



# The World That Was Ours

The Story of the Rivonia Trial

*Hilda Bernstein*

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Hilda Bernstein

SAW

Nelson Mandela is the world's most famous political prisoner. He has become the symbol of those struggling for a free and just South Africa; and to the world, a symbol of the necessity to eradicate racism. In June 1989 Mandela and five others will have been in prison for twenty-five years, sentenced to life imprisonment after the notorious Rivonia Trial in 1963-64. Hilda Bernstein's husband, Rusty, was one of the accused. Her story of the trial and its effect on her family and political associates is a testament to the principles and policies of the ANC leadership, then and now.

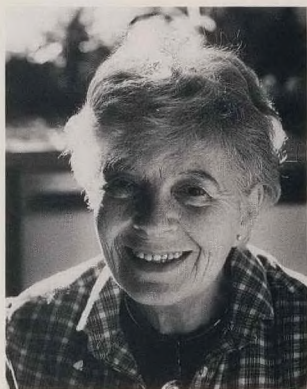
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International pressure for Mandela's release has never been stronger. Hilda Bernstein's compelling book makes us feel and understand why he should be set free.

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Hilda Bernstein was born in London. She lived most of her life in South Africa where she was active in the liberation movement, trade unions and women's organizations. Elected to the Johannesburg City Council during the Second World War, she spoke and acted on behalf of the voteless black majority. She was imprisoned and banned from all political activities as well as from her profession as a journalist. In 1964 after the Rivonia Trial she left South Africa with her family and made her home in Britain. Her paintings and etchings are in public and private collections in many countries. She has written extensively about South Africa including a prize-winning novel *Death is Part of the Process*, which has been filmed by the BBC.

**'Hilda Bernstein is one of the very few people who have worked closely with Nelson Mandela and the leadership of the ANC over 40 years. Her understanding and her gift for giving expression to the crisis in South Africa are unique ... The essential book for all who really wish to know the history of the struggle for liberation in South Africa. I commend it without reserve.'**

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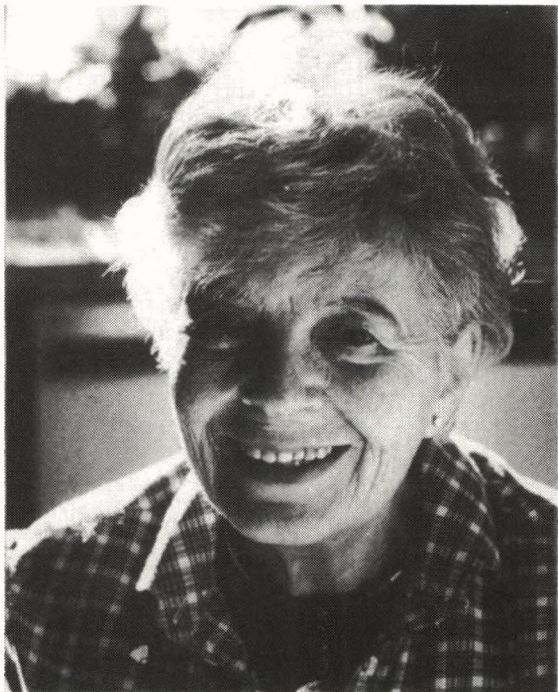
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ISBN 1-872086-01-2



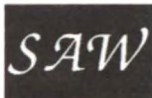
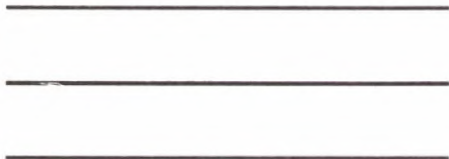
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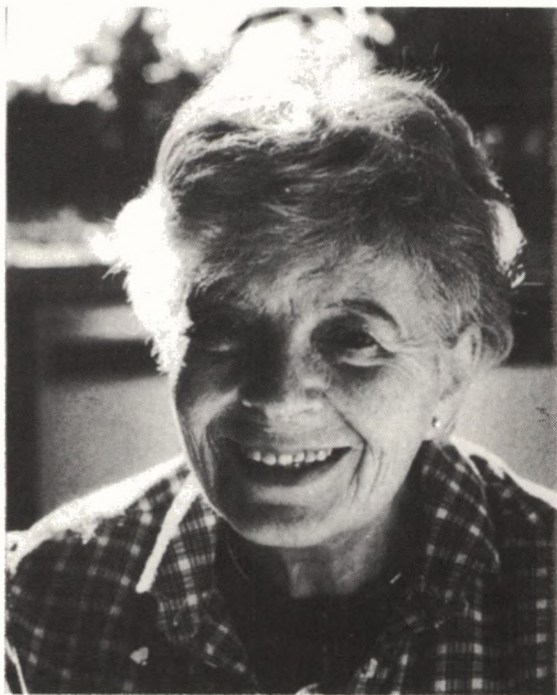


