

# Face to face with MK in Lusaka

By Nic Borain

**MAY** 1990 will see the first meeting of the two protagonists who perhaps symbolise the conflict in South Africa at its sharpest: the military wing of the ANC, Umkhonto we Sizwe, and a range of SADF-linked South Africans from inside the country.

Idasa will be hosting this four-day conference in Lusaka, providing a unique forum for the parties concerned to examine vital issues that are part and parcel of the negotiation process: the de-escalation and cessation of hostilities. The challenges facing the military forces in a projected post-negotiations phase will also be identified and examined.

A highlight of the conference is bound to be the early session where the delegates introduce themselves and their personal military histories, not least for the tremendous symbolism of weapons being exchanged for words by "enemies" in the most serious sense of the word.

Delegates include former SADF generals and other former senior officers, men who have recently served in the SADF as conscripts, academics, members of the End Conscription Campaign and representatives of the Transkei Defence Force. The SADF has been invited to send formal representatives but it seems more likely that it will, instead, monitor the proceedings closely. Several of the academics attending are expected to do so in consultation with the SADF.

The meat of the agenda will be a good look at the role of the military in transitional societies, in particular in the South Africa of 1990.

The vital question for historically antagonistic military forces is how to build the trust necessary for a positive role in the negotiation process. A further question is how the process is to be monitored. Delegates to the conference will be encouraged to set out their positions - particularly their fears and concerns about the future, and then to explore the options.

A large part of the agenda is devoted to projected post-negotiations military matters. The question here would be how to create a unified army that would earn the respect of all.

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## Ploughing a minefield

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agricultural debt.

Unfortunately, when it was time for delegates to depart at the end of a very full and demanding weekend, this dilemma still remained and overall, numerous issues raised during the workshop were not conclusively resolved.

Numerous other points of conflict also emerged. These included the nettle of nationalisation and compensation - subjects which were alluded to during the workshop, but never fully confronted - as well as why a rural land policy is needed. Should it address food production, settlement patterns, employment, access to land or stem the flood to the urban areas?

The best use of legal resources, how they should protect and support people struggling to gain access to or maintain



Discussing the issues over

control of their land was also debated. Similarly the questions of how to handle intervention, how to identify paths of change and then support viable strategies, produced conflict among delegates.

# Land: A labyrinth of tricks and tales

By Sue Valentine

**WHETHER** land is nationalised or privately owned is a non-issue for most black South Africans because virtually all land used by them belongs to the South African Development Trust.

So says Geoff Budlender of the Legal Resources Centre in a paper co-written with Johan Platsky that looks at the way in which black people can "own" land and makes the point that in almost every instance this matches the classic understanding of nationalised land.

Budlender identifies quitrent tenure as the dominant form of land use and explains what rights land users enjoy under this system - rights which the relevant minister may cancel. He may also appropriate the land. Ultimately the state has a residual right to the land whenever it chooses.

In the first half of the presentation of the paper, Platsky showed how the different race zones ("homelands" and Group Areas) in which people were forced to live in South Africa "derive from an intricate system of interrelated legal provisions of quite astonishing technical complexity".

Because of this "kind of labyrinthine complexity which cannot and did not arise from a single flash of misguided brilliance", the overturning of the 1913 Land Act and the 1936 Land Reform Act would not suffice to bring about significant change. The Group Areas Act would have to be abolished simultaneously in order to offer black people somewhere to move to, and the mesmerising array of land laws passed by the various homeland authorities would also have to be erased.

Concluding their two deliveries, the lawyers made a strong case for a careful re-

moval of land laws in such a way as to avoid leaving people with fewer rights than before. They warned that unless land reform measures were accompanied by real



Researcher Essy Letsoalo spoke on state land reforms

democracy, disaster - as had occurred elsewhere in such programmes - could be the result.

In an appeal for people involved in the land question to move away from loaded ideological terms and confront the empirical reality of what was happening in the field, Aninka Claassens of Trac (Transvaal Rural Action Committee) set about examining some of the myths regarding private property.

She asserted that the history of freehold title or private ownership in South Africa was contrary to its traditional connota-



Howard Cowling and Errol Moorcroft.

The burning question of ecology and the need for urgent action to avoid catastrophic degradation was raised but not carried through sufficiently. Numerous speakers stressed that South Africa had

tions of free and fair transactions and secured individual rights. It had been established by way of physical conquest, detailed and complicated contracts between governors and illiterate chiefs, and in the context of missionary outreach and mineral acquisitions. Once land was obtained it was granted to loyal European citizens.

Claassens said that time and again in the course of her work she had traced the origins of title deeds at the Deeds Office to find the land had been granted by the state to a white person.

