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in this issue . . .

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EDITORIALS

1. The Namibian Miracle

A large part of this issue of REALITY is appropriately devoted to Namibia and its independence.

When one thinks back to the situation a year ago, or even to the tragic shambles of SWAPO's return across the border, what has happened there has been nothing short of miraculous

That all those years of trading blows, military and verbal, should have ended in a Constituent Assembly which, with

apparent unanimity, could produce a constitution rooted in Liberal principles is quite astonishing.

No doubt many difficulties lie ahead. Walvis Bay is an obvious one, and the sinister figure of Eugene Terreblanche trying to stir up the Basters could be another, but the extraordinary sense of goodwill which seems to be shared by the main political leaders is a wonderful omen for the future. □

2. Negotiations: No Time to Waste

Could South Africa emulate the Namibian miracle?

It won't if serious negotiations don't start soon and move quickly.

While potential negotiators spar and try to score points they hope will impress or reassure their constituence, things are starting to go badly wrong down there at the grassroots.

The violent chaos after the Ciskei coup and the horrifying upsurge in the Natal conflict, including large-scale attacks on non-Inkatha communities, have not only left a lot

of people dead, and many others with everything they owned destroyed, they have probably put paid to any hopes of new investment in both areas, and may indeed have started a flight of what there already is. In Natal a variety of leaders make calls for peace, some more convincing than others, but nobody takes much notice. The urge to vengeance is too strong for that, and it seems that only a virtual armed occupation of the main centres of conflict will bring peace. And for how long? Not for long, until the leaders of both factions are seen together, in the field, wherever trouble threatens, telling their supporters to come to their senses.

On the other side of the picture are elements in the police force who are not neutral, or are trigger-happy, or are both. They may well be covert rightwingers trying to sabotage reform. Other rightwingers seem set on making the mining town of Welkom a no-go area for Blacks. They may not stop there.

More disturbing than any of this has been the resurrection of the dreaded "necklace", surely one of the most despicable and dehumanising methods ever conceived for dealing with people you think might not be on your side. The leaders of the liberation movement who failed, for whatever reason, to put a stop to this ghastly practice when it first reared its head amongst their supporters all those years ago, may well live to rue that day. Only Desmond Tutu and a few other brave individuals ever risked their own lives to stop it. Now reports of its renaissance are returning to haunt us all.

We may also live to rue the day when young people were urged to forget about education until they had liberation,

and to devote their energies instead to making the country ungovernable. Such lessons are more easily learnt than forgotten. Ungovernability down there, where the necklace lies in wait for non-conformists, and the incentive to learn has been largely lost, presents the ANC with a major problem. For Mr De Klerk it certainly makes his task of persuading Whites to accept a future in a non-racial democracy a thousand times more difficult.

So what has to be done if what is threatening to become a lost generation is to be saved, and if something like the Namibian miracle is to be made to happen here?

People need to be given something they feel is important and constructive to do. What better than building a new society?

But until the negotiators agree on what shape that society will take, nobody else can do very much. They should get a move on. □

by Randolph Vigne

NAMIBIA AFTER 26 YEARS

Randolph Vigne was first in Namibia just over a year after the Windhoek shootings of 10 December 1959. Namibia's Sharpeville, they launched the 30-year struggle, completed with independence on 21 March 1990 which he attended as a guest of the new government. When vice-chairman of the Liberal Party of South Africa he was banned in 1963, and left the country without a passport the following year. In England he kept in close touch with Swapo, and in 1969 became founding chairman of the Namibia Support Committee, a UN-recognized body which has worked in solidarity with Swapo throughout this period. He is today its Hon Secretary.

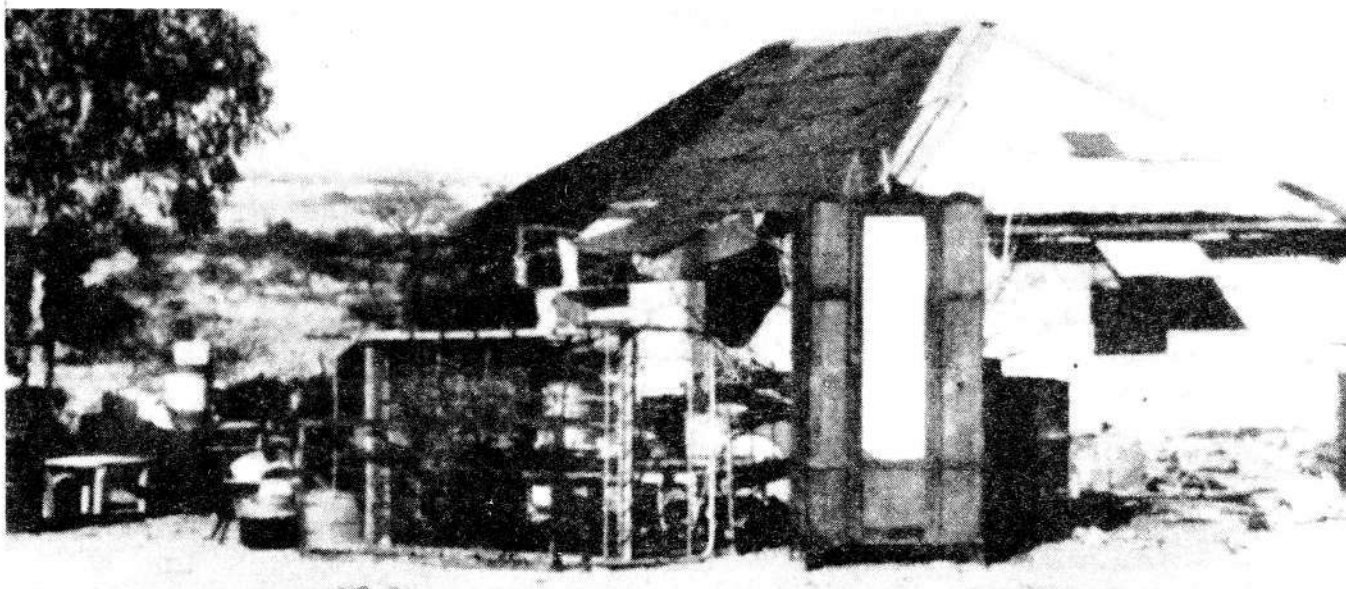
Revisiting Namibia this year recalled my first and only visit there before leaving Verwoerd's South Africa 26 years ago. I had introductions from Swapo friends in Cape Town, a commission for **Contact** articles, and a brief from the Liberal Party to report on the situation, while seeking also possible conveners of a non-racial Liberal pressure group. A bonus was a meeting on the aircraft with the Anglican Bishop Mize, who got off at Keetmanshoop but offered me his empty house (now the Deanery) next to the tiny St George's Cathedral in Klein Windhoek. Here, and in the Old Location, I met leaders of Swapo, Swanu and the Herero Chiefs' Council, thanks to the Bishop's manservant who took the necessary messages. I could thus lie

low and was saved the frustrations of my Cape Town neighbour, Brian Bunting, editor of *New Age*, who had visited shortly before me and had been followed or watched by security policeman 24 hours a day. Or yet Oliver Tambo who had been put on the 'plane straight back to Johannesburg when he had arrived in 1960 to act for the Chief's Council over the Old Location shootings.

The men I met contrasted sharply with the human scene around them. This was still an old German colonial town, the oppressive atmosphere further charged with tension since the Old Location shootings, and the African community contained a sort of sub-species, the Ovambo contract labourers in domestic service, minding the gardens and cleaning the red-roofed bungalows or mock schlosses of the town, rightless people of whom terrible stories of physical punishments were told. Yet here they were – the 90 year old Hosea Kutako, deeply impressive figure, his face scarred by a German bullet, who had been left to look after the fragment of the Herero nation when Samuel Maharero and a few thousand survivors of Von Trotha's *Vernichtungsbefehl* escaped across the sandveld to what is now Botswana; Ciemens Kapuuu, his secretary and successor; Levi Nganjone, a dynamic Swapo organizer who had travelled across the endless sands of Ovamboland on a bicycle, visiting embryonic Swapo

branches, meeting Ya Toivo, Tuhadalen, Simon Kaukungua and the other northern leaders; Zedekia Ngavirue, a neutral hoping to unite Swapo and Swanu, then editing the first African newspaper in Namibia, *South-West News*; John Garvey Muundjua of Swanu, and others. Confident, upstanding characters, they bore out the promise of our Cape Town Swapo Colleagues that the nascent liberation movement would prove equal to its task.

Only the last two of those I met in 1961 were still in action in 1990. Zed Ngavirue had petitioned at the UN with Sam Nujoma later the same year, joined Swanu, did a D Phil at Oxford, where we met again, later becoming chairman of the Rössing Corporation, and was now to be Director of National Planning in the new Independence government. Muundjua I met in the members' tearoom at the Tintenpalast during the constituent assembly session in February. The old Chief had died in 1970 and Clemens Kapuu, his successor as Herero chief, had been killed by an assassin's bullet 17 years later. Nganjone had left politics.



Old location removals: Windhoek 1962.

In 1961 they had all been eager for intercession with the United Nations, for aid for widows and children of the shootings or for those disabled, and for political opposition to the threatened imposition of Bantu Education on the already neglected and backward school system. I was told that, after 40 years of the mandate, there were only two Namibians at university, Kerina of Swapo and Kozonguizi of Swanu: I met both later, in Ghana and England, and back in Windhoek as delegates from other parties in the constituent assembly. I learned that no school went beyond Standard VI – Kapuu and others had been sent on to the Stofberggedenkskool in the Transvaal to do Junior Certificate. That denial of education was a major grievance then and since, and taken by the Africans as planned to sustain the claim that they were not ready to govern themselves. Bantu Education would strengthen that claim: the UN must block its introduction into Namibia.