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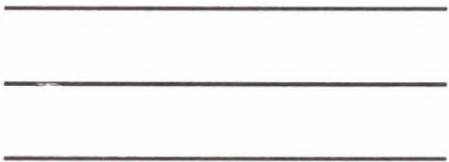
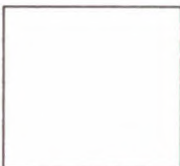
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One woman's experiences in a closing net of persecution, police and prisons. Hilda Bernstein gives a searing personal account of her family's life as enemies of apartheid - from police raids and house arrest to the Rivonia case in which her husband stood trial for his life with Nelson Mandela and others. And ultimately of a dramatic midnight escape from danger on foot across the borders of South Africa. A story that makes compelling and unforgettable reading.

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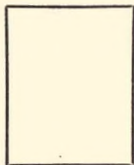


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■ *Melvyn Bragg*

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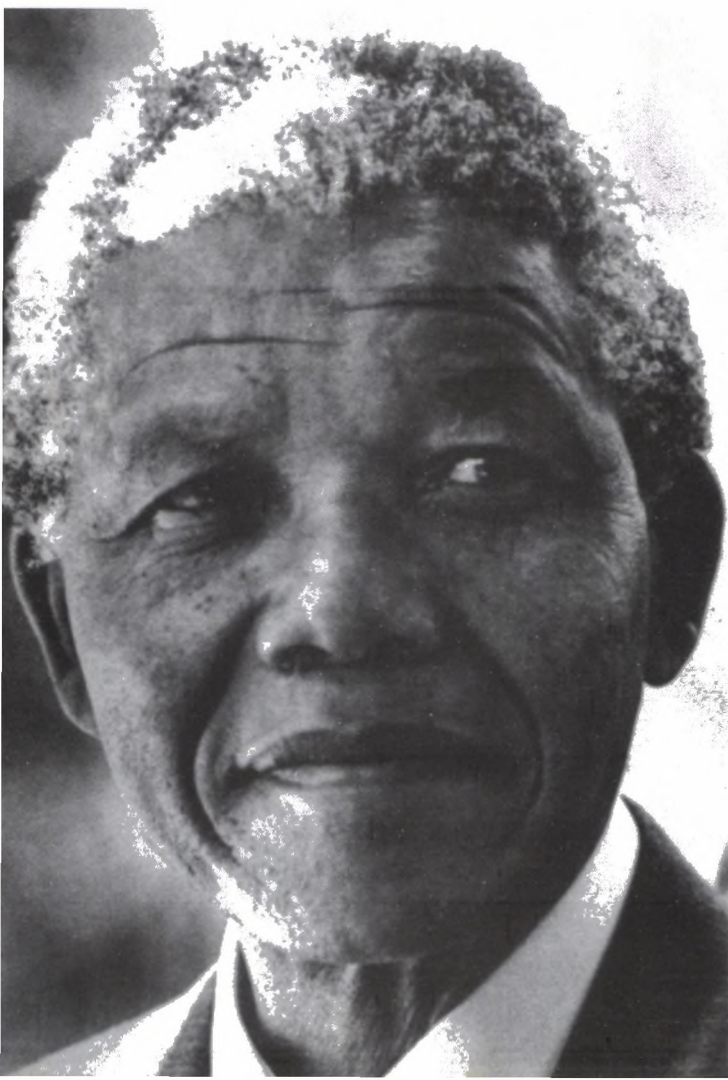
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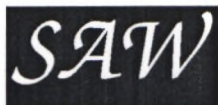
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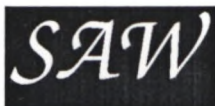
**PRICE: £14.95 (hbk); £5.95 (pbk)**

