröth, but the meeting closed without any definite commitment from the church leaders. A bland and meaningless letter followed from Dr Shejvali on 19 September, thanking the parents for the meeting and concluding: 'May God bless you all'.

That September, Attie Beukes went to Geneva as director of the development department of the CCN for a conference with donor agencies. In Europe, he met some of the support groups and Namibian refugees, and returned home with further information about the purge victims. He also met Father Gröth, who was unwilling for the information in his files to be made public.⁶ Coinciding with Beukes's visit, the Committee sent letters to support groups of Swapo in Europe (the Namibia Support Committee, the Namibia Association), to church bodies (World Council of Churches, Lutheran World Federation, British Council of Churches, Vereinigte Evangelische Mission, Swedish Free Church, United Church of Canada), to the UN secretary general, to the Swapo president (Nujoma) and to the presidents of Cuba, Angola and Zambia: the countries most directly in authority in the zones where Swapo held its prison camps. Evasive replies were received from the church bodies and silence from the UN secretary general, on behalf of the world authority that had recognised Swapo as 'sole and authentic representative' of the people of Namibia.

Matters came to a head in the early months of 1986. The Committee decided to send a delegation to the UN secretary general, Javier Perez de Quellar, to be led by Stella-Maria Boois (whose son Ben Boois was a Swapo prisoner) and Erica Beukes. They asked the VEM in Germany — Gröth's mission — for financial help with travel expenses, but were refused, apparently at the urging of Namibian church leaders. As a result, the delegation was unable to set off.

Then on 16 February 1986, the Swapo leaders Theo-Ben Gurirab (foreign relations secretary, now Minister for Foreign Affairs) and Hidipo Hamutenya (secretary for information, now Minister for Information and Broadcasting), issued a statement at a press conference in London declaring that Swapo was holding as prisoners at least 100 members who were South African government spies. It declared that the spy network had first been detected in December 1983, and had penetrated both political and military wings of the movement abroad. Gurirab made it clear that the statement was a response to reports circulating in Namibia and Europe that Swapo was involved in 'fascist' activities against Namibian refugees. (*CTS*, p 48).⁷ Alleged confessions on video tape accompanied the press conference.

On 13 March 1986, less than a month after Swapo had admitted that it was holding many prisoners — in fact many more than a hundred — Attie Beukes and Erica Beukes received a firm response from the collective guardian of

the Christian soul in Namibia, the CCN. They were informed by Dr Shejavali that they had been dismissed from their jobs, with immediate effect. The letter to Erica Beukes stated:

The decision to terminate your employment with the Council of Churches in Namibia was reached only after careful consideration of your leading role in the 'committee of parents' and the various statements issued and published on behalf of that committee 'care of the Council of Churches in Namibia'.

This Council is most perturbed about the way you have chosen to represent the serious allegations made by that committee. It regards the attack on the credibility of 'local pastors and priests' in a very serious light, unwarranted and uncalled for. The statements issued on behalf of that committee, coming, as it is, from an employee of the Council of Churches in Namibia, contains very serious allegations, inter alia, in regard to the role of the Churches and it's [sic] commitment to upholding basic human rights...

It is in these circumstances that the Council had no choice but to terminate your employment.⁸

The decision was confirmed by the executive committee of the CCN, meeting on 17 March. In a letter from the legal firm of Lorentz and Bone of 18 March, Attie Beukes was ordered to hand over the keys of his office as well as all documents and correspondence, 'against the background of recent developments which have brought about serious tension between you and other senior office bearers' of the CCN.⁹

Attie Beukes and Erica Beukes refused to comply with these instructions, until the CCN obtained a legal injunction issued by the South African appointed court. Soon afterwards, Oxfam in Britain summarily stopped funds to a teaching project (the Science and Mathematics Programme) in Katutura township in Windhoek with which Erica Beukes was connected. The project was then evicted from its teaching premises, which were taken over by the CCN.

The worthy Kandetu, writing in *CALIN* on the work of the CCN (his then employer, prior to the Swapo government), says not a word about this sordid affair. The omission is characteristic of the book as a whole. Kandetu does, however, blandly report that the 'Faith, Justice and Society Cluster' of the CCN serves to provide advice and information to the Namibian people 'on their rights, privileges and responsibilities before the law'. (p 210)

From the Bible to the Witch-Hunt

Two months after the sacking of Attie Beukes and Erica Beukes, leaflets were circulated in the townships of Windhoek, written in Afrikaans and headed 'Verraiers van Suid Afrika in Swapo Geledere' ('South African Traitors in the Swapo Membership'). In tone reminiscent of Germany in the 1930s, the leaflet concluded with the slogan: 'Swapo is die Volk...Die Volk is Swapo'.

The leaflet was issued by Swapo as a direct threat to leading members of the Committee of Parents ('Ouerskomitee'), seven of whom — including Erica Beukes, her husband Hewat, Attie Beukes and Stella-Maria Boois — were listed by name as among a 'whole group of traitors that South Africa has apparently planted within the leadership corps and activists of Swapo, both within Namibia and abroad'. (translated) Suspicions were voiced going back to 1977. These 'puppets or spies of South Africa' were accused of having given information to their 'bosses', resulting in South African military attacks and massacres at Swapo camps in Angola such as Cassinga and 'Vietnam'. Many of these spies, it stated, had already been caught and were being 'held under the supervision of Swapo' ('aangehou onder die toesig van Swapo'). The Committee of Parents was accused of having sent letters and telegrams to world leaders stating that Swapo had arrested their children without justification and that women were mistreated in Swapo camps.

A direct and very menacing attack was made on Stella-Maria Boois: 'she herself and her son [held by Swapo in its pits in Angola] are South African spies'. The leaflet incited the instincts of the lynch mob with a further chilling call:

Irrespective of whether they are friends, relatives or mere compatriots
— STAY AWAY FROM SOUTH AFRICA'S POISON!

Weg met Maria Boois! (Away with Maria Boois!)

Weg met Stella Gaes!

Weg met Talitha Smith!

Weg met Attie Beukes!

Weg met Hewat Beukes!

Weg met Erica Beukes!

Weg met Paul Vleermuis!¹⁰

Three months later, on 31 August 1986, the house of Erica and Hewat Beukes was mysteriously fire-bombed and gutted. Fortunately, neither they nor their children were injured.