With Ngavirue and two others I drove to the Waterberg reserve, along the dirt roads of the time. Heavy rain had fallen, the country was green and veld flowers were everywhere. But the *omurambas* were full and, bare-legged, we had to push the elderly car (hired from a member of the Chief's Council, our driver) across several. In the reserve we met leaders who, interpreted from Herero or German, urged their local causes on us, chiefly the right to market their own cattle rather than hand them over to the government's marketing boards to their great loss. I saw the timetable of local *vendusies* displayed in the Ovitoto reserve on my February 1990 visit, and wondered what prices the cattle would fetch, even though the old grievance seemed to have gone: after a too-recently broken nine-year drought, they were half-starved. In 1990 Ovitoto had a school, store and administration building Waterberg in 1961 had had none of these but far better grazing and fatter cattle.

At Otjiwarongo we split, I to a neat little German hotel, they to friends in the location. At Okahandja we stopped to visit the graves of Maharero and his heirs, where Kutako now lies too, the scene so unforgettably described later in Michael Scott's *A Time to Speak*. And all they way we talked, to my infinite advantage. Where was the notorious *hauteur*? Where the deep scar of anti-white hatred left by the German genocide of 1904 and the near-enslavement of the remnant? I began to understand the attitude of a proud people who, though defeated, yet felt themselves superior to their conquerors, whether Germans or Afrikaners.

They were sceptical about my hopes of the non-racial Liberal group. Zed and two friends, I learned, on asking if they could attend a public meeting for Alan Paton, organized by a few of these liberals, had been told first 'of course,' and then 'no, for your own safety'. (When I told Paton this he wrote to them that he would have cancelled the visit had he known.) The scepticism was right: an

architect who had been of some service to Michael Scott years before cut me short. A lawyer to whom the architect directed me was abusive: 'You know the natives don't pay any income tax? And all they do is complain.' But Hans Berker, Judge-President at Independence, and his wife hospitably gave a braaivleis for me and some of their liberal friends, non of whom, however, would agree to convene a non-racial group, or even join one. In his chambers, Bryan O'Linn, now on the bench, was sympathetic but felt the time was far from ripe, and Hannes Smith, another Afrikaner and then editing the *Advertiser*, advised me to leave it to the Africans: 'Forget about Kerina - Kozonguizi's the one with the brains.' The famous 'Smitty' has since volunteered that Nujoma was the one that should have been backed. He had left the year before.

My last attempts failed too. Herr Lempp, a German bookseller who had African friends, told me he would be ostracized and ruined if he stood up to be counted. Percy Niehaus, leader of the local equivalent of the United Party, was courteous but dismissive. Most memorably, Israel Goldblatt, senior member of the South African bar and recently counsel for African interests in the Old Location shootings enquiry, offered serious discussion and reminiscence, but when he asked 'What are they saying in the location?' I realized how far there was to go. And Bishop Mize, back in Windhoek, expressed his admiration for our President but rejected the boycott weapon Paton had recently espoused, since this implied

coercion and as a Christian he could only bear witness to the evils of *apartheid* and *baasskap* (making the Bishop's expulsion from the country a few years later sadly ironic.)

I took the Skymaster back to Cape Town, made my report, wrote my articles, and did what I could in correspondence with Chief Kutako, through Kapuuu, and with the Hereros in Botswana, a representative of whom I had met with the old Chief (he had taken a year to make the journey, mostly spent in hiding from the South African authorities.) The visit also committed me to the Namibian struggle from then on.

The non-racial group was decades away, however, and the assembly I observed from the gallery in February 1990, with black and white Swapos, DTAs, Nats and others bringing in a liberal, democratic constitution by consensus, an amazing manifestation of it. (With, *plus ca change*, near the top of the agenda was the country's educational need, and new beef export outlets not far below.) It had taken 23 years of the 'border war' and an estimated 90 000 Namibian deaths from all causes to bring about that non-racial assembly, a cost item that must painfully be put down on the white side of the ledger. And the magnanimity, as before, on the black, who had done the fighting and suffering, and brought down Goliath. □

by David Lush

INDEPENDENT NAMIBIA: SOME EARLY OBSERVATIONS

"In 17 years of dealing with black leaders, I have never respected any of them more than I do the Swapo people I have been working with in the Constituent Assembly."

Lofty praise indeed considering it comes from one of Swapo's most bitter opponents, Dirk Mudge, chairperson of the DTA (Democratic Turnhalle Alliance), and is indicative of the rapid change in attitudes- "Boerestroika" as it has become known - of Namibia's predominantly right-wing white community.

This has been in no small part due to Swapo's highly successful policy of "national reconciliation" which has helped persuade whites to stay on in Namibia with their much needed skills and capital. But this same policy is in danger of eroding Swapo's own power base as the liberation movement's grassroots support grows disillusioned with what many see as maintenance of the status quo.

National reconciliation has been a central plank in Swapo policy since the launch of their election campaign last June, although it was not until after the results of the

November poll were known (Swapo won 57 per cent of the vote) that this policy was seen to work.

As the newly elected Constituent Assembly started to meet, opposition parties found to their surprise that Swapo was prepared to negotiate and compromise - as it had to in order to achieve its aim of having the constitution passed by the required two-thirds majority without delay so the country could become independent as quickly as possible. Koos Pretorius, leader of the whites-only Action Christian National (ACN) party, admits he is "impressed" with Swapo's give and take approach - "as long as I didn't make the proposals," he jokes.

Swapo's immediate acceptance of what are now known as the 1982 Principles - internationally-approved, democratic guidelines now written into the constitution - stole the DTA's thunder and the latter had no choice but to settle down and become what Mudge calls a "loyal opposition". "What must be clear to everybody is that we are now in a new ball game.

"We have had an election, we have a constitution which guarantees a multi-party system and which has been

accepted by all. From now on the DTA....will be loyal to the country and to the constitution."

Even Namibian AWB leader Hendrik van As says he is prepared to give up his fight against the "communists" and go back to his farm, where he wants simply to be left alone. But if black people then come and steal his cattle and parts off his water pumps, he adds, "I will drive my cattle to the abattoir and leave the country for good".

OPPOSITION SUPPORTERS

Once the opposition parties were convinced of Swapo's sincerity, their supporters followed suit. White farmers in the eastern Gobabis region are renowned for their right wing, almost feudalistic beliefs, and it was with much trepidation that Swapo Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Kaire Mbuende, set about meeting with this close-knit community.

Doctor Mbuende – a small, dapper, soft-spoken and articulate man – was the antithesis of the farmers' perception of a Swapo commissar – a perception betrayed by the issues they raised at meetings with the Deputy Minister; some wondered whether the doctor believed in God, others wanted to know if they would be allowed to keep their guns, while others were worried that Swapo would force them off their land. Mbuende patiently explained the government's policy and, although not always agreeing with the doctor's views, the farmers left vowing to "stick it out" in an independent Namibia. After all, they say, "South West is our home", and as long as they could keep their land, the politics-weary farmers would stay.

There has also been a dramatic change of heart amongst the white business community which has suddenly woken up to the prospect of new and untapped commercial opportunities in a post-independent Namibia. The godfathers of Namibian business – renown left wing politics – are frequent visitors to the house of Namibian President Sam Nujoma, happy to be seen chatting with their once sworn enemy.

Nujoma personally arranged for a delegation of Namibian entrepreneurs to make a fact-finding trip to Angola where the group met with representatives of the "Marxist" government and discovered "great potential" for trade.

The success of national reconciliation firstly required the unravelling of decades of rabid anti-Swapo propaganda woven by the pro-South African media, a process which started the moment the first exiled leaders stepped onto the tarmac at Windhoek Airport, dressed not in khaki battledress and toting AK-47s but in three-piece suits and carrying attache cases.

But to be really effective, Swapo required the co-operation of the mass media. Ironically, from the day Swapo was declared winner of November's independence elections, one of the main exponents of anti-Swapo propaganda, the state-controlled South West Africa Broadcasting Corporation (now re-named the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation, NBC) performed a somersault and began giving maximum prime-time coverage to once blacklisted party leaders and their views.

NBC staff admit the change was a job-saving move made by those wanting to stay on in Namibia after independence – and there are many. After all, they argue, they were civil servants and therefore take orders from those in power. With the advent of independence, the NBC will for the meantime continue as a parastatal organisation, and the new government has made it quite clear the electronic media will continue purely as a mouthpiece of the government and a vital tool in the process of "nation building"

But national reconciliation has required more than image building to win over the rich and powerful; it has also meant abandoning a commitment to wholesale nationalisation, a move which could lose Swapo credibility with the left, and in particular the unions.

Cracks have already started to appear in this bedrock of Swapo support. The new year has seen a spate of labour disputes resulting from employer malpractice. The Namibian Food and Allied Union (Nafau) recently reported that, on average, eight workers a day were coming to their office having been sacked for reasons ranging from belonging to the union to asking for more pay.

This has caused some unionists to question the validity of national reconciliation. "With all this talk of mixed economy and national reconciliation, the employers think they have the right to carry on as they used to," says one union official. "They are abusing the policy of reconciliation."



Trade Unions Graffiti: Windhoek 1989.

And as the new government begins to look more and more at home with the existing capitalist economy, the unions are standing their ground. Although still confident that workers' interests were best served by a Swapo government, President of union umbrella movement the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW), John Saetenhodi, says the "exploitation of workers will only end in a socialist dispensation where the means of production belong to the people".