**PUBLICATION DATE: 12 June 1989  
[Published to mark 25 years served by  
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**PUBLISHED BY: SAWriters,  
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# SAWriters

invite you to the launch of

## The World That Was Ours

The Story of the Rivonia Trial

by *Hilda Bernstein*



on Monday 12 June 1989

at 6.45 p.m.

at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies

28 Russell Square, London WC1

RSVP

Syeda Ali-Khan on 01-788-4918

or Rob Turrell on 01-624-5700

# NEWS from SA Writers

## The World That Was Ours

### The Story of the Rivonia Trial

by Hilda Bernstein

This is Hilda Bernstein's moving account of the Rivonia trial in which her husband, Rusty, faced the death sentence. He was accused with Nelson Mandela and others of attempting to overthrow the South African State by violent means. Rusty was acquitted but Mandela and seven others were sentenced to life imprisonment.

Nelson Mandela is the world's most famous political prisoner. In June 1989 he and five others will have served twenty-five years of their sentences.

Hilda Bernstein was born in London. She lived most of her life in South Africa where she was active in the liberation movement, trade unions and women's organizations. Elected to the Johannesburg City Council during the Second World War, she spoke and acted on behalf of the voteless black majority.

She came to know Nelson Mandela well through working with him in anti-apartheid campaigns in the 1950s. She also came to know and love Father Trevor Huddleston, then active in trying to prevent the destruction of Sophiatown. At his 75th birthday celebrations this year he named two people who had had the biggest impact on his life: Harry Belafonte and Hilda Bernstein.

After the Sharpeville killings in 1960 the African National Congress, which had opposed apartheid through non-violent means, was banned. As a result of this and 48 years of struggle without significant progress towards democracy, the ANC adopted a strategy of sabotage. Hilda Bernstein and her husband did not participate in acts of sabotage, but they knew about the new direction taken by the movement, they were among its leaders and when reprisals were taken they knew they would be among the victims. She and her husband were imprisoned and banned from all political activities; he was put under house arrest and she was prevented from pursuing her profession as a journalist.

In 1964 after the Rivonia Trial she left South Africa with her family and made her home in Britain. Her paintings and etchings are in public and private collections in many countries. She has written extensively about South Africa including a prize-winning novel *Death is Part of the Process*, which has been filmed by the BBC.

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**Hilda Bernstein** will be available for interview between the 4 and 23 June. Her eldest daughter, **Toni Strasbourg** (the film director), and her husband **Ivan Strasbourg** (the photographer); **Harold Wolpe** (Reader in Sociology at Essex University), one of the Rivonia escapees; and **Joel Joffe** (Director of Allied Dunbar), the defending attorney in the Rivonia Trial will also be available for interviews.

The book will be launched at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 28 Russell Square, London, on 12 June.

To arrange an interview please contact Syeda Ali-Khan on 01 788-4918.

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# Southern African *Review of Books*

Vol.2, No.5, Issue 9

June/July 1989

£1.50



Norman Etherington **You Can't Get There From Here**



David Moore **Radical Peasant Populism**



Michael Wade **Peter Abrahams at Seventy**



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(01) 624-5700

Editor: Kenneth Parker  
Publisher: Rob Turrell  
Assistant Editor: Julie Wheelwright  
Subscriptions: Anne Macintosh  
Editorial Board: Robin Hallett,  
Zoë Wicomb, Ann Harries

**Southern African Review of Books**  
(ISSN 0952-8040)  
Vol. 2, No 5, June/July 1989.  
Appears bi-monthly.

### In the next issue:

**Colin Stoneman** reviews Wilbur Smith's new southern African blockbuster  
**Zoë Wicomb** reviews Maria Thomas' *Antonia saw the Oryx First* and a new collection of short stories  
**Anne Harries** reviews Paul Threoux's *My Secret Life*  
**Peter Vale** reports on a peripatetic journey through Namibia  
**Graham Pechey** reviews new fiction  
**Stephen Gray** reviews Mike Nicol's first novel  
**Harold Wolpe** considers the 'Johnson' thesis (he promises) and **Michael Burawoy** considers Harold Wolpe  
**Terry Ranger** on Cecil Rhodes

Cover: A Mozambiquan child is force-fed maize porridge by its mother. From *Forced Out. The Agony of the Refugee in Our Time* [Joe Alexander]

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or postal giro to Girobank, Bootle, Merseyside, GIR 0AA, acc. no. 5991005

*Southern African Review of Books* is published by Robert Vicat Ltd. Registered Office: 25A Greencroft Gardens, London, NW6 3LN. Printed by East End Offset Ltd, Unit 7, Empson Street, London E3 3LT. Typesetting: Robert Vicat Ltd. UK bookshop distribution: Central Books, 14 The Leathermarket, London SE1 3ER.