Farmers assaulted their workers as a matter of routine, she said, and were so confident of acquittal that they reported the events to the police themselves. This was the case recently when a farmer who had beaten a crippled worker to death was fined R100. "Such incidents are increasing," she added.

Land was taken from people through force and trickery, not through fair practices. The entire system of private property was bound up in racial terms.

She said it was necessary to dwell on this history because similar practices were being recreated daily. The land laws and Group Areas Act were still in force and the present realities in which communities, identified by the government as black spots and in the process of resettlement, struggled to stay on their land were occurring under the cabinet of the current State President.

"We must move the debates away from the ideologically bound reference points to see who is on the land and what is happening there," she said.

In an eloquent historical overview, UCT historian Colin Bundy offered an understanding of the land question in which he identified certain themes which could explain the present situation and constrain future developments.

Firstly, throughout its evolution, capitalist agriculture in South Africa had been an arena of backward and brutal social relations. Until 1980 agriculture was the largest single employer of black labour and farm-

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virtually reached a ceiling in terms of available agricultural land and present systems of farming could not be sustained. There were also differences between delegates over what sustainability meant and how to deal with it.

There was consensus, as Mike Savage spelt out during the final session of the conference, on the importance of the rural land issue - whether it be a concern over agriculture, access to land or agrarian relations. Delegates also agreed on the need for concrete actions to effect change, that there was a lack of relevant and detailed information on vital areas (white farming was one such area) and that more case studies were needed which involved people from those specific circumstances.

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UCT academic Mike de Klerk who helped organise the conference

workers were the worst paid labour force. In this context, Bundy asked whether it would be possible to retain social relations like these in a different state. Could they be reformed or should they be fundamentally transformed?

Secondly, capitalist agriculture had relied heavily on the state for its development. The supposed "superior efficiency" of capitalist agriculture possibly needed to be revised when considered in the light of state aid and repressive legislation to secure land and labour.

Thirdly, the evolution of capitalist agriculture had taken a long time and non-capitalist methods of farming (such as tenant farmers) had persisted until the early 1960s in some cases. Bundy said the implications of this were that an extremely powerful popular preference for peasant farming remained.

Ultimately, Bundy reduced the situation to two options: can rural social relations be altered significantly enough and the hunger for land addressed if large-scale agriculture is left intact? Or, can the national food supply be sustained and can the countryside feed the cities if things are significantly changed?

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# Endangered by freehold

By Sue Valentine

**THE DANGERS** of freehold tenure and the insecurity it ultimately produces for poor people was one of the themes to emerge from a paper on land tenure in black rural areas delivered by Unisa anthropologist Catherine Cross.

She argued for three possible reformed forms of tenure: freehold or individual tenure, which she suggested was safe only for the rich; modified indigenous tenure, the mode for most African forms of tenure; and state leasing, a familiar system under which black people hold land at present, but one which might be difficult to "sell" to the white community.

Cross stressed that it was not necessary to find "THE" tenure system. Most important was to provide security and allow for the creation of flexible and accountable models.

Expanding on her statement about the dangers of freehold tenure, she said people did not realise how easily freehold (in comparison with communal tenure, where security is relatively good) could be lost.

"Freehold land is only secure if people can pay," she said. "All too often freehold land is timebound. People with a low cash flow run high risks of losing their land on a mortgage or because of not being able to pay their taxes . . . An enormous amount of land was lost on mortgages in the late 19th century."

She suggested that in the present situation potential black land owners are attracted by the prospect of freehold tenure because they see whites apparently retaining control of their land on that basis. However, what many aspirant black land owners do not realise is the amount of economic support white landowners receive.

Cross acknowledged that in the present economic climate in South Africa whites too were in danger of losing their properties because of escalating land and housing costs and bond repayments.

Another danger contingent with freehold tenure is the potential erosion of empowerment and equity. Superficially freehold seems to be a fair system, but when land is lost - due to a range of circumstances - it inevitably goes to rich landlords from whom the former landowner then has to seek work as a tenant. The power structures consequently emerging from freehold tenure tend towards the inequitable.

Cross suggested that the violence in Natal was related to the prevailing land tenure system: because much of the land is freehold neither government nor homeland structures can control what happens in such townships. The eruption of physical violence thus emerges from the lack of bureaucratic control the authorities can exert on land owners.

# 'Simple' system behind Zimbabwe success

**HOW TO** assist the poverty-stricken peasant system of agriculture while maintaining the highly productive and sophisticated commercial sector was the task that confronted Senator Dennis Norman when he became Zimbabwe's first Minister of Agriculture in 1980.