Grassroot disillusionment has also been compounded by appointments to the new government of servants of the old regime, in particular to the state security departments. Many activists are dismayed to find those responsible for their detention and torture in the past are still in post, causing many to wonder what their years of struggle and suffering were all for. Here too, the argument that it is all "in the spirit of national reconciliation" is beginning to wear thin. The aloofness of many of the new leaders has also prompted rumblings of discontent in the townships and villages countrywide. "The people are very disappointed that they don't see more of the President," says a nurse living in the Windhoek township of Katutura not far from the house where Nujoma stayed prior to independence. "We saw so little of him, even though we lived so close to him. We want to know him, like Zambians know President Kaunda."

She recalls a visit Nujoma made to the hospital and the way he spoke only with the management and senior staff and not to the nurses themselves. "We are the ones working with the patients and we are the ones who know what's going in the hospital, not the management. If the President wants to know what's going on in Namibia, he must speak with the people, and the same goes to other leaders who will be in the Cabinet."

DETACHMENT

The nurse's disappointment, echoed by many non-exiled Namibians, is understandable. During the years of liberation struggle, Swapo's internal leadership was always amongst the people, living in the same townships where they drank, ate and breathed with their supporters. And the names and legends of exiled leaders were always being talked and sung about, while their pictures hung on living room walls throughout the country.

There was genuine expectation that when the exiled leaders returned, they too would be like their home-based colleagues, so many were disillusioned when the besuited Swapo big guns – with the exception of Nujoma – moved into the posh "white" suburbs and were seen only on television and the rostrum at political rallies.

This detachment does not come as much surprise to "returnee" Namibians who say they saw precious little of their leaders even when together in exile. Their dissatisfaction lies instead with the relationship they have with their "stay at home" compatriots.

The triumphant welcome the stay at homes gave wave after wave of returning exiles has soured to mild resentment between the two groups. "The returnees think they were the only ones in the struggle," complains one stay-at-home typically, "but we were also in the struggle.

We were the ones who suffered under the apartheid government while they studied in countries with governments which were friendly."

EXILES

For their part, exiles came home to find an affluence amongst black Namibians which never existed when they left; before everyone lived in matching township hovels and no one could afford a car, whereas now townships have sprouted luxury suburbs and the dusty streets are filled with everything from battered Chevrolets to gleaming BMWs.

To add insult to injury, returnees have found it difficult to find employment. "In exile we were given food, work and housing, but here there is nothing," said one graduate returnee who, in the nine months since returning home after 12 years "outside", has had no job and remains dependent on the erratic goodwill of friends and relatives for food and shelter. "Our leaders gave us the impression that, when we came back, everyone would get work. But for many, this is not the case."

Ask almost any unemployed returnee what they will do in the future and the likely reply is: "I'm going to work for the new government." But again they could be disappointed, as many a civil service post is still filled by its previous incumbent.

High expectations of change make for more potential discontent during the early days of independence as the government grapples with its colonial legacy. "People think houses and things will fall from heaven," says one social worker summing up popular perception that change will come overnight, a perception which the social worker confirms exists not only amongst the working classes but also educated professionals – including teachers.

The new government has inherited a mountain of problems – R500 million national debt, 40 per cent unemployment, hundreds and thousands of people homeless or living in sub-standard housing, and 12 500 teachers of whom only 10 per cent are qualified – which will take decades rather than days to solve.

Discontent with the ruling party has already reared its head in, of all places, the far north of the country where 97 percent of the electorate voted Swapo in November's election. Swapo's regional director – veteran Simon Kaukungua – was voted out of office in the annual branch ballot as party members were unhappy with his authoritarian and inaccessible style of leadership. They also complained they were being kept in the dark by an uncommunicative Swapo head office in Windhoek. Head-quarter party chiefs declared the ballot invalid and reinstated Kaukungua, but the episode is an indicator to the political minefield the new government – and Swapo in particular – is now walking through.

So far Swapo has reconciled the minority for whom the liberation movement has exceeded all expectations. But this has been at the expense of the majority responsible for the party's parliamentary power, not to say its existence. □

THE IRONIES OF SOUTH AFRICAN POVERTY

F. Wilson and M. Ramphela, **Uprooting Poverty: The South African challenge**, David Philip, 1989. Price R22,30.

This book is the flagship of the publications coming out of the *Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa*. More than 300 papers have already been circulated to libraries and individuals interested in the field of poverty studies; many of these will be gathered into specialist volumes to be published in due course. It was decided to release first a general interpretation of the findings in order to address the widest possible public and to provide a framework for the rest of the material.

The approach of the Inquiry was to stipulate a minimal framework within which authors of different persuasions could develop their analyses of the contours and causes of poverty. Allowing the *vox populi* to be heard was considered much more important than developing a tightly logical approach to the subject. This dictated the way in which the book had to be written. Any reader expecting a sustained argument, such as one might expect from a single author, will be frustrated. Instead, one is confronted with a fairly loose organising framework within which Wilson and Ramphela manage to give almost all the contributors some sort of look in. One reads the text most productively if one looks for contradictions and issues neglected as well as for the contributions to analysis made by the researchers.

Eliminating poverty implies making the least well-off people as well off as they can possibly be. This must involve consideration of the relationship between growth and distribution. It might (or might not) be the case that a very high rate of growth would be accompanied by a very unequal distribution of income, and that a lower but more egalitarian growth pattern would be better for the poor. The issue is alluded to in the book and discussed briefly in terms of the debate between capitalism and socialism, but here, as in many other places, the reader is warned that the issue will have to be debated in much more detail than the text achieves.

The gap in the analysis here is a study of the prospects for growth. Only if one can form a conception of this can the notion of a budget constraint be developed in terms of which proposals can be assessed. All the things it would be a good idea to do cost much more than the country can afford. How is a selection to be made?

At this point, there is a difficulty peculiar to South Africa. Given reasonable rates of growth (say a sustained 4% p.a.) it will take South Africa a single generation to eliminate mass poverty. It will take two generations to

give everyone the standard of living that white South Africa now enjoys. The trouble is that white South Africa sets the standard of what everyone wants, and wants now. (After three centuries of oppression, the system owes it to us!) Take education, for instance. In aggregate, the resources devoted to education are not far off what one would expect of a country at our stage of development. But they are unevenly distributed across races. If they were not, every school child would have a standard of education somewhat below the standard of Coloured education. Nobody wants that standard. Whites certainly do not. Neither do blacks – it is the standards for whites that appeal to them.

STATE INTERVENTION

What results is a set of 'morally' based demands – supposedly to be met through state intervention, redistribution, reduction in defence spending – which cannot possibly be met if there is to be equal access to the goods and services specified. It may be that the outcome is eventual reconciliation to the lower standards which are compatible with universal access. But another possible outcome is that high standards will be achieved by some at the expense of denial of access to others. This, after all, was the outcome of anti-poverty policies devised in the wake of the First Carnegie Inquiry. Of course, the Second Inquiry was concerned with poor blacks rather than poor whites. It also makes the point that the political forces in black society are in the urban areas. They can be expected to make claims for state intervention, purportedly against poverty in general but actually in their own interests. We have seen how state intervention has produced high standards for a few; limited extension may suit more than one political agenda.

It is here that tough questions about the relative merits of liberal policies of equal access and massive state intervention are important. Take housing policy, for instance. Wilson and Ramphela, though they are careful to discuss opposing views and to call for more "thinking through" the issue, call for a crash programme with heavy state support. In common with many others they suggest that houses that people currently rent should be declared paid-up and ownership vested in their occupants. But this is a very expensive policy, especially when new houses are being added to the rental stock. Between 1983 and 1987, 123 000 local authority units were sold, while 94 000 were built. This alone involved the state in as big a subsidy as all other schemes put together. It simply cannot be replicated at that scale. An attempt to do so will

simply confine the beneficiaries of state policy to a small proportion of households in need. It will also favour the already housed at the expenses of the unhoused. If one wants to eliminate poverty, the better, though politically more difficult, route is subsidising serviced sites. One can do that for everyone with little more than the currently available resources. But there are formidable obstacles: an urban class claiming compensation for centuries of oppression, local authorities who want middle class black neighbourhoods but not poor ones, a state claiming it wants privatisation but not really trusting the market at all.

STATE AND MARKET

The debate about state and market has been given an interesting new twist by the experience of developing countries. It used to revolve around how well the Soviet Union had done in relation to Western democracies and around the costs and benefits of Keynesianism. But the issue here and now is whether the market can provide opportunities for the poor over against urban elites in control of the state. It is, can, they are worth going for. They will reduce poverty. Just as importantly, they will also provide a basis for avoiding the harshness which will certainly result if a new political monopoly follows the present one.

In terms of interests, it is no accident that a rural political movement like Inkatha stresses the role of the market and that the Congress tradition stresses the role of the state. Market opportunities may be the only hope for rural people faced with more powerful urban political forces. If so, quite a lot more thinking through of the Second Inquiry's material will be needed if it is not to perform an ideological function remarkably like the first.

Consideration of investment leads to another interesting question about the underlying political assumptions that Wilson and Ramphela are making. They devote twenty-one pages to proposals for public investment in the fields of sewerage, water, energy, afforestation, housing, health and education. But they say nothing about creating the conditions for private investment in enterprises producing marketable output. This would worsen one of the three alarming features of the pattern of investment since the mid-1970's – a very high proportion of investment in publicly owned enterprises. (The other two are rapidly increasing capital intensity and a declining rate of investment.) Quite how the pattern as a whole is to be explained is a controversial matter. One possible view is that it has to do with confidence. Economic stagnation in the economies of inter-war Europe may be ascribed to pessimism resulting from the uncertainties of social

change. Our economy now requires that (predominantly) white savings be channeled into investment opportunities arising out of the development of the black market. This requires major innovation and is not so easy to do in a racially segmented society, with the threat of expropriation in the air. But it has to be done if a wide range of wage-goods is to be produced along with the incomes necessary to purchase them. In the 1930s Keynes was in favour of a "somewhat comprehensive socialization of investment", but this requires a rather more efficient state than we have at present or are likely to have in the future. The alternative is to create a better set of markets for the deployment of loanable funds. To do so requires a supporting set of political agreements.