# YOU CAN'T GET THERE FROM HERE

Norman Etherington takes a close look at two books on a future South Africa without apartheid. The capitalist team (politics without economics) pins its faith on the master class abolishing its own supremacy, while the socialist team (economics without politics) reluctantly concludes that the economy of a post-apartheid society would not be so very different from the present one

The economic and political crisis which led to the on-going State of Emergency encouraged many informed observers to contemplate, for the first time in 25 years, that the end of apartheid was really at hand. These books had their genesis in 1985-86 and are usefully read together because of the different points of view they reflect. *After Apartheid* is the product of an academic conference held at York University in September/October 1986, from which seventeen papers were selected for publication. The contributors try to assess the difficulties that a post-apartheid government would face in attempting to implement the ANC's Freedom Charter. The socialist sympathies of most of the writers are tempered by an appreciation of the economic limits that would constrain any government operating in the late twentieth-century world economy.

In contrast, *A Future South Africa* is grounded on the premise that without a peaceful transition to a post-apartheid capitalist economy neither democracy nor plenty will be possible. This is not surprising, considering that the book results from a collaboration between the Anglo-American mining conglomerate, a handful of large US corporations and a selected panel of American academics, led by a Boston University sociologist, Peter Berger.

Although Boston once had a starring role in a violent revolution which culminated in the confiscation of the losers' property and the suppression of all their political rights, Professor Berger is no friend to revolutions. They are 'likely to lead to the substitution of one oligarchy by another, not to a democratic regime'. They 'create new tyrannies' (p. 295). This assumption is an article of faith among the contributors who ignore the many African examples of authoritarian governments which emerged from a peaceful negotiated transfer of power from former colonial masters, as well as the cautious and mild capitalist leadership of Zimbabwe which emerged with a Marxist-Leninist agenda from a guerrilla war.

It would be tedious, however, to dwell on the ideological predilections of either group of writers. They are stated up front and need no decoding. It is more productive to compare the prospects that a group of sophisticated economic thinkers envisage for a revolutionary manifesto proclaimed 34 years ago, with the possible futures which a team of writers sponsored by Anglo-American are prepared to accept.

The working methodology of the democratic capitalist team gives their results particular interest. Some twenty-five groups of 'key actors' in the South African drama were selected for investigation, ranging from the National Party and business elites to the United Democratic Front and the ANC. In a great many cases individuals from these groups were formally interviewed. Professor Berger supplied an 'analytic

schema' to guide the research; he also developed techniques for 'reality-testing' the answers supplied in the interviews. Although neither the names, nor the contents, nor the formats of these interviews are supplied in the text, they provide a data base of sorts on groups who are

Africa? Monetarist theory said that balance of payments and trade problems could be counteracted by devaluing the currency (thus boosting exports and curbing imports) and reducing the costs of exports by cutting real wages. Inflation was supposed to be kept in

tion into a technologically sophisticated workforce and make them consumers, the country is economically finished.

Can the ruling regime recover its equilibrium? Writing for the Anglo-American team, Lawrence Schlemmer is confident that the government is getting on top of the Emergency and will re-embark on a course of steady reform 'if the economy permits'. (p. 51) In contrast, the article on 'The United States and the World' by John, Marcum, Helen Kitchen and Michael Spicer in the same book is pessimistic:

A chronically violence-prone South Africa [and Anglo-American] will find itself faced with an emigration brain drain of key professionals and a decreasing access to the swiftly changing universe of knowledge which is essential for the proprietary technology upon which any prosperous or 'winning' nation must, in these times, be built. It can resist greatly but "the tide of history runs against South Africa". (p. 265)

This conclusion is echoed by the economists. Cassim sees the crisis brought on itself by a regime whose extinction is required before the prostrate national economy can recover. Jerome Blumenfeld predicts that the servicing of the huge external debt alone will stunt growth and cripple investment for the foreseeable future. Vishnu Payachee does not believe that much more help will be forthcoming from international agencies such as the IMF which previously helped South Africa surmount the debt crises of 1976-77 and 1982-83.