None of this history relating to the CCN and its victims appears in *CALIN*. One would be entitled to wonder whether this terroristic Swapo leaflet was itself not the work of the dirty tricks department of the South African military occupation forces, if identical sentiments had not been expressed a year later in a letter published in the *Windhoek Observer* on 30 May 1987 by a leading Swapo member, the advocate Anton Lubowski (assassinated in Windhoek in 1989). There Lubowski dismissed allegations of the kind put forward by the Committee of Parents as 'false propaganda that is being spread by puppets, collaborators and spies'. The holding of Swapo's alleged one hundred 'spies, collaborators and puppets' (i.e., people identical to the members of the Committee of Parents) was vigorously defended, in the firm expectation that 'we will be catching even more in the not too distant future'. Lubowski concluded his letter, addressed to Erica Beukes, by accusing her of being a 'person who has committed the worst crime against the freedom

of your countrymen imaginable'. (CTS, pp 71–72) It is hard to penetrate the psychopathology of such sentiments, in which the authentic tone of the Swapo spy drama is expressed.

The Sanctification of Torture

In the same month that Lubowski's menacing letter was published in the *Windhoek Observer*, the nationalist movements of southern Africa, including Swapo, met in what the World Council of Churches describes as an 'historic dialogue' with international church leaders in Lusaka, Zambia. (CALIN, p 199) The meeting culminated in the 'Lusaka Statement' which inter alia expressed recognition of Swapo by the WCC as 'sole and authentic representative of the people of Namibia', the formulation adopted by the United Nations. In its own words, the 'WCC adopted the Lusaka Statement as its own'.¹¹

For all practical purposes, the standpoint of the churches was that of Advocate Lubowski and the authors of the Swapo leaflet distributed in Windhoek in May 1986. Despite the mass of evidence about Swapo's purges — which now included a book, including 92 pages of documents, some from Pastor Gröth, published in Namibia in 1986 by Erica and Hewat Beukes and Attie Beukes, called *Namibia, A Struggle Betrayed* — the Africa Secretary of the British Council of Churches, the Rev Brian Brown, made submission to a hearing of the WCC in Washington DC on 3 May 1988 that 'both church and Swapo are people's movements...partners in opposition to the South African occupation'. It was not true to say that 'the church is Swapo and Swapo is the church'; a more accurate description was that 'the "people" are Swapo and the "people" are the church'. Nicely, he declared that the churches 'endorse Swapo's purposes, if not all of its methods'. The Christian churches, in Brown's words, had 'become an integral and important part of Swapo'. (CALIN, pp 188–90) With these semi-totalitarian semantics, the men of God sprinkled incense on the torture pit. Without any hint of qualification relating to Swapo's own admission that it held large numbers of members as prisoners, despite the testimony of Gröth and the appeals of the Committee of Parents, the WCC reported formally in tones worthy of a stalinist regime. It stated that

The illegal occupation of Namibia has been facilitated by Namibians who have collaborated with South Africa and have been traitors to the cause of a free Namibia. Yet Swapo is willing to accommodate these people in a free Namibia and forgive their misguided behaviour. (CALIN, p 202)

Not only did the churches uncritically promote this Orwellian Newspeak, the editors and publishers of CALIN more than a year later were content to reprint this kind of language without comment. The WCC was recommended by its Washington hearings to call upon the governments of the world to 'provide all necessary forms of support to Swapo...' (p 203) This enthusiastic

endorsement of Swapo followed a visit to Swapo's camps in Angola in December 1987 by one of the WCC's sister organizations, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), based like the WCC in Geneva. As Gröth reported in 1989 after the release of Swapo's detainees, the visit followed a 'very painful discussion' within member churches of the LWF in response to the appeals of the Committee of Parents in Namibia. While in Geneva, the Swapo president, Nujoma, invited the LWF to send a fact finding delegation to Angola to investigate the charges of human rights abuses.

After months of preparation, a six person delegation spent five days in Angola and reported on 29 March 1988. The visit was a fiasco. The churchmen were predictably shown merely what Swapo wished them to see and were not allowed access to the prisoners themselves. Their report was circumspect, stressing that because of lack of time and preparation the delegation could not satisfactorily complete the task with which it had been entrusted. This did not prevent the LWF secretary general Gunnar Staalsett, from declaring a month later in the bulletin *Lutherische Welt-Information* (No 14/88 of 14 April 1988) that allegations of human rights abuses in the Swapo settlements were unfounded and that the work of the Committee of Parents was 'part of the ongoing South African propaganda war aimed at discrediting the liberation movement'. Staalsett's bizarre act of disinformation appeared in the bulletin under the heading: 'Angola: No indication of Swapo violations', expressing a very different emphasis from the one actually recorded by the delegates. (Gröth in *CTS*, pp 35-36)

A second CWS delegation led by Staalsett had met Swapo representatives in Angola only the month before, among them the Catholic Bishop Haushiku and Pastor Shuya of VELKSWA, both of whom had been briefed by Attie Beukes as far back as March 1985. The LWF's visits turned the authority of the churches even more terribly against the detainees. This is how, in the late twentieth century, on the eve of the collapse of the regimes of eastern Europe, world public opinion was manipulated and managed on the issue of Namibia.

A Guilty Secret

There is a passage in *CALIN* which directly connives at sanctification of the Swapo prison system. It appears in a summary of reports from a delegation of Namibian churchmen to political and church leaders in ten countries of western Europe (including the Vatican) and the United States, presented at an evaluation meeting in Frankfurt, Germany, on 4-5 December 1986. The visits of the delegation had taken place over the previous ten days. Coming after the work of Attie Beukes and Erica Beukes for the CCN in western Europe in 1985, the Swapo statement about holding 100 'spies' of February 1986 and the sacking of Attie Beukes and Erica Beukes in March 1986, this interconfessional mission was characterized by explicit bad faith. The delegation met top government and church leaders, and functioned unashamedly as a fund raiser for Swapo. Under the hymnal rubric 'We are Slaves of Hope', the delegates in their report record their concern with Mammon. Different

types of support were welcomed by the Namibians 'as long as it was channelled through the churches, the Council of Churches in Namibia, or the South West Africa People's Organization (Swapo)'. They reported that Sweden had 'promised a substantial raise in its financial support to Swapo'. (pp 185–86)

In London, the Namibian delegation attended an ecumenical meeting at Bloomsbury Baptist Church, at which there was 'evidence of good knowledge of the Namibian situation' among the church-related action groups, and at which solidarity was expressed with Swapo. Yet the question of Swapo's prisons, so far from Bloomsbury, was posed to this cosy gathering. The delegation reported evasively:

Outside, the church members of the International Society for Human Rights held a protest at the delegation's visit and the presence of Swapo representatives. Delegation considered this protest to be inspired by South Africa to defame Swapo and the churches... (p 172)

The focus of the ISHR protest, omitted by the church leaders in their laundered report, was the purges in Swapo and the fate of its prison victims. It is not necessary to endorse the political perspective of the ISHR to acknowledge that its reportage on the detainee issue in Swapo has been factual. As in the sacking of Attie Beukes and Erica Beukes, the Namibian Christian leaders in their report chose to mask a system of gross abuses by defaming those who reported it.¹²

In reproducing the report of the Namibian church delegation, the editors of *CALIN* connived with the churches by failing to explain the context of the protest by the ISHR at Bloomsbury, despite having published a number of footnotes to elucidate the document. The uninformed reader is not permitted to grasp the context of the protest by the ISHR or the issue at stake, while those in the know are strengthened in their effort to conceal the truth. A dishonest piece of mis-reportage is made worse by editorial complicity.