CLIMATE

And here we are at the heart of the matter. The reduction of poverty in southern Africa requires, more than anything else, a climate within which the rate of productive investment will increase sharply. A number of sub-Saharan African countries have taken national self-realisation to imply strongly statist economic policies. In none of these countries has this led to significant and sustained economic progress; in some it has led to alarming retrogression. The SADCC countries have all seen the need for a new approach and have taken steps to liberalise their investment policies. The recent initiatives in Zimbabwe are but one manifestation of a process which has been gaining momentum over the past few years. They recognise that there is no choice; the sub-continent continues to need international help to develop. The terms on which this help is obtained must, of course, be the subject of shrewd bargaining. But however the details are worked out, they imply a modified, deracialised capitalism. Even those who consider socialism to be morally superior to capitalism must come to realise that the path to it lies through a negotiated settlement and an accompanying seizure of power. Such a settlement must embody both a thoroughgoing respect for liberty and a commitment to rapid raising of the living standards of the mass of people. This means taking existing achievements and structure rather more seriously than Wilson and Ramphela have done. In the process, one may find that populist mobilisation and economic development bear a rather more awkward relation to one another than **Uprooting Poverty** supposes.

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THE RIGHT TO KNOW AND THE S.A. STATE OF EMERGENCY 1986-1989

On 2 February 1990, in his opening address to Parliament, President F.W. de Klerk initiated an era of **glasnost**, or dialogue, in South Africa. Firstly, he lifted bans on organizations, individuals and documents imposed under security legislation, and released a few political prisoners. Secondly, while the State of Emergency remained in place, it was severely amended. The media emergency regulations were abolished except in relation to visual material, long-term detention was subject to greater control, all affected organizations were de-restricted, and the power to restrict individuals was severely curtailed. In many senses, the government's powers reverted to the level which had pertained prior to 12 June 1986, while their implementation became more relaxed than at any time in the preceding thirty years. This is thus an opportune moment to consider the nature and impact of Emergency censorship in South Africa during the late 1980s.

For political activists of the mid 1980s a major memory of the declaration of the national State of Emergency in June 1986 is of isolation and lack of information. For several weeks people disappeared into detention or hiding, meetings were paralysed by uncertainty about what could or could not be said (even in the form of prayers), political organizations were forced underground, and the publication of anti-apartheid opinion and news was stifled. Unattributed pamphlets by clandestine groupings were suspected, often wrongly, of being police plants. The prevailing climate of uncertainty, and even fear, bears a remarkable resemblance to Vaclav Havel's description of the 'atomized' society of Czechoslovakia, in which opposition groups operated in isolation¹.

It was a period of bizarre and unreal experience throughout South Africa in which normal discourse, written and spoken, came to a virtual standstill. The **Weekly Mail** and **Sowetan** were seized from news vendors and all anti-apartheid newspapers were in disarray. The office of **SASPU National** was raided, and burnt down a few days later, and the periodical was produced on the run. Virtually the only commentator on South African affairs was the Bureau of Information whose spokesperson, David Steward, appeared frequently on television. Steward threatened journalists with retribution should they employ that unquestionably accurate phrase 'white minority regime', as control was exercised over language as well as the contents or reports. Bureau of Information briefings were not privileged and could be used later against reporters. By the end of 1986 five foreign journalists had been deported. Newspapers appeared with heavy black lines through censored portions, and the **Sowetan** ran a blank box instead of a leader, until such indications of censorship were themselves banned. This was in tune with the authorities' assertion that "We do not have censorship. What we have is a limitation on what the newspapers can report"². The limitations were illustrated by the fact that a report was released by Amnesty International in London on the detention of an entire

church congregation at Elsie's River on 15 June 1986, days before the news was available in South Africa. In the Northern Transvaal a Reverend Abram Maja was detained for 380 days for possessing and circulating subversive material. In court in 1987 the Security Police used part of psalm 5 as evidence of the illegal nature of Maja's documents, and, when cross-examined, put forward the view that parts of the Bible could be construed as subversive under the Emergency. Orwell's 1984, it appeared, had surfaced in South Africa just a couple of years late.

Those who designed the censorship aspects of the Emergency believed that the demands of the liberation movement for democracy in a unitary, non-racial state justified a response akin to a low key civil war in which control of news and ideas was fundamental. The Emergency regulations thus sought to inhibit communication at a number of levels. The most obvious were the transmission overseas of images of the popular uprising which began in September 1984 in Sebokeng and details of officially sanctioned brutality; the communication by the Mass Democratic Movement of the ideas and aspirations of the oppressed, and alternative organizations, to other sectors of South African society; and the essential linkage between organizations which keeps the liberation movement functional. There are two viewpoints from which to consider the impact of Emergency censorship: the pessimistic and the optimistic, and they will be addressed in turn.

PESSIMISTIC

The pessimistic viewpoint saw the censorship implications of the Emergency as a microcosm of the different types of censorship inflicted on South Africa for decades, enforced with the zealotry of an unchallengeable security apparatus. There is much evidence to support this contention. Like apartheid and its educational system the State of Emergency sought to seal off the realities of apartheid from those who enjoy its benefits. The specific role of Bantu education is to separate the mass of the people from the cerebral and mechanical means to articulate their grievances and hopes for the future. Like the plethora of security related laws which has been placed on the statute book since 1950, the Emergency had the ability to censor dissident individuals (537 banned and listed persons in August 1989) and organizations. Like the censorship provisions of statutes affecting key areas of South African life (for example, the police, defence force, strategic trade, and fuel and energy supplies) the Emergency regulations covered up the truth about the methods used to sustain apartheid. Finally, like the Internal Security and Publications Acts, the Emergency targeted specific publications and seized, censored and suspended them.

In epitomizing the massive edifice of South African censorship, the Emergency focused attention on the extent to which the suppression of ideas was central to the government's counter-insurgency Winning Hearts

and Minds (WHAM) strategy. The installation of a pliant group of 'moderate' black political leaders at the community level was predicated on two tactics: the injection of massive material aid in order to improve low standards of living; and the neutralization of popular leaders and activists from the democratic movement. The history of Alexandra township from 1986 to 1989 illustrates this well. The suppression of popular organizations and those who propagate their ideals was one strand of censorship implicit in the Emergency; the others being the cutting off of the flow of information at source; control at the point of publication; and the encouragement of a climate of informal repression.

There can be no doubt that these four strands of censorship have had a far-reaching and malign influence on the nature of contemporary South African society. Cutting off information at source involved the exclusion of reporters and photographers from scenes of unrest or operational areas, which may simply have been, for example, the site of a strike. In this way the daily experience of thousands of South Africans went unpublished – Ameen Akhalwaya of **Indicator** contends that reporters were even afraid to record events in their notebooks for fear of seizure and harassment. The consequences have been large gaps in the recorded history of South Africa; and the attainment of an official objective of breaking the mental strands linking the struggles of the past with those of the present. Out of publication comes shared experience, solidarity and commitment, which prompted Suttner and Cronin to write: "The struggle is a struggle of memory against forgetting"³; and identify censorship as the enemy of the democratic movement. As the late Percy Qoboza of the **Sowetan** commented, these regulations reduced the general credibility of the Press – people who experienced traumatic events were led to distrust newspapers which could not report them fully.

NEWSPAPERS

The Emergency regulations empowered the Minister to place censors in newspaper editors' offices. This he chose not to do, probably because of the poor international publicity which would have ensued, and because he had other effective weapons at his disposal. It was forbidden, for instance, to publish subversive statements, speeches of restricted persons and officials of restricted organizations, photographs and details of unrest and security force action, details of restricted gatherings and certain strikes and boycotts deemed subversive, as well as material about the arrest, conditions, release and court proceedings involving detainees.

Titles which tried to circumvent these controls were threatened with suspension and in some cases taken off the streets for periods ranging from four to thirteen weeks. Eleven titles, of which nine are still in existence, were so threatened and five actually suspended. This tactic was employed as late as November 1989 although there were signs that securocrats had penchant for more decisive action. Thus there was an upsurge in the number of raids and seizures, the latter sometimes involving spectacular quantities of material, coinciding with a transfer of responsibility for seizure from the Department of Home Affairs to Law and Order. The process started in July 1988 with the seizure of 14 300 copies of the Learn

and Teach publication **The historic speech of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela at the Rivonia Trial**, which is part of open court proceedings and the historical record. In late August 5 000 copies of the Muslim community paper **Al Qalam** were seized, followed by 30 000 copies of **Crisis News**. In the same month copies of one issue of **Weekly Mail** were confiscated; while in November 1988 a Lebowa youth was arrested at a bus stop for reading **New Nation**, questioned at a police station and then taken home, where copies of **Learning Nation** supplement and a T-shirt were confiscated.

During 1989 raids affected not only the favourite targets, the alternative Press and the trade unions (10 000 copies of **COSATU News** taken in April 1989), but also publishers like David Philip (four raids in six weeks), Ad Donker and Ravan, and booksellers. The authorities removed 1340 copies of the Learn and Teach publication **Comrade Moss** and were also interested in **Culture in another South Africa**, Meli's **The land belongs to us**, van Diepen's **The national question**, and Mzala's **Gatsha Buthelezi**, which quotes Ronald Segal, at that stage a banned exile. From The Other Press Service (TOPS) police confiscated in July 1989 two photographs of David Webster's funeral, a poster and a notebook, minutes and a Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC) resource package.