Speaking to delegates at the Rural Land workshop about the Zimbabwean experience, Senator Norman said agriculture in his country had played "probably the largest single role in bringing political stability after 11 years of sanctions and 14 years of war".

In 1980/81 the value of commodities sold by commercial farmers totalled (Zimbabwe) \$18 million. Five years later the value had risen to \$192 million. Livestock sales had risen in value by 1 400 percent. Maize production in 1980/81 stood at 42 000 tons; by 1985 this had reached 481 000 tons. In 1980/81, 33 000 tons of cotton were produced; it was 132 000 in 1985.

The reason for these dramatic increases, said Norman, was the new agricultural policy which encouraged farmers to grow crops suitable to the area in which they lived.

In central Zimbabwe a population of

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Dennis Norman

about 25 000 to 30 000 people had been scratching a living trying to grow maize. A programme aimed at weaning them from maize to cotton was introduced and for the first time in the country's history a cotton ginnyery was built in the area and cotton sales exceeded \$34 million. All this happened within four years.

Norman said a "simple system" consisting of three prongs was responsible for the dramatic increases. "The resource base was quite good, but it was not available to everyone, only to whites. We tried to extend services to everybody."

This included an education programme - crash courses through agricultural colleges for farmers and a general effort to stimulate interest. Secondly, the necessary fertilizers, seeds, chemicals and transport were made available to smallscale farmers - usually on a loan basis, with very few grants being handed out.

Thirdly, in an effort to redress the system whereby only white farmers were within easy access of transport or storage

depots, black farmers were assisted to reach the market. New depots for grain and cotton were built throughout the country so that, in areas where it was deemed those crops could be farmed productively, no farmer was more than 60km from the nearest depot.

"For the first three years after independence we were successful in preventing urban drift, in fact we reversed it. However, the position has now changed because of the success of the education programme and people are moving to the urban areas once again," said Norman.

The resettlement programme in which it was hoped to create villages with better agricultural prospects for about 162 000 people in the first four or five years of independence was less successful. It had envisaged four settlement schemes where land could be held as individual land, as a village with communal land, as individual land with communal grazing or as land for livestock farming. Through the willing-buyer-willing-seller scheme (before anyone in Zimbabwe may dispose of land, they must first offer it to the government) land was available for the project.

Senator Norman suggested several reasons why the programme had not worked. Firstly it had been introduced too quickly and not enough planning went into it.

Secondly, not enough value was given to the importance of title deeds, be they freehold or leasehold. Thirdly, co-operatives were not always successful and although Norman said he believed they did work, they needed to be carefully managed within clear guidelines and parameters. Lastly, many of those encouraged to farm knew little about it; training was needed if people were to become successful farmers.

Challenging the poor image most white South Africans seemed to have of prime minister Robert Mugabe, Norman spelt out some facts regarding the Zimbabwean government's record.

"In the 10 years Zanu-PF have been in government, they have not appropriated a single property," he said. "They have not nationalised a single industry, they have honoured every external debt. Every external pension has been paid since 1980 - they have not reneged on a single one - and they have honoured every single clause of the 1979 agreement. We have a government which stands by its word. It could have gone the other way, but it didn't."

## Tricks and tales

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After offering four possible economic options, Bundy concluded by saying the answer would not arrive as a policy preference but would take shape in the course of struggle.

"What people want, how they will be or-

ganised to express their desires, how the state and capital will respond, will determine the land question," he said.

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## Unity worthless?

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because of political differences; the development of separate black consciousness-orientated organisations and Charterist bodies - with such rivalry that separate organisations in apparently apolitical fields such as literacy, domestic workers and even pre-schools have been formed; the conflicts over foreign funding and suspicions in some quarters about the DP's commitment to a post-apartheid South Africa.

Indeed, the pettiness and intensity of the tensions that has often existed between these groupings in the past makes the prospects of effective unity look very

remote.

But is it even desirable as a goal? The answer should be an emphatic no.

The essence of democracy is that political organisations go to the electorate to win votes for their policies and strategies. If they win sufficient support from the ordinary people, they gain representation.

There are clearly major differences of approach and personality among the different elements of the anti-apartheid movement. Now is not the time to patch them up in a semblance of unity on the spurious grounds that the system will exploit those differences and tensions.

Now is rather the time the different groupings try to get popular support by campaigning among the soon-to-be voters - and let the people decide.

Trying to create "unity" among these groups in preparation for a popularly elected government in a new and free South Africa will not only avoid the differences and conflicts between them, but it will also create a new United Party with all the attendant problems that Sir De Villiers Graaff and his party faced during the 1970s.

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