Today there are signs that the churches have gently begun to wean themselves from their previous uncritical embrace of Swapo, and a tiny trickle of funds has gone to projects aimed at helping Swapo's former torture victims. (letter from Erica Beukes, April 1991) The Rev Brian Brown is no longer with the British Council of Churches. But the murky past remains well shrouded, especially through books such as *CALIN*. All this is in sharp contrast to the work of Rev Salatiel Ailonga, the only cleric to come out of this episode — including even Gröth — with his humanity and his honour fully unimpaired.

A Witness to Humanity

Ailonga was a Namibian refugee, based in Zambia, the first clergyman to go into exile. At the beginning of the Swapo spy mania in the mid-1970s he was compelled to flee to Finland after he drew attention to Swapo's crimes against

its own members. As could be expected, Ailonga is a non-person to the editors of *CALIN*. His name does not appear at all.

Writing from Finland on May 24 1977, Ailonga took advantage of the fact that his bishop, Leonard Auala, was in Dar es Salaam attending a meeting of the Lutheran World Federation. (Auala was the predecessor to Bishop Dumeni, with whom Pastor Gröth and the Committee of Parents pleaded in vain for assistance in 1985). While Bishop Auala was in Dar-es-Salaam the government of Tanzania was holding eleven former leaders of Swapo in prison without trial or the benefit of habeas corpus, at the behest of the Swapo leadership and the government of Zambia. Those in prison – critical of corruption in high places in Swapo, its lack of democracy and the participation of Swapo armed forces in the war in Angola alongside the South African army – had been arrested in Zambia in April 1976 along with over a thousand trained fighters and members of the Swapo Youth League, and threatened with mass executions by the Swapo president, Nujoma.¹³

Giving details about torture and shootings at the Zambian army's concentration camp at Mboroma, Ailonga appealed to Bishop Auala to visit the detainees, among whom were several well-known members of his church. Auala, who died in 1982, had made a bold stand along with Moderator Paul Gowaseb of the ELK in a major document of resistance to the South African regime of 30 June 1971. Read aloud in every black Lutheran assembly the following Sunday, the statement – written by students at the Lutheran seminary at Otjimbingwe, endorsed by the boards of ELOK and ELK and signed by Auala and Gowaseb – stated that the South African regime in Namibia had 'failed to take cognizance of Human Rights', that black people in Namibia were continuously being 'slighted and intimidated in their daily lives' and were not free.¹⁴

The slighting and intimidation of Swapo's exile members by its leaders, and the unfreedom of Swapo's internal critics in the prisons of Tanzania, failed to register with Auala and his delegation. He did not respond to Ailonga's plea. It was left to the exiled Anglican bishop of Damaraland, Colin Winter, to administer to the spiritual needs of the eleven jailed dissident leaders. The church leaders preserved silence on their guilty knowledge. As Gröth reported in a memorandum written after the arrival back in Namibia of Swapo detainees in July 1989,

Very little of the Swapo conflict of 1976 was publicized. In the upper echelons of the Namibian churches, it was indeed never officially discussed. The Namibian churches' emerging solidarity with Swapo and its liberation struggle since the early seventies made them avoid discussion on the issue of violations of human rights by the exiled Swapo. (*CTS*, p 34)

Yet the question of publicizing the abuses of the 1980s was very problematic for Gröth himself.

The Passion of Pastor Gröth

Gröth's intervention, its conditions and limits posed a moral and theological dilemma to the German churches as sharp as any since Hitler's time: more specifically, to the Lutheran tradition, and in particular to the oppositional current brought together in 1934 as the Confessing Church (*die bekennende Kirche*). I am not here discussing the fall of such as Kameeta, Hendrik, Auala and Dumeni beneath the highest moment in the Lutheran tradition, and even beneath their own standpoint, expressed by Bishop Auala in his talk with the South African prime minister B J Vorster on 18 August 1971 as a 'burning thirst for human rights'. (quoted in 'Report' by Siegfried Gröth, *CTS*, p34)

The distinctiveness of cultural life in Namibia, especially compared with South Africa, consists very largely in its being drenched in religious consciousness, above all that of the Lutheran churches of northern Europe. Thus the seamless interweaving of politics and religion in Namibia, and between Namibian politics and northern European religion. Especially in the 1980s, the moral character of the Protestant churches of northern Europe — mainly German and Lutheran — was hammered on a Namibian anvil. The theological context of the questioning on Namibia was very well known in Germany, and thus to the pastors of the VEM (to which Gröth belongs), since its parameters were those of their own theological education. This German education centred largely on the teaching, influence, and life and death of Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, hanged by the SS in the concentration camp at Flossenburg on 9 April 1945.

It is not without significance that Bonhoeffer — gagged, banned, imprisoned and finally executed by the Nazis — acted at one time in the early 1930s as secretary to the Youth Commission of the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches, and of the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work, two early ecumenical organizations which led after World War II to the founding of the WCC. At the height of the war, as an emissary of the German resistance, Bonhoeffer delivered messages in Geneva to Visser t'Hooft, later the first General Secretary of the WCC. Through its relation to Bonhoeffer and also after the war to Pastor Martin Niemöller — imprisoned for eight years under Hitler — the WCC passed judgement on itself in the 1980s by its silence on the detainees in Swapo's pits. At the war's end, Niemöller became president of the Lutheran Evangelical Church's Office for Foreign Relations, and was present when the WCC was formed in Amsterdam in 1948. The WCC's response to Swapo in Angola calls to mind Niemöller's self-critique of his early response to the Nazi terror, the three words: 'I was silent'.