At the same time the State started to prosecute rather than take administrative action. A Gardens Youth Congress member was fined R1 500 in June 1989 for publishing a subversive statement in a pamphlet. On 21 July 1989 reporters from the **Weekly Mail** were charged under the Emergency for articles printed in 1987 on detainees, based on information raised under privilege by Andrew Savage in Parliament. **Vrye Weekblad**, a favourite target, was prosecuted for its coverage of the conscientious objection issue; and other publications faced charges for publishing material on school boycotts, security force action, hunger strikes, labour strikes and demonstrations. Newspapers were also charged under the Internal Security and Prisons Acts by way of reminder that the censorship provisions of other legislation were formidable. At least four newspapers were charged with quoting Comrade Harry Gwala, who was released from prison in November 1988, yet remained a listed person until 2 February 1990.

DETENTIONS

During the five weeks following declaration of the national Emergency on 12 June 1986 one person was detained on average every five minutes. From July 1985 to December 1989 45 000 people were detained, some for periods up to 30 months and almost all under the Emergency. The vast majority were members of organizations adhering to the Charterist and Congress traditions. Although many types of person were included, two stand out. The first were high profile leaders, including journalists and academics, the most articulate exponents of the democratic philosophy. In the case of Zwelakhe Sisulu, editor of **New Nation**, it was eventually made clear that detention was a result of his work as a journalist. Security police admitted in court that the detention of two other media persons was designed to prevent the publication of a new radical paper in the Eastern Cape. Under the 1985 Emergency almost the entire staff of **Saamstaan** was

detained. The second type involved thousands of low-profile activists and rank-and-file members of anti-apartheid organizations. Many underwent no interrogation and the purpose of their detention seems to have been that of disruption of community organizations, especially the severing of communications.

On release many ex-detainees became restrictees, numbering 658 in all. Restriction orders varied from person to person, but many proscribed work intended for publication, Press interviews and a presence on premises involved with journalism and educational matters. Such restrictions severely disrupted the careers of two leading journalists, Zwelakhe Sisulu and Brian Sokutu. Sisulu's detention occupied 735 of 1056 days of his newspaper's existence and his restriction order ran to three pages. He had to report to Orlando police station daily. Restrictions were also placed on 31 anti-apartheid organizations which, while they continued to exist in a purely legal sense, were prohibited from disseminating their own or anyone else's views. Thus important data and viewpoints on township affairs conscientious objection, alternative education, trade union issues and human rights abuses became inaccessible. As early as 21 June 1986 the utterances of 118 organizations in six magisterial districts in the Western Cape had been banned.

The Emergency encouraged a climate of increasingly unrestrained militarism which nurtured informal repression. This has ranged from the harassment of community activists by police, municipal police and vigilantes, through arson and explosions, to assassination. The massive, professionally executed explosions at COSATU House and Khotso House, the firebombing of Khanya House and the Port Elizabeth Advice Office, and the burglaries of news agencies have all resulted in the loss of important documents and communications hardware. The killing of David Webster on 1 May 1989 is widely believed to have been connected to his role in documentation of detentions and political assassination by death squads. The prosecution of low intensity conflict, whether by the State or its freelance allies, had (and continues to have) the general objective of silencing opposition viewpoints emanating from community groups, educational, cultural and religious organizations, trade unions, the media, and professional and sports bodies. Evidence now emerging from the Harms Commission suggests that both the South African Police and the South African Defence Force ran squads capable of assassination and destruction.

BLEAK

By the end of 1989, the picture was thus bleak. In late 1986 a number of successful challenges were mounted to Emergency regulations in the Natal Supreme Court, which declared them void for vagueness or outside the original intentions of the Public Safety Act (Act no. 3 of 1953); or, in other words, meaningless or illegal. Some rulings were overturned in the Appellate Division; other regulations were made more watertight and re-issued, for example as the Media Emergency regulations of December 1986 and August 1987, a draconian set of curbs which remained largely unaltered and licensed the Minister to exercise his prejudices in an arbitrary way. A wall of silence descended around significant portions of South African life, particularly in the black townships, already deprived by the policy of apartheid of the

educational and material wherewithal to communicate news, ideas, frustrations and hopes. Anthony Sampson in the **Observer** of 22 June 1986 described Soweto as cut off from Johannesburg in the same way as East from West Berlin. Physical obstructions such as roadblocks and cut telephones could not be maintained indefinitely, but some commentators attributed deaths to the control of information which inhibited propagation of the Mass Democratic Movement's non-violent philosophy.



The Emergency's censorship has been very much more radical and effective than that which operated before 1986. It was not overly ambitious, sought to control information only from within South Africa, depended almost entirely on State employees to enforce it, and encouraged self censorship. 'Traditional' censorship by contrast was over-ambitious in its attempts to control the World's literature and the import of media through the co-option of many potentially unco-operative agents such as librarians and booksellers. Perhaps most important of all there was no general opposition from the white community about media restrictions. Christopher Hope found that "... people are told very little. They wish to know even less"⁴, accepting the small warnings on the front pages of newspapers and voting in large numbers (80% or over) in both May 1987 and September 1989 for parties practising or advocating the methods of a police state. "Pictures of rugby and beauty queens have replaced township unrest on many front pages", wrote Tony Heard. "Now the darkness is almost complete"⁵. Truth had become subversion.

OPTIMISTIC

Considerable damage has been done to South African society, and to the liberation movement, by Emergency censorship. However, there were contradictions within the system, and combative challenges to it, which make a more optimistic viewpoint not unreasonable. When the **Weekly Mail** was suspended for four weeks in November 1988, its co-editor, Anton Harber, in a pugnacious response, called upon journalists to stop worrying about the law and adopt the tactics of the streetfighter. Only in this way, he reasoned, could remnants of the right to know be preserved in the face of the imperatives of the

totalitarian state. This strand of defiance was visible throughout the Emergency and it has important implications for the future. Significantly it surfaced in resolutions closing an Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa (IDASA) conference in January 1990, at which it was agreed that laws restricting democratic debate should be broken.

A limited amount of textual and photographic material about township experience has filtered through in spite of the exclusion of journalists and camera crews. In the early days of the Emergency this was because the police followed up cases retrospectively. With the launch of the Defiance Campaign in August 1989 a new policy of arrest and confiscation on the spot became apparent as well as a continuance of raids on the offices of foreign news networks. The aim of the police seemed to be to remove Press persons at the scenes of non-violent protest, before taking violent action themselves. In the first few weeks of the campaign 74 arrests were noted and the determination of journalists was epitomized by repeated arrests. Overseas news coverage, written and pictorial, was far more comprehensive than had been the case three years earlier and the South African Police expressed anxiety about material smuggled out of the country.

Comments in works such as **Now everyone is afraid**⁶ offer an insight into loopholes in the Emergency. The acquisition of information about police activity in less accessible areas was made virtually impossible until court proceedings were instituted. The lodging of affidavits and the bringing of interdicts against kitskonstabels was not seen as a direct tactic but one which would generate publicity. In this way information about human rights abuses at KTC, Bhongolethu (Outshoorn), Aberdeen and Hofmeyr was brought to light, although the State tried to embargo affidavits relating to community grievances. Similar tactics exposed the activities of the Ama-Afrika vigilante group in the Eastern Cape, and some headway was made in countering government propaganda about so-called 'black on black violence' and 'faction fights'. In KwaNdebele three journalists from the **Star** found a three day spell in custody at Kwaggafontein police station a fertile source of information. In the case of a Black Sash project looking into municipal police in the Eastern Cape⁷, research was only possible because they did not fall within the definition of security forces. In the published findings some references to the South African Police and South African Defence Force had to be excised. On the other hand, de Villiers and Roux⁸ reported that Press curbs restricted information on municipal police activities.

Political trials, required from time to time to display South Africa's legal system, also proved to be a useful source of data, possibly explaining why the government appeared to grow less keen on them. Occasionally there were suggestions that reporting on political trials would be restricted until judgement was given. The various Alexandra Treason Trials, for example, revealed information about people's courts, alternative township structures, and police and vigilante action. Inquests also provided a channel for the release of information, for example about the existence of Askaris, or renegade ANC cadres, now in the service of the State. Little is still publicly known about

the deaths of 11 people at Trust Feed on 3 December 1988 because of Emergency restrictions, but the inquest magistrate in October 1989 found circumstantial evidence of the involvement of three policemen from New Hanover.

INNOVATION

Prohibitions at the point of publication were circumvented in a number of innovative ways. Initially there was an air of despair involved in the printing of black lines across vulnerable text, and the choice of the potato by the editor of **Sowetan** as the subject of his weekly column, in the absence of a clear right to report political matters. The **Weekly Mail** argued that once the Bureau of Information had released its version of events, details from other sources could be published. This adroit approach was declared illegal in court. Initially it was believed to be illegal to publish the names of detainees. In the confusion of 12 June 1986 a few inaccurate lists appeared, but after 25 July a concerted effort was made to list all those persons whose next-of-kin had been informed, an assumption of public knowledge. The ready availability of names stands in contrast to the Argentinian experience during the 'dirty war' of 1976 to 1983 where only two Buenos Aires newspapers, one English language, dared to provide this protective role. The **Weekly Mail** became skilled at drawing attention to censorship without infringing the regulations and simultaneously raising the spirits of its supporters: blank spaces were, for instance, filled with the names and phone numbers of government ministers, to whom readers were referred for further information. The alternative Press became accustomed to releasing information in thinly veiled terms easily interpreted by its readership. Thus "familiar yellow vehicles", "persons who may not be named" "a substance inducing tears" became longhand for police vans, the police themselves, and tear gas.

The suspension procedures launched against **New Nation** were challenged in court, but this succeeded only in postponing the inevitable. Both the court proceedings and the process of appeal to the Minister under the Emergency did, however, allow the public to see how muddled and arbitrary were the reasons for suspension. **Weekly Mail** published the front page of the first suspended edition of **New Nation**, an action subsequently made illegal under the Emergency. **South** managed to sell 20% of its 9 May 1988 edition in two hours before its suspension was gazetted, and the next month was spent in in-house training, helping **Grassroots**, a Western Cape community newspaper, and launching a Press agency. **Grassroots** and **New Era** had suspensions lifted as recently as May 1989. However, the outburst by Stoffel Botha in May 1988, when he described the alternative Press as 'media terrorists' purveying 'publicity for revolution'; **Work in Progress** editor Glen Moss' description of warnings as "incoherent and ungrammatical" and his point that scattered references could not be considered "systematic publication of subversive propaganda" as required by the regulations⁹; and, most significantly, international support for the Save the Press campaign, devalued the suspension process even in the eyes of the State. Conversely the lack of a rational and predictable basis to the Minister's comments and actions encouraged the self censorship which is borne of uncertainty.

SLOW PROCESSES

There was evidence of dissension, inefficiency and embarrassingly slow processes within the system. The latter could have been exacerbated by the need to reiterate the warning process with the declaration of each new emergency. None of these fitted the image of the Emergency as a time of quick, firm action. Nor did the authorities persuade anyone that this arbitrary but drawn out procedure was in any sense objective or scientific despite the existence of a panel of experts to advise the Minister. Suspended titles, to outward appearances and like many detainees, emerged strengthened by the experience. **Grassroots**, for example, increased its print run from 30 000 to 50 000 when it re-appeared in May 1989; while **New Nation** printed 65 000 copies after a suspension warning in November 1989 and sales rose 82% during the year as a whole. Similarly, plans to establish a register of news agencies in June/July 1988 had to be abandoned when the practicalities were investigated – under this proposed regulation even the local gardening correspondent regularly writing for a rural newspaper would have been liable for registration. There was also considerable international opposition to the measure. The Save the Press campaign, which was at its height at this time, demanded the right to acquire and disseminate information, move freely around the country, air all views and act on behalf of any cause, and associate with any movement. Most opposition newspapers, whether of the mainline or alternative traditions, carried front page warnings about Emergency censorship, although not necessarily every day. Some were comprehensive in their explanation of the state of affairs, but the most creative was **South's**: "You have the right to know".

Restrictions on individuals and organizations proved increasingly thin: in August 1989 a number of persons and corporate bodies declared themselves unrestricted, although the UDF itself was not to do this until 17 January 1990. At the height of the Defiance Campaign in November 1989 Transkei lifted its State of Emergency and bans on Charterist, Africanist and Black Consciousness organizations. Even before the campaign however, restricted views were becoming more readily accessible. The London based **Southscan** on 7 June 1989, for instance, published an interview with Ephraim Nkoe (education officer) and Simon Ntombela (publicity secretary) technically in their individual capacities, but in reality speaking on behalf of the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO). The Defiance Campaign included a national 'speak out' by restricted persons which was reported verbatim by the alternative Press. The same Ephraim Nkoe was a speaker at the launch of the Durban Youth Congress in August 1989 and was quoted in the Press. In September 1989 a Northern Transvaal SAYCO member was charged with furthering the aims of his restricted organization, in what was believed to be the first such legal action. At the same time SAYCO issued a statement condemning the charge, which was published in the Press. In the same month another restricted organization, the End Conscription Campaign, released a national register of 771 men refusing to serve in an apartheid army. Although full details of related Press conferences could not be published, information about the objectors and their experiences in Namibia and Angola were a powerful challenge to the regulations which made it an

offence to undermine conscription. The State was able to outlaw organizations and disrupt communications but not remove accumulated experience nor control thought¹⁰.

Both the government and the Mass Democratic Movement were well aware of the effect of draconian censorship on democratic discourse. Mohammed Valli Moosa of the UDF National Executive speaking in June 1989¹¹ admitted that the Emergency had disrupted communication and created isolation, while much energy had been expended on a purely holding operation. David Webster wrote about the chaotic days of June 1986, pointing out that at that time only the trade unions had the communications structure to maintain a flow of information. The human rights observer of June 1986 would have needed to be capable of a considerable level of optimism to believe that three years hence, still under a State of Emergency, fulfillment of the right to know would still be on the agenda, and fiercely contested.

This combative response developed particularly strongly in the wake of the February 1988 restrictions, led in particular by the Church. New umbrella groups such as the Committee for the Defence of Democracy in South Africa (CDDSA) and the Azanian Co-ordinating Committee (AZACCO) replaced restricted organizations, but they too were quickly silenced. More significant was the restriction of the Detainees Parents Support Committee (DPSC). Its documentation and publicity role were quickly taken over by the Human Rights Commission with a structure and brief far wider than the DPSC. The monitoring roles of many local detainee support groups were taken on by unaffected organizations and new projects were started by relatively well protected university departments and research groups. The idea that academic freedom demands the academic responsibility of documenting State repression became more widely accepted in universities than hitherto. Similarly the number of human rights activists and progressive journalists increased.

TRUTH

The nature of South African society and its international links have been such that the truth cannot be suppressed in its entirety, although the government evinced a clear desire to do so since the report of the Steyn Commission in 1982. Even the barriers created by apartheid have been too porous to permit this. Similarly there have been too many people committed to the right to know to control all the information crucial to preservation of the status quo. The esoteric details of the South African struggle are often difficult even for sympathetic foreign observers, but the South African government's assault on freedom of expression and information touched on an international issue which is only too readily understood overseas. In this context the alternative media became well entrenched given the circumstances, and even attracted material aid. In 1988, for instance, the Canadian government announced a million dollar plan to establish a legal advisory fund for the alternative Press, support individuals suffering from censorship and blunt government propaganda. International pressure was important, and possibly crucial, in limiting suspension and defeating the registration of news agencies. Two, perhaps unfashionable, further points are worth making. Firstly, the existence of Parliament and opposition MPs to ask questions

ensured that the authorities were forced to reveal some information. Secondly, the failure of the international community to enforce sanctions rigorously gave the South African government reason to behave in a relatively restrained fashion; and refrain from the tactics remembered from Argentina and Chile in the 1970s which would have disrupted communication totally.

In the opinion of the editors of *Work in Progress* "... any government which has as much to hide as South Africa's rulers must fear all but the most tame sections of the media" and "... is justified in fearing what a competent media might publish"¹². It is the task of South African democrats to uncover and disseminate as much information about the way the country is run as possible. A deeper understanding of power structures and relationships is fundamental to the debate about the planning of a future in which people have greater control over their destinies. Experience of life under a State of Emergency has shown that within a deeply entrenched culture of resistance in South Africa is an important group which has as a priority the maintenance of channels of communication. So draconian were the implications of the State of Emergency that the numbers of people committed to the right to know grew considerably and their skills and tactics expanded commensurately. It is thus possible that out of the challenge of severe repression might emerge stronger foundations for a policy of freedom of information in a post-apartheid South Africa. □

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by Yusuf Bhamjee

ACCESSIBLE POLITICS

Chris Heymans and Gerhard Totemeyer (eds): **Government by the People: The Politics of Local Government in South Africa**. Juta, 1988.

Given the municipal elections and the implementation of the new local government structures that are under way, this is a most welcome book. It is timely, useful and also, the first of its kind.

A wide range of people, representing a cross-section of the ideological spectrum have contributed to this book. The usefulness of the text lies in the fact that the politics of local government in South Africa has been made accessible to a wider reading public. It is written in a fairly simple style – a book which is not only of interest for the specialist alone but can be read by the average practitioner of local government as well as people involved in community organisations.

The articles are broadly divided into three themes:-

- (a) The relevance of local government;
- (b) Local government and the politics of "reform" and "restructuring" in South Africa; and
- (c) Future trends

The general feeling amongst people who write about local government and certainly amongst those whose work appears in this publication, is that Central Government is seeking to make reforms at local government level – there is a belief that this process will be a building block towards more fundamental changes at the national level.

Local government reforms can be perceived to take place at least partly in response to struggles waged by civic and community organisations. Local government is a site of struggle, and changes at this level may affect policies at a national level. Changes brought about by struggles from below rather than concessions granted from above make it possible for local government to function as a forum for change – that will lead towards more fundamental national changes.

This review will discuss the book under consideration chapter by chapter.

Tötemeyer (Chapter 1) elucidates our understanding of local government by introducing key concepts like legitimacy and authority, conflict and instability, ability and viability of local government. He then discusses local autonomy and decentralisation, the relationship between central and local government, ethnicity and integration, politics and administration. Within the South African context – both in terms of central government and local government – politics and administration are inextricably linked. Blacks view politics and administration as part of the oppressive machinery of apartheid. This promotes conflict and instability. Tötemeyer therefore argues that fundamental structural changes are necessary “for a government in search of survival”.

Focusing on Sommer’s theories of the best strategy which could be used to promote social and political integration in a diverse society, Tötemeyer suggests that government finances should be better spent in promoting interaction between diverse groups. He does not however specify how.

Hanekom (Chapter 2) defines and describes the characteristics of local government before going on to cite the factors responsible for the development of local government.