Gröth gave voice to this crisis of the German Christian conscience, which required him to be measured by its own standard. Through his breakdown and through his efforts to mediate through the churches, but also through his refusal to take the step of public opposition to the purges in Zambia and Angola, Gröth drew a line rejected by Bonhoeffer between a purely religious act and a worldly one. After an intensely bitter dispute between himself and

Attie Beukes in Germany in September/October 1985, over whether or not he should make his files public, Gröth preserved silence even after Attie Beukes and Erica Beukes were dismissed by the NCC in March 1986. His moral authority was thrown publicly on the side of Swapo's prison victims only after they were already released from the pits, and had returned to Namibia. Gröth's testimony was then published in Germany as *Menschenrechtsverletzungen in der Exil-Swapo*. (Human Rights Violations in Swapo in Exile) on 18 September 1989, and reproduced as Gröth's 'Report' in *CTS* (October 1989) There he states:

It was not possible for the Namibian churches to exercise any noteworthy influence on the issue of the violation of human rights. In the joint liberation struggle, the clerics responsible in Namibia relied on what the Swapo representatives told them.

This is contradicted by Gröth's own representations to those same churchmen, from 1985 to 1989. He continues:

It remains incomprehensible how the exiled Swapo succeeded in violating human rights for more than ten years...Swapo could arrest people or be responsible for their disappearance without it being seriously discussed at an international level, in the church, or in the ecumenical domain.

In Namibia itself, even in the churches, it was impossible to officially and publicly address the facts of the case concerning torture by Swapo. [Yet this was done by the Committee of Parents, and by the publication of *Namibia, A Struggle Betrayed* – PT]. Amongst international bodies, this topic was taboo. The international community, as well as the churches, were overcome with a lameness, a powerlessness, that is difficult to explain.

Gröth states that after the return of Swapo's prison victims, he had been confronted as pastor for Namibian refugees with the question: 'Why are you only making this public now? And what made you treat the violation of human rights by Swapo as a purely internal and confidential matter to the church?'. (*CTS*, p 39) His reply in his own defence, printed in *CTS*, is that firstly, he did not wish to 'create problems for the families in Namibia' with whom he was in contact; secondly, he 'did not want to speak out publicly' because in his view it was 'more important to negotiate on these difficult issues with the leaders concerned'; and thirdly, that he was afraid that what he had to say would be 'abused for propaganda purposes, that the South African propagandists would get hold of it', even in Germany. (*ibid*)

Taken in themselves, these are reasonable criteria, but unsatisfying. Effectively the churches in Namibia, the WCC, the British Council of Churches and the VEM, with Gröth as its crucial representative, were *non*-confessing religious bodies. In Bonhoeffer's terms, they preferred the 'cheap grace' of conventional left-nationalist liberation theology to the 'costly grace' of active

commitment to their own professed principles. Gröth's powerlessness stemmed from his self-confinement to the 'inwardness' that Bonhoeffer found inadequate in his prison letter of 30 April 1940), by contrast with Bonhoeffer's conception (following Hegel on the social nature of humanity) of the need for outward action and relationship with others. Gröth's Gethsemane, his theology of the cross, found its suffering figure in the torture pits at Lubango. Bonhoeffer had argued that the Christian was called on to participate in the 'suffering of God in the life of the world'. (letter of 18 July 1944, in Bonhoeffer, p13) In the last resort, Gröth retired into religion and left the worldly defence of humanity – and the calumny – to others.

First and Last Word

In the exceptionally difficult campaign to reveal the truth about Swapo's purges and to rescue the victims, the most courageous individuals were the small group in Namibia around Erica Beukes, Attie Beukes and Stella-Maria Boois. The last word on the complicity of the churches, continued in *CALIN*, belongs to Ailonga. He has the place of honour because of his humanity and his prescience and because his was also practically the first word to be raised on behalf of the victims. He was fearful, he wrote to Auala, that all the thousand members of Swapo then still held in detention in Zambia in May 1977

may be lost within a short time and never return to Namibia. But there are thousands of families, friends and relatives of these people, and their voice will be demanding an explanation. What will the answer of the church be?...If you as leaders of the church in Namibia will fail to go with love into this question in Swapo, which is a small group, how will you be able to cope with problems which will arise on a much larger basis within a free Namibia, be it under the leadership of Swapo or someone else? (*CTS*, p 40)

In the following years, until the detainees crept from their dungeons in May 1989 like the prison wraiths in *Fidelio*, the churches in Namibia and internationally gave their answer. It is one of the scandals of the twentieth century. Swapo's prison system, preserved from investigation by complicity of the churches, will be endured in its effects for many years in the social life of southern Africa and in the personal lives of its victims. The volume under review is the product of a shameful history.

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1. Dr Abisai Shejavali, General Secretary of the Council of Churches in Namibia, in a letter on the subject of Swapo's detainees to Mr Koshy, 23 December 1985. *Call Them Spies (CTS)*, p 47] *CTS* was published in October 1989 by Motinga, an ex-Swapo detainee and former commander in Swapo's military forces, and Basson, a former senior officer in the South African

Defence Force. It is probable that Basson's connections with the South African Defence Force made publication possible. It is exclusively a book of documents.

2. In CALIN, p 202.

3. Letter to Reverend Paul Isaak in Chicago, 8 July 1985. CTS, p 42. Isaak's brother Sam had been detained by Swapo.

4. Report by Committee of Parents, April 1987. In CTS, p 63.

5. Ibid, p 64.

6. The manner in which this became available to Beukes awaits its own telling.

7. Deputy to Hamutenya in the new ministry of information and broadcasting is Tjongarero, formerly director of the communications department of the CCN, assisted by Kandetu, former associate general secretary of the CCN and author of the brief essay on the CCN in CALIN. In Namibia, saintliness is the surest road to power and place. The spokesperson for labour camps is assisted by public relations officers for the Almighty.

8. Photocopy of letter in possession of author.

9. Photocopy of letter in possession of author.

9. Leaflet in possession of author.

10. Report of the World Council of Churches, Washington Hearings on Namibia, 2-4 May, 1988. In CALIN, p 199.

11. For a detailed history of the Swapo spy-drama of 1976 see Trewhela (1990-91).

12. Because of the standpoint of the ISHR on Mozambique, Angola and Nicaragua, Erica Beukes and Attie Beukes later worked separately, still under the name of the Committee of Parents. Those like Stella-Maria Boois worked under the name of the Parents Committee.

13. For a detailed history of the Swapo spy-drama of 1976 see Trewhela (1990-91).

14. In Herbstein and Evenson, p 54.

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Paul Trehwela (1990/91), 'The Kissinger/Vorster/Kaunda Detente: Genesis of the Swapo "Spy-Drama", Parts I and II), *Searchlight South Africa*, Nos 5 and 6.

DOCUMENTS

Document 1

Letter from Reverend Salatiel Ailonga, a Namibian pastor, then a refugee in Finland after having fled from Swapo in Zambia, to Bishop Leonard Auala of the Evangelical Lutheran Owambo-Kavango Church (ELOK), 24 May 1977. Auala was the senior figure in Ailonga's church. He was then attending a conference of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, at the head of a Namibian church delegation. The letter refers to Swapo's suppression in 1976 of resistance to its collaboration with the South African army in the war in Angola. For the background, see Paul Trehwela, (1990-91).

Dear Bishop Auala,

As you know, since 1976 there was a conflict among the Namibians in Zambia. This led to many leading members in Swapo and my Chaplaincy being imprisoned on the request of Swapo's leadership. First, eleven leading members of the Party and Youth League, then forty-eight from the front, talking on behalf of the soldiers, and later on over one thousand Namibians disappeared. In the wake of this I had to leave Zambia and since June 1976 I have been staying in Finland.

Now you have the opportunity of being in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, where eleven of the imprisoned are being held. They are said to be in the following places:

Immanuel Engombe, Zakaria Shikomba, Andreas Nuukuawo and Martin Taaneni, who at the present is seriously ill, are in Keko Women's Prison, Dar.

Filemon Moongo and Johannes (Jimmy) Ampala in Mtwara Prison (?), Keshii Pelao Nathanael, Ruben Shangula, Tabora Prison (?), Andreas Shipanga and Salomon Mifima, Isanga Prison, Dodoma.

I request for you to look for a possible way to see these people, because some of them are said to be seriously ill. It is a good luck for you that Zambia is close to Tanzania and it would be well if you would try to go there to see the people in Buloma [Mboroma - PT] camp North of Lusaka, who are reported to be dying because of lack of food and medicine.

According to the proofs and my knowledge, this is not a purely political case or internal Swapo affair. It is a case concerning the wellbeing of the Namibians and their human rights, which touches the church and its responsibility to a great extent. The imprisoned in Tanzania and Zambia are members of all churches, including Lutherans, Anglicans and Roman Catholics.

The reason for the imprisonment is not yet known to the world, and there is no legal ground to hold people without trial. This needs to be said with all seriousness even at the present meeting [of the LWF in Dar-es-Salaam - PT], looking for the justice and dignity and liberation of the human being as a whole. If there should be any fault or crime, not all the thousand could be held responsible. There is a reliable report that at Buloma camp in August last year many people were shot at, many were wounded and some died, among them Frans Manguwala and Naftali Lilya.

In matters like these, which may have the most serious effect for the future, the church should not be silent. All these thousand may be lost within a short time and never return to Namibia. But there are thousand of families, friends and relatives of these people, and their voice will be demanding an explanation. What will the answer of the church be? I would say that in every leadership, church or state, the leaders have to be led and shown the truth without fear or partiality. That shows not enmity, but love for the leaders you correct, because you care about what he is doing. If you as leaders of the church in Namibia will fail to go with love into the question in Swapo, which is a small group, how will you be able to cope with problems which will arise on a much larger basis within a free Namibia, be it under the leadership of Swapo or someone else?

I request you in all humility to take this matter seriously and prevent more vain bloodshed.

I attach some proofs of personal statements and written letters to support the information above, showing the very serious state of many Namibians outside our country.

(signed) *Salatiel Ailonga*

Copies:

Dr Lukas de Vries, Pres ELC,

Rev Albetus Maasdorp, Assist. Secr. Gen., LWF,

Prof Mikko Juva, Chairman LWF.

(printed in CTS, p.40. First published in *Namibia, A Struggle Betrayed*, 1986. Also in *Swapo. The 1976 Anti-Corruption Rebellion*, Windhoek, 1987, a pamphlet issued by the 'Independent Group' and edited by Hewat Beukes. De Vries later joined the pro-South African interim government as a deputy minister. Juva and Maasdorp were leading world officials of the LWF. The *Times of Namibia* reported accurately on 6 October 1989 that Namibia's 'most prominent and well respected churchmen' had been well informed about the plight of Swapo detainees abroad since 1977 but had 'failed to inform the nation of this tragedy and preferred to remain silent'. It is plain from this letter that the same applies to the LWF).

Document 2

Letter from Rev Siegfried Gröth in Germany to Rev Paul Isaak in Chicago, 8 July 1985, informing Isaak of the imprisonment in Angola of his brother Samuel Isaak, a Swapo member.

Dear Brother,

After such a long delay I am now able to write to you. In the meantime I hope you have received the letter of Mrs Sohn, my secretary, made at May 18, 1985. The reason of my long silence is a very serious illness. After my three weeks' stay in Zambia among the Namibian refugees I had a break-down in Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe. In the middle of May I returned to Germany, accompanied by my wife who came to Zimbabwe to my support. But here again I had to go to a hospital for further treatment. Since last week I started slowly my work in the office.

First of all I have to say to you: This was the most difficult trip to Africa for me since more than twenty years. I arrived in Lusaka on March 19 and made immediately the experience that there was a very dangerous situation among the Namibians in Exile. I was confronted with an atmosphere of fear and mistrust, hopelessness and despair. Some of my good friends and brothers in Christ I could not find, among them your brother and Thomas. As far as I know, a lot of SWAPO-members disappeared and were brought from Zambia to Angola. As I heard in a lot of confidential talks with old friends among Swapo, these brothers are accused to be spies of South Africa. They must be in detention after internal SWAPO-trials.

On March 4 hundred of SWAPO-members were invited by SWAPO-leaders to the Namibia Institute of the United Nations in Lusaka [in a report written after the return of the prison victims to Namibia, Gröth gives the number of people present on this grisly occasion as 'more than 400', CTS, p34]. From the afternoon up to one o'clock in midnight the invited people had to watch video tapes which were shown to them. On these tapes Namibians were confessing about South African actions among SWAPO people in Zambia and Angola. According to the confessing Namibians they were recruited as spies for South Africa. Two key-persons in this trial were Samuel Thomas and Benny Boois. Boois and Sam and maybe others were confessing that a lot of SWAPO-members became spies for South Africa. Among the names which were mentioned is your brother. As I heard from close friends who are still SWAPO-members he had to go from Zambia to Angola and is now detained. This happened after the video-tape was shown in the time between March 12 and 20, according to the information of a close friend to me.