Hanekom makes the point that local government in South Africa does not enjoy the autonomy that it should; rather, it operates within the parameters laid down by central government. However, instead of developing this argument to expose the top-down control characteristic of the South African government, he discusses local government in a general context, thereby understating the importance of this point.

He also addresses the relevance of local government in a democratic society, putting forward a convincing argument in favour of local government – “as a community-sensitive agent of social and economic progress”. However the democratic content of his argument would only be realised in a future South Africa.

Bekker (Chapter 3) offers “a prognosis for effective devolution in the light of contemporary local government reform in South Africa.”

Arguments in favour of devolution are convincing and his examination of the complexities of devolution in terms of a revenue base, legitimacy, macro-economic and fiscal principles is enlightening.

Robert Cameron (Chapter 5) galvanizes the argument that local government restructuring has led to greater centralisation. This he does simply by rejecting the notion that the RSCs are extensions of local authorities. Instead he shows that the RSCs in effect exercise top-down control via the Provincial Administrators who are directly appointed by and accountable to the Minister of Constitutional Development.

Hence Cameron states that: “The government’s intention to devolve powers to local authorities is countered by its determination to keep control of the reform process.” Cameron therefore concludes, “They (government) make a mockery of democracy.”

Pierre du Toit (Chapter 6) examines in greater detail the pivotal role of the Administrator and the RSCs in general. He firmly concludes, “To believe that the RSC Act is not racially discriminatory is nothing less than fiction.”

In discussing power relations both within and outside of RSCs, he concludes that they (RSCs) have failed to take “South Africa out of the deadlock of racial ideology.”

Solomon (Chapter 7) provides an excellent account of financial and fiscal aspects of local government. He looks at the effectiveness of the RSCs as redistributive agents of wealth, which are required by statute to sell bulk services to local authorities. Legally, he argues, the RSC is not a local authority. He declares the RSCs are disastrous in terms of taxes and levies, subsidies and borrowing. Solomon does not view RSCs as financially viable bodies. The RSC system lacks internal safeguards or checks and balances, and they do not enjoy legitimacy. He concludes that, “Local autonomy is a useful policy principle in South Africa, regardless of who implements it. It is clear however that the RSC initiative is not fostering local autonomy, but political hegemony. As such, it can only succeed if supported by active force.”

Poto (Chapter 8) in a novel way looks at the financial and political viabilities of Black Local Authorities – perceived as serving the interest of the government, they lack credibility and legitimacy. Thus their future is bleak.

Poto suggests that the South African government begins negotiations with representative leaders and that the government should attempt to depoliticise local government in order for BLAs to play an effective role in local government structure.

Humphries (Chapter 9) postulates that while BLAs focus on own affairs, the RSCs were partly introduced to effect Black participation at the general affairs level, indirectly linking the Black community to central government. To legitimise this, attempts were made to improve the living conditions of urban Blacks via the redistribution of the revenue clause of the RSCs. Linked to this exercise, is the security strategy, effectively introduced with the collapse of Black authorities nationally. The common assumption shared by both constitutional and security officials is that local authorities lack legitimacy due to insufficient infrastructural resources and not any political opposition to the local authorities.

Humphries argues that the States of Emergency have been declared to ensure the survival of local authorities in the face of political opposition, rather than to ensure broad national security.

In conclusion, Humphries questions both the chances of the policies of the National Party towards local authorities succeeding and future government policies towards BLAs. He predicts that RSCs will have difficulty in generating enough funds to “affect the political standing of local authorities single-handedly.”

Seegers (Chapter 10) focuses on the development of the National Security Management System (NSMS), using a “civil-military” approach. She traces the creation of the State Security Council, Total National Strategy and the

Total Onslaught Strategy. She argues that Joint Management Centres (JMCs) can fill in the administrative gaps in local government – which collapsed especially in Black and Coloured areas. She maintains that even in White areas, the JMCs can be used to address problems created by the RSCs. In conclusion, Seegers states that “As long as the security establishment does not qualify its service to the state, it is condemned to play a role of quasi-police and quasi-government.”

Atkinson and Heymans (Chapter 11) cite their concerns on the expectations of practitioners about the government’s reform process and practitioner’s views about developments towards non-racial institutions at a local level.

They do recognise that civic and other township groupings demand single, non-racial local authorities.

Their concluding remarks are that local government is a possible arena for political accommodation since extra-institutional opposition groups and many White participants are open to suggestions other than government ones.

David Dewar (Chapter 12) identifies three relevant characteristics of urban development in the future – urban growth, poverty and unemployment, and levels of income inequality. To address these issues meaningfully he calls for marked changes in city management practices.

He points out that local government needs to be decentralised and rebuilding should begin at the local level with people directly affected by decisions controlling such decisions. He tends to isolate the changes needed in urban centres from the overall political changes needed in South Africa. Aside from mentioning the Group Areas Act, he does not discuss any Apartheid policies which impede the proper operation of city planning and urbanisation strategies.

This chapter would have been much more appropriate if it were written in the context of South Africa’s apartheid policies, and had taken into account the effects of increased rural-urban migration, and the poverty/underdevelopment of rural areas.

Watson (Chapter 13) makes the point that non-racialism is only the first step in the move towards a democratic system of government.

It is suggested that functions of local authority be widely defined and decentralisation be carried out as far as possible. Watson criticises amalgamation, saying that it reduces democracy as it increases bureaucracy of administration. Watson’s concluding remark is that the

system of representation, the powers allocated to central government, the local finance system and the structure of local government must change in order to solve South Africa’s developmental problems.

Swilling (Chapter 14) traces the development of local government in South Africa under the Apartheid regime – community councils, BLAs and RSCs. After laying the foundations of non-racial municipalities, he discusses the significance of the Freedom Charter to local government. Swilling concludes that “The future of the South African political crisis will depend to a large extent on what happens at the local level.” The Black majority is now demanding the right to determine its own future.

Atkinson (Chapter 15) discusses the necessity for local government restructuring, the importance of shared political values, the importance of negotiations and finally proposals for the resuscitation of local initiatives. However she argues strongly for a need to create the climate for negotiations at both local and national levels.

Local government negotiations are likened to negotiations at the national level. It is incumbent on central government to create the climate for negotiations – as “Effective negotiations cannot take place from a position of a monopoly of white power. Such a monopoly will only breed suspicion, resentment and radicalism.”

Reviewing the chapters together, it emerges clearly that there is too much overlap and repetition, especially when dealing with the RSCs. A certain degree of repetition is understandable in view of the fact that different authors wrote each chapter, but the extent could have been reduced.

The major weakness of the book is the absence of the voice of the extra-parliamentary opposition.

The term “restructuring” is used loosely to lend credibility to the State’s reform initiatives which in practice, are not designed to discard, but to further entrench, apartheid. Restructuring is the state’s method of reproducing Apartheid and strengthening the inequalities embedded in the system rather than transforming society to a more just and equitable system.

While the authors recognise this, they continue using the term in the above context, creating a degree of confusion. In the context of their arguments, perhaps a more appropriate term ought to have been “reproducing/entrenching Apartheid.”

For all this, the book is a very useful read and is warmly recommended. □

WEST BANK REALITY

David Grossman: **The Yellow Wind**, translated from the Hebrew by Haim Watzman. London: Jonathan Cape, 1988)

In the late-twentieth-century world few states show such striking convergences as Israel and South Africa. Both are politics that have been brought into existence by a gradual process of conquest, the imposition of force on the territories' older inhabitants. ('Conquest' is a raw uncomfortable term usually evaded in the sanitized rhetoric of the dominant elites.) Both countries have become a wrestling ground for rival nationalisms – Afrikaner/African or Zionist/Palestinian. The airwaves carry to the point of tedium the surly ideologies of the major combatants, but still for the attentive observer there come from both countries many other voices, the voices of decency and courage as individual men and women face up to a dauntingly oppressive environment. Of course there are profound differences between the two countries – most obvious in their size and location: Israel is a very small country, with little more than one-fiftieth the land area of South Africa: smallness sometimes magnifies tension. At the same time Israel occupies a part of the earth's surface that more than any other has for millenia been a scene of conflict between differing cultures. How sharp here is the contrast with a country set at one of the world's extremities. But for all that the convergences of our own times remain insistent. That is why it is impossible for any one familiar with South Africa to read about contemporary Israel and not find him or herself struck by the parallels. That is why it seems particularly worth while drawing the attention of a South African readership to a very remarkable book that has just come out of Israel.

David Grossman is a young Israeli writer, the author of two novels and three children's books. In 1986 – some months before the outbreak of the Palestinian uprising – an Israeli weekly journal suggested to him that he spend a couple of months travelling round the occupied territories of the West Bank, talking not to politicians and officials – their statements are always predictable – but to ordinary people. A whole issue of the journal, **Koteret Rashit**, was devoted to Grossman's account of his experiences. It was intended to serve as a contribution to the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the Six Days' War. Grossman's long article became a sensation: republished in book form, it became 'the fastest-selling book in the country's history'. **The New Yorker** took it up and gave it extensive coverage. Now it has been published in England – regrettably only in hard covers. I would urge an enterprising South African publisher to find ways of bringing out locally a paperback edition at an affordable price.

CLASSIC

For David Grossman has written what I am certain will come to be regarded as one of the classics of our time. He

has done something simple, difficult and important: simple to define, difficult to execute, important in its consequences. In essence what he has done is look reality straight in the face – and the reality of the West Bank is painful, frightening and therefore disturbing. Humankind – some words of T.S. Eliot float, possibly garbled, to the surface of my mind – can't take very much reality. And yet when reality is presented with a proper sensitivity it becomes assimilable and invigorating. Grossman's book has a resonance that gives to his local theme a universal relevance.