Dear Brother, when I got these informations during my stay in Lusaka it was a shock for me which I shall never forget. I could not believe what I heard again and again from my brothers in Christ and good friends. As you know your brother is a very close friend to me since years and we had all the years when we met in Lusaka a spiritual fellowship and became more and more brothers in Christ and close friends. We had a relationship and friendship of trust and brotherhood. And, as you know, I'm close to your family, to you, and I remember with great thankfulness your father who was one of the first pastors of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia. I am personally convinced that your brother is not a South African spy. All the years when we met I made the experience that he was a loyal member of SWAPO. Therefore he left his family and his country years ago and therefore he was willing to accept the difficulties and sufferings of a life in exile. He was very much concerned to make his studies in order to be a responsible member of a new and free Namibia in future. And Sam was also a responsible and committed Christian who was willing to suffer as a disciple of his Lord. And finally he was concerned about his family in Namibia. These three loyalties were important for your brother Sam and my friend. I'm saying this as the pastor and shepherd of Sam with whom I had a close relationship by faith and friendship.

I was asked by responsible Christians and SWAPO-members in Zambia to contact representatives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia. I was asked by them to inform brothers of the Namibian churches so that they know about the critical situation of the Namibians in Exile. Our brothers in Zambia are convinced that there is such a great crisis in Zambia and Angola among SWAPO that churches in Namibia have to give their support and advice. Otherwise it could get worse and worse for the Namibians in Exile. This cry for help from Namibian churches came to me as a pastor who is asked by Namibian churches to take spiritual care among the Namibians in Exile in Zambia.

On May 15 I had a confidential talk with Rev. Zephaniah Kameeta in my house in Wuppertal. I returned from Africa on May 13 and had the chance to discuss this serious issue with Brother Kameeta. I informed him about the emergency situation in Zambia and Angola and mentioned the names of my friends and brothers who are in such a dangerous situation. I also mentioned names of your brother and Samuel Thomas. I told Brother Kameeta that responsible Christians and SWAPO-members are appealing to the churches for their support and help. I hope very much that Brother Kameeta as Vice-president of ELC will do his best and I trust in him. I also had confidential talks with Pastor Hendrik Frederik, the Presses of the ELC on June 14 in my house. I informed him as the President of the Church about these dangerous developments and the needs of friends and brothers in Zambia and Angola. And the consequence of the experience in Zambia was my break-down in Harare some days later. But I'm also convinced that our Lord Jesus Christ is our only Saviour and Good Shepherd. Since my visit in Zambia I'm praying daily for my brothers and sisters in Angola and Zambia who are suffering and have to go through the valleys of despair and darkness. I don't know what exactly is happening with Sam and the others in Angola. The Lord knows and he is taking care of them. This is my conviction. All the years that Sam and myself were listening to the Good News that Jesus Christ is our only Saviour and good shepherd. And I am convinced that the Lord is also the good Shepherd of your brother who is in such a difficult and dangerous situation.

I'm writing this with great sorrow as somebody who is also suffering because of the situation in Angola and Zambia among our friends there. May our Lord give you strength and hope! Let us pray to him that he will save your brother and my friend and the others! And let us pray for your mother and your whole family! In my daily prayers I am very much with all of you.

This is a very personal and confidential letter to you. Your family and other families are affected by these events. But also the churches in Namibia are affected and have to take care of those who are struggling for survival, hope and faith.

I would be very grateful if you could respond as quickly as possible to my letter. I'm waiting for your reply. And if I get any new information I shall write to you as soon as possible.

I would like to greet you very heartily with the word of Our Lord Jesus Christ which has strengthened and encouraged me during the last weeks: 'I will not leave you alone; I will come back to you'. (John, 14,18)

Your brother in Christ,

(signed) *Siegfried Gröth.*

(printed in CTS, p42. Samuel Thomas is the brother-in-law of Swapo's vice-president, the Rev Hendrik Witbooi. Such an illustrious relative by marriage did not save him from the purge. He returned to Namibia from Swapo's underground prisons on 4 July 1989, along with the bulk of his fellow victims).

LETTER FROM JOHANNESBURG

Braam Fleish

I've been stimulated to write by a series of conversations I've been having with my new housemate, Mzwee. It's strange spending time with an ex-guerilla who has as many names as the countries he's lived in. Mzwee returned in December after a ten year exile in Angola, Zambia, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Soviet Union and Cuba. By the time he returned he had risen to the rank of political commissar in the SACP and ANC, although he, like so many of his comrades, is deeply disillusioned. Actually its not so much disillusionment as disorientation. Their rigorous training in Marxism-Leninism was unreflective and anachronistic. Ironically I think there has never been a time in South African history where a good class analysis is needed. But the pat narratives, the types of didactic debates that the movement in exile spend many hours agonizing over are of little value in the current context. This leaves many with a feeling of perplexity. For others its easiest to collapse into the world of technical questions. For many, these *are* the questions.

Mzwee moved in when Mark, my former housemate from NY moved out. He didn't just move out, he's off to West Africa, actually the Ouagadougou Film Festival in Burkina Faso. There's a large contingent of South African film makers going up to the festival this year, I guess for the first time in the history of the festival. From what he told me, its the most important bi-annual cultural event in Africa and the main source of foreign revenue for Bukino Faso.

Back to Mzwee. There are so many ironies in the 'new South Africa'. This phrase has such an incredibly complex set of meanings, it's used in so many different ways, by so many different people, it's hard to untangle it. I guess in some way, this whole letter is about coming to terms with, getting hold of, trying to break through, the strange taken-for-grantedness that has overtaken this place in a time when nothing should be taken for granted. But to that later. For now just the description of a single ironic event. Last Thursday night the national symphony orchestra played Mozart's Requiem. Mzwee and a handful of other returnees and ex-political prisoners attended the concert. There they began to cautiously fraternize with what the trendy Marxists refer to as 'the commanding heights of capital'. Why are the commissars at the symphony? It's the legacy of Lenin's cultural conservatism, the legacy of their years in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. And who is performing? The quality of the orchestra has vastly improved with the huge influx of previously unemployed musicians from Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Gabor, the conductor, has been in the country for many years, but the new first violinist arrived less than six months ago. The choir for the Requiem was the Soweto Teachers Choir.

In my attempt to come to terms with the 'new South Africa', I've come up against a process of normalization, an absence of idealism, and business takes command. They are interconnected in a complex ideological and pragmatic web of relations that has only become clear to me recently.

Undoubtedly the thing that makes me most unsettled about South Africa is the 'naturalness' or 'ordinariness' of this cultural and political moment. A new mood is spreading through the urban areas, not just in the white community, but my sense is that it is even pervasive in middle-class and working-class communities in Soweto and other townships around Johannesburg. The intensity of the violence of the second half of last year has waned, the crisis mentality it engendered has past. Replacing it is a numbness. Actually it's not so much a sense of being tranquilized, but of selective forgetting. This is the first year in which the government schools are desegregated (not all, but an increasing number). Rather than a monumental event, the formally all-white schools have maintained their old practices and cultures, just with a few new black faces. Already problems are emerging, but they are not the great cultural problems of a fundamental transformation of social life, but the technical problems of black children not having adequate preparation for the standards of white education. Catch-up programmes, intensive remediation, but no real reconsiderations of the curriculum or organization of existing systems are under way. What is so stunning about these schools is the sense one gets that not only has nothing changed, which in some sense is true, but where there has been real change (black faces in white crowds), that those changes go unrecognized. There is a sense in which what is now, is somehow how it has always been, even where it never was. And it has only been months, not even years.

The continued crisis in most black schools remains unchanged. We hear accounts all the time of militant youth firing principals and teachers. One recent newspaper reported that a seventeen-year-old had been elected principal in a Pretoria high school. The particular young comrade would not give his name to the reporter for fear that his father would whip him if he found out. The perpetual crisis has become the normal state of affairs and no aggressive initiative, either from the government, the Mass Democratic Movement or the ANC has begun to address it. While there are a lot of words, little action has materialized. For many children, crisis is all that they know. Children ordering teachers around. You would be hard pressed to find a high school classroom in Soweto full after eleven in the morning. For many, this is what school has come to mean. Gone is any sense for left educationalists that youth controlling schools is part of the overall transformation of the social relations of schooling. Instead, the youth are out of hand. (I'm beginning to sound more and more conservative, as do so many of my radical colleagues.)

The normalization, whether it be of crisis or of the 'new' that is taking place in the schools, epitomizes processes that are under way in the country as a whole. As neighbourhoods become integrated almost no one seems to notice. Perhaps these changes go unnoticed because it is only the most exclusive neighbourhoods and those which are traditionally left/liberal that are 'greying'. Conservative white working class suburbs remain untouched because the country is in a deep recession and few people can afford to move into over-priced white areas. But even the absence of change is going unnoticed despite the huge back-log of people needing decent housing. Public places are now integrated, the privileged few who can afford the expensive price of a movie ticket seem to blend in with the affluent whites around them. The buses are now integrated, but only a small number of blacks

ride the previously whites-only buses: when they do they are invisible. But the bus system as a whole remains unchanged, because the system is really based on geography rather than the colour of one's skin. We can analyze the variety of reasons that the *de jure* changes have not totally transformed social life, and yet, there has been sufficient changes to warrant people talking, people sitting up and paying attention.

My speculation is that it is all about memory and its opposite, the forgetting of the past. 'Europeans Only' has been taken down and at least in the public space, the old white way of talking is muffled. (Some still talk in private about the 'natives': 'Zulu boys make much better garden boys'). The government has a vested interest in forgetting. Their apologists speak of the crime of apartheid. Many of the public signifiers have disappeared (still two entrances to the local liquor store). Some names have changed. All get a new wash, come out sanitized. The most difficult task of all, the rewriting of history, has begun with a vengeance. Pik Botha, the minister of foreign affairs through the period of high apartheid, said in a recent television interview that he was always anti-apartheid, but believed the best way to change the system was from the inside. You cannot find a government officer who ever believed in apartheid. The monuments still stand, the homeland government buildings in rural wastelands, the fascist sculpture of the Boer-trekkers, but they seem to be ancient relics of a former barbaric civilization. Although the object still remains, somehow people have forgotten their purpose, they don't understand their meaning in the context of a whole system.

If we could even talk about a public consciousness, it would now be in the in-between world, neither in the past, nor in the future. If there is a future, it's to get ahead or live the life of the flashy non-racial beer commercial. It is certainly not a glorious collective future of the new nation, new culture. The big ideals of the struggle, 'the people shall govern, the doors of culture and learning shall be open...' can still be heard, but somehow if you listen closely you notice a real hollowness about the sound, its the echo, not the original.

For the public to have a memory, for there to be something other than this 'normality', there needs to be history, an attention to everydayness, and an imaginative future. The government has taken care of history and replaced it with American sitcom and CNN. In fact American television or programmes have dominated South African evening viewing for the last ten years. A lot of the imaginative futures (socialism and even democracy) has gone stale, the old slogans about people's power and socialism seem a little facile. No new vision has come to take their place. As for the everydayness, either people escape from it, or it's not an issue. In either case, at least for the moment, the everydayness is not going to push people into a critical consciousness. As Gramsci would say, common sense is winning out over good sense. and the government and business are clearly winning the common sense. People have been watching the future on television for the past few years even when their daily lives told them that it was a lie. As our social world begins to shift, what is strange about the new arrangements is ironically familiar because people have been watching it on television. Here perhaps is the key to the normality mentality because the unfamiliar has consciously been made familiar.

Nelson Mandela came to his *alma mater*, Witwatersrand University last Wednesday to give the opening address to the student. Introduced by the

leader of the 'most' revolutionary wing of the liberation movement, SANSCO, the South African National Students Congress, as one of Africa's greatest men, a man that walks with giants, Mandela gave a steady, convincing speech under an umbrella which protected him from the sun. This was the stadium [previously the main showing of the annual Rand agricultural exhibition] where I came as a kid to watch the prize-winning bulls being displayed. Along the sides of the arena were stands with the state-of-the-art equipment for the artificial insemination of cows. In those days black South Africans were only allowed access to the fairground on Wednesdays, the rest of the week was reserved for whites. About five years ago the university took over the fairground for the education, commerce, law and engineering faculties.

Mandela spoke about the role of the university and academic freedom, of the strategies for the transition period, and of the campaign for a constituent assembly. To the students he said, 'the struggle is no substitute for studying', forever we hope, putting to rest the slogan, no education before liberation. To the faculty he offered a new concept, the patriotic intellectual, the academic who put her expertise to use in framing options for what he referred to as the 'new South Africa'. Yogesh, a long time and committed activist who works in the Policy Unit attached to the Education Department, cynically commented to me later that day that the struggle no longer demanded that we be organic intellectuals, we don't have to be ashamed of our petty bourgeois origins, we can work for the Development Bank of Southern Africa. After years of grass root activism he's just come back from a job interview at a big corporate foundation.

The crowd at the Mandela show included large numbers of the maintenance staff. The security guards listened politely. At two o'clock, in the middle of the speech, many students started leaving the stadium, heading for class. At the close of the speech the university community stood for the traditional singing of the national anthem, 'Nkosi Sikelele Afrika. Something happened in the middle of the anthem. The crowd almost lost the melody because the tempo was so incredibly slow. The customary 'vivas' received only the vaguest response. As Mandela left the stadium, the students rushed towards the exits, no toyi-toying, no freedom songs today. People are tired, perhaps they have other things to do. Politics is no longer in command.