Grossman starts his exploration in the Palestinian refugee camp of Deheisha south of Jerusalem 'where twelve thousand Palestinian refugees live in one of the highest population densities in the world'. He spends some time in Ofna, one of the settlements built up by the members of Gush Emunim, one of the most extreme of the Zionist groups. He visits the campus of an Arab university and sits in on the proceedings of an Israeli military court. He seeks out West Bankers who are working 'illegally' and therefore living clandestinely in Israel proper. He goes to the Allenby Bridge over the Jordan and sees the way that Arabs entering or leaving the West Bank are treated. He goes to one Arab village whose inhabitants after being thrown out by the Israelis, have been allowed after many years to return, and to another village which has been cut in two by the Green Line, the 1967 frontier, so that the two halves have grown painfully different and apart. He meets an Arab whose son has been shot dead as a terrorist, whose house has been totally demolished and who has thus been reduced to absolute beggary. He goes to the funeral of a Jewish woman killed by terrorists and learns how the men of the settlement have wreaked their revenge on a neighbouring Arab town.

MORE THAN A JOURNALIST

All this, you may say, any journalist could have done. True enough – but Grossman is something more than a journalist. He is an Israeli and a novelist. As a liberal minded Israeli he has long been deeply troubled by the occupation. 'I could not understand how an entire nation like mine, an enlightened nation by all accounts, is able to train itself to live as a conqueror without making its own life wretched'. He found himself beginning to think of 'that kidney-shaped expanse of land the West Bank, as an organ transplanted into my body against my wishes and about which I would have to come to some sort of conclusion and decision'. In other words he is constantly possessed by a deep moral concern. Translated into human terms this develops into deeply humane egalitarianism. In the course of his travels he meets a remarkable Israeli lawyer who defends Arabs in the military court.

'In her relations with Arabs there is something you don't come across very often – straightforwardness and equality, without a trace of sanctimony; she places herself neither above or below her clients, and there is no soft and self-effacing paternalism, Very rare.'

It is this rare quality that Grossman also possesses. It makes him a sympathetic listener, a stimulating conversationalist. He can relate to people of widely differing backgrounds.

It is no less important that he is by training a novelist. For the novelist has to develop a special sensitivity to place and person, the eye reflective and observant, quick to note the subtler details of scene or gesture, the ear trained to record the idiosyncratic inflexions of speech. (Here a word of praise and gratitude to Grossman's translator from the Hebrew for rendering so readably the texture of Grossman's prose.) Taken all together then, the qualities which Grossman deploys provide the reader with the opportunity of acquiring an exceptionally penetrating insight into a cruel and difficult situation.

HATRED

Hatred is a political emotion of which many people, especially those sheltered by a reasonably affluent lifestyle, have no personal experience. Yet in his conversations with Palestinian Arabs Grossman is constantly presented with the reality and the intensity of their hatred. Take, for example, the words of a 30-year old Palestinian who spent ten years in jail for being a member of a nationalist organization:

'Of course I hate you. Maybe at the beginning I didn't hate and only feared. Afterwards, I began to hate. Before I went to jail, I didn't even know I was a Palestinian. There they taught me who I am. Now I have opinions . . . Understand: the average Palestinian is not the fascist and hating type, but you and the life under your occupation push him into hatred. Look at me, for example. You took ten years of my life from me; You exiled my father in '68. He hadn't done anything. He wasn't even a PLO supporter. Maybe even the opposite. But you wanted to kick out anyone who had an opinion about anything. So that we would be here completely without leaders . . . You took everything. National identity, and the identity of every one of us who fears you and depends on you for his livelihood, you took everything. You made us into living dead. And me, what remains for me? Only the hatred of you and thoughts of politics. That's another evil you brought upon us, that you made every man here, even the most ordinary fellah, into a politician.'

Hatred – poisonous and invigorating – affects almost everyone, even the smallest children. In one refugee camp Grossman visits a kindergarten. Some of the children are the fourth generation to live in the camp. 'The children here know everything', one of the teachers tells him. 'On any night the army may enter their house, right into the house, conduct a search, shout, turn over the blankets and slash at them with their bayonets!' A little boy makes a gesture with a stick as if to shoot him. 'Who do you want to shoot?' the teachers ask the child. And he answers, 'Jews –because the Jews came and stole my uncle.' 'Is this the answer' – Grossman turns to the two young women teachers – 'to bring up another generation

and another in hatred? Couldn't you try, maybe, another way?' The two teachers, 'each in her own way, in a whisper or with self-assurance', give the same reply, 'There is no other way'.

INCOMPREHENSION

The obverse to Palestinian hatred would seem on the Jewish side to be incomprehension. Grossman brings this out very clearly in his account of his visit to the Gush Emunim settlement at Ofna. He was warned that the settlers were 'crazy, fanatic, blind', but knowing that 'reality never surrenders to a stereotypic view' he 'went in order to learn'. He wanted to find out how the settlers viewed their Arab neighbours, whether they were capable of developing any powers of empathy. To try and get them to understand what he was getting at, he talked to them of his own concept of time, of the great importance he attached to it, of his unwillingness to 'tolerate the thought that even one moment of my life might pass empty of meaning, of interest, or enjoyment', 'Were I living under foreign rule, what would torture me', he tells then, 'would be – beside the tangible things that are taken as given – the fact that I do not control my time - the curfews, the roadblocks, the interrogations.' The settlers of Ofna dismiss this sensitive point with a raucous gibe, and there is a hum of agreement when one of them says that 'he does not want to think even for a minute about the situation of the Arabs around him, because he is caught up in a struggle with them': he is at war and any attempt to pity them would serve only to endanger his own position.

'The whole world is against us, they broadcast to you with every word' – these Zionist zealots cherishing their dreams of a Greater Israel. 'Inevitably, they have created their own prison, their spiritual Sparta on the mountain tops, out of which they peek, stiff and prickly, in the face of all other opinions'. Talking to them leaves Grossman with a sense of his own lack of comprehension. He cannot understand their grandiose motivation. 'I fear life among people who have an obligation to an absolute order. Absolute orders require, in the end, absolute deeds, and I, nebbish, am a partial, relative, imperfect man who prefers to make correctible mistakes rather than attain supernatural achievements.'

STRATEGIES

Haters and zealots – these are the polar extremes. And in between there comes, of course, all those who have worked out their own strategies. There are the refugees who become 'addicted to their dreams', living in 'a splendid past or a longed-for future'. There are the so-called 'wastonaire' (derived from a local slang word **wasta** meaning 'mediation'), Arabs who batten on the opportunities offered by the occupation, enriching themselves in the role of middlemen between the military and the local population. There are the many Israelis who 'cling to the desire to remain ignorant and unaware. Faithful to their half-closed consciousness, they immerse themselves in a despairing, miserable moral slumber: "Wake me when it's over".' And there are a few who are prepared to look reality squarely in the face.

One such is an Israeli ecologist, Nisim Krispil, who has spent years wandering through the West Bank, 'speaks Arabic like a native and knows all the smallest customs

and manners.' 'We could have built something with the Palestinians in partnership. In mutual assistance and friendliness. Today the only people who come to them are people with demands . . . No one has taken an interest in what can be improved, to distribute clothes to the needy, to bring toys to the kindergartens', But Krispil himself lives up to his preaching, spending much of his time engaged in small, practical deeds of kindness. He goes everywhere unarmed, knowing that Arabs would be enraged and humiliated if they saw him carrying a gun.

And then there is Raj'a Shehade, a Palestinian lawyer and writer. Shehade is the author of a book, **The Third Way**, in which he expounds his personal philosophy of action. He rejects the two ways most obviously open to him as a Palestinian – the way of collaboration, the way of armed struggle. Instead he opts for the 'third way', which is summed up in the Arabic word **Sumud** meaning 'endurance' or, as Grossman interprets it, 'a sort of passive combativeness, gritting one's teeth to keep from giving in, and to keep from losing one's mind.' It is an austere philosophy designed to provide an antidote against despair – and with so many Palestinians condemned to live in refugee camps not only in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip but also in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, despair is an emotion never far from the surface. Shehade too fears for the future: 'the occupation is steadily destroying us', 'destroying the entire fabric of civil and traditional life'. And yet, he tells Grossman, 'I do not despair. There are so many things to fight for. There are so many things to improve. From looking after mental health institutions to the effort to set up a law school. There are a million things

that a person can devote himself to. You can't give up'.

HUMAN

In the last paragraph of the book Grossman quotes a remark made by Albert Camus that the passage from speech to moral action has a name – "to become human". But Shehade has already said much the same thing: 'one of the things which, for me, gives meaning to my life is that the situation is a challenge: to remain human even under the conditions that prevail'. And so Grossman reflects that 'nothing matches the occupation as a great personal challenge. As a personal crossroads demanding action and thought'. I am not sure that many people who live in the cosiness of the affluent West will grasp what Grossman is getting at, but I am certain that friends in South Africa will appreciate what he means. And agree with him too when he adds, as one who has faced his challenge, 'sometimes you can gain in this way – for a split second – real mountain air.'

Finally, an explanation of the book's title. 'Have you ever heard', an elderly Arab asks Grossman, 'of the yellow wind. It is 'a hot and terrible east wind', coming from 'the gate of Hell' once in a few generations. It is a wind that 'sets the world afire, and people seek shelter from its heat in the caves and caverns, but even there it finds those it seeks, those who have performed cruel and unjust deeds, and there, in the cracks in the boulders, it exterminates them one by one'. And 'the rocks will be white from the heat and the mountains will crumble into a powder which will cover the land like yellow cotton'.

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