Another story. Monday night I have my campaigns sub-committee meetings (ANC newspeak for sub-committees of the branches). A beautifully spoken young woman (product of an elite private school) gave us an 'input' on the strategy of the Patriotic Front. In the subsequent discussion one of the hardest working members of the sub-committee made a comment about working not to see people just being integrated into the existing structures, but for genuine restructuring. In her words, what we used to call 'socialism' and 'democracy'. Only in that moment did it really come home to me that I and many 'committed' people have all but abandoned this language. Instead it's about solving problems, about negotiating for and about the interim government. The pride and the centrepiece of the left ideology, of its mythology, the concept and practice of strong democracy is losing its intellectual power and it's disappearing from the practices of many organizations. The particular meaning that democracy took for the left in the early eighties had to be with a process of consultation, of leadership being held accountable

to the lowest levels in grassroots organizations. 'Decisions must emerge from the bottom', was the key concept of the United Democratic Front. But today, for a whole host of reasons, democracy has lost the power to capture our imaginations. Our leaders negotiate behind closed doors, their major decisions taken without the organizations having any real input. The returning liberation movement [from exile] has no experience of the kind of democratic practice that had become the norm in the mass movement. Some of the key figures in the democratic movement are just burnt out.

I sometimes think of the revolutionary enthusiasm of the Sandanistas, or the young Bolsheviks in the first experimental years of the 1920s and their faith and commitment to a new world. The 'new' in the 'new South Africa' is very different from the 'new' in a socialist 'new order'. I imagine there must have been an incredible sense of excitement, a kind of potency of unexplored power and a sense of comfort in working collectively for a new future. The 'people' in South Africa haven't even come close yet to 'seizing' power and yet the cynicism stage in transformation has miraculously been brought forward. We've skipped the idealist phase, we've even missed disillusionment and gone straight to cynicism. Perhaps this is the first truly post-modern transition.

The only grouping with any sense of bounce is big business, what we used to refer to as 'capital'. The spirit of the new South Africa is business in command. They have captured the cultural moment in the beer commercials, in the call for management and efficient running of society. The ANC is returning from exile with so little to offer in terms of solutions or vision. In part this can be attributed to the fact that the central theme in the language of the exile movement was outdated ideas on socialist and third world political and revolutionary theory. This is the moment when nearly all African countries are turning to privatization, free market and individual initiative. Zimbabwe has just accepted the World Bank's demands for a restructuring of their economy, as a precondition for significant new loan allocations. Mozambique and Angola, the newest 'socialist' countries in the region are undergoing similar transformations. These changes tend to be uncritical and rather unimaginative implementations of models of development most successfully articulated in the 'miracle' economies of the Pacific rim such as Hong Kong, Korea and Taiwan.

Business has a new confidence, even arrogance. Mzwee who works as the coordinator of employment for returning exiles comes home every day with a new story about various businesses that have approached his office with offers of employment for returning MK soldiers. One of the largest insurance companies in the country, Southern Life, called the other day to offer twenty five positions for ANC returnees. In the meeting with the company it came out that they were keen on getting militant members of the movement as they believe that such men would be trusted and accepted by the communities in which they would be expected to sell life insurance. Like nothing else, the image of ex-guerilla soldiers going house to house selling life insurance to working class black families embodies the spirit of this new age. The law of the new South Africa: the state shall not provide, leave it to individual initiative, let the market decide. The new cadre of salesmen would be well paid by South African standards, be given company cars, (probably Hondas)

and housing subsidies which would allow them to buy expensive homes in the new integrated suburbs.

The university graduate business school has just opened a programme in public administration which specifically targets community leaders. With massive funding from mining, Anglo-American Corporation and De Beers, the programme hopes to socialize a new elite for positions in the future government bureaucracy. The South African Breweries has just donated a fleet of new Toyotas to the various regional offices of the ANC with 'no strings attached'. The list is endless, the gifts and contributions, the concern about training and up-grading, of job creation. Massive incorporation with offers of social mobility, stability and success in a corporatist new South Africa.

But why has the once militant movement just succumbed? The answer isn't too hard to find. Big business has the resources, they have the expertise, they have the training facilities. For those that remained in the country for the intense years of the struggle, there was never even a thought about running, controlling and administering an advanced industrial society. The enemy was business, business methods and business mentality. The state was the enemy. No one wanted to understand how the state ran the country, the principle concern was how the state was used as a mechanism of repression. In place of the state, activists posited a romantic notion about popular participation. Perhaps the best example is in education where the mass movement elaborated a concept of People's Education. In real terms this had to do with rewriting a few text books and attempts to institute democratic structures involving teachers, students and parents. Little attention was paid to addressing the backlog, to thinking creatively about broad new approaches to an educational system as a whole. Most of all, little thought was given to the fact that any new system would be built on the old, or more precisely, any new system would inherit the old. In the rhetoric of the time it was the government's responsibility to provide equal education. As for the movement in exile, most of the time was spent just trying to keep the mythologies alive. Almost no one got experience in other countries with the planning and running of massive state systems of schooling.

The spirit of the day is the spirit of business, pragmatic, instrumental, and fundamentally conservative. All the talk is of negotiated settlements, compromise and realism. I must confess that I find myself talking the very self-same talk in the company of people I think are dreamers.

The absence of idealism might mean transition without euphoria. This might mean less dogmatism and fewer grand schemes for social planning. But this loss of idealism is not the same as sobriety. When you are sober, your head clears and the world comes into sharper focus. Unfortunately the world is now more foggy.

This is the news from the frontier.

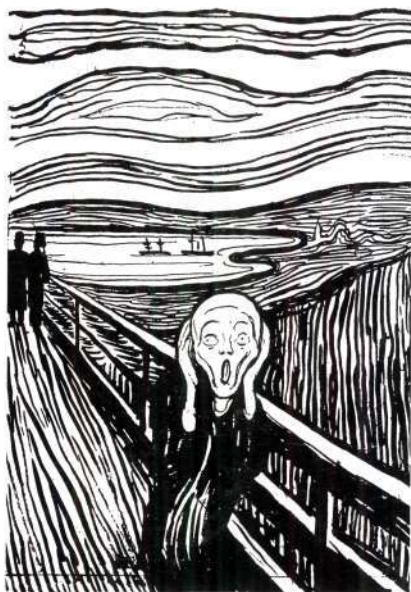
This letter, written in February 1991, has been overtaken by the violence that erupted in the Townships. This does not alter the perceptions of the writer. We hope to print further letters by the same author in later issues of *Searchlight South Africa*.

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