So how do our two teams of experts imagine that a transition to a society without apartheid might come about? If the Berger and Godsell book is largely politics with the economics left out, then Suckling and White's *After Apartheid* is economics without politics. It has virtually nothing to say on the transition though it appears to assume that it will be accompanied by violence. The other team of writers is obsessed with the transition. Dedicated as they are to the proposition that only a peacefully negotiated transfer of power will save the country, they examine the question from every angle.

Schlemmer, who like other contributors served on the Buthezi Commission of the early 1980s, believes that the regime will survive any internal or external challenge and can only move beyond apartheid by moving along the lines suggested by the Commission and the subsequent KwaZulu-Natal Indaba. However, he does not explain how this outcome would alter the fundamental structure of apartheid. Would Natal and the Eastern Cape — which he identifies as prime candidates for devolution as non-racial capitalist democracies — really become centres of technological innovation driving economic growth and generating new exports? Would big capital flow to these provincial centres any more readily than it has moved to the bantustans? And would white supremacy continue as

**A Future South Africa.**  
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edited by Peter L. Berger and Bobby Godsell  
Human & Rousseau, 344 + vii pp.,  
R24.95, 1988, 0-624-02617-5

**After Apartheid**  
edited by John Suckling & Landeg White  
James Currey & Africa World Press,  
216 + xv pp., £25.00/£8.95, 24 November 1988  
0-85255-109-X/0-85255-110-X

generally beyond the reach of the contemporary researcher.

What then do the two teams have to tell the average reader who wants to know the causes of the present crisis, whether the ruling regime may recover its equilibrium, how the transition to a post-apartheid society might come about and what types of future regimes might conceivably emerge?

Tied as they are to the opinions expressed by their 'key actors', Berger and Godsell's team have little to say on the causes of South Africa's dramatic economic and political collapse. This is partly because their book tends to be politics with the economics left out. Most of their informants on the right flank of the political phalanx appear to believe that 'reform' was to blame.

The economists have quite a different story to tell, the story of a tough government in the 1970s taking tough measures which unexpectedly threw the country into turmoil. The economic downturn of the later 1970s caught the Republic off-guard. Suddenly there was inflation, rising interest rates, a sharp drop in the profitability of manufacturing industry, and an upward bending curve of foreign debt which compared unfavorably even with such embattled economies as Zaïre and Chile. To meet the threat the state turned to fashionable monetarist remedies — tightening credit, cutting government spending, and measures to stem the outflow of capital — which plunged the economy into recession in 1981. Companies began to go bankrupt. Others retrenched workers on a massive scale. The resulting unemployment in a country which had long maintained a reserve army of the unemployed, caused consternation in the townships. Thus, concludes Fuad Cassim, it was not well-intentioned political reform but monetarist economic reform that ignited the magazine of discontent.

Why did measures which worked for other countries wreak havoc in South

check by curbing the money supply and raising interest rates. The economy was then to be restructured so as to produce the exports which would enable economic growth to generate the new jobs required by an expanding population.

The historic legacy of apartheid, however, led to quite different results. A slump in the value of the currency in a country critically dependent on imports enhanced rather than inhibited inflation. Real wages could not be effectively cut in an economy where remuneration hovered near subsistence levels for most workers. And workers who managed to maintain their wage levels were slugged by dramatic increases in the cost of living.

Worse still, when unemployed youth took to the streets and people boycotted rent payments, international financiers — who generally smile when austere economic regimes tighten the belts of the workers — took fright and the credit-worthiness of the state was suddenly in doubt. Although manufacturing industry had come to play a much larger part in the economy during the previous 30 years, it produced mainly for the limited internal market. Its goods could not and did not compete on the international scene. The impoverished millions could not generate enough local demand to stimulate increases in output. The importing capacity of neighbouring countries had been deliberately undermined by South Africa's notoriously effective campaigns of 'destabilisation'. As Cassim puts it, 'the costs of maintaining the racial order have come home to roost'.

Very little, if any of this analysis is to be found in Berger and Godsell's book. But when the Anglo-American team of experts testifies to feelings among the political and business elite that 'reform' must push 'beyond apartheid', they are not reporting basic changes in hearts and minds. They are voicing a widely shared perception that unless South Africa can bring a large section of the black popula-

usual in the Free State and the Transvaal?

Heribert Adam and Pieter Le Roux take a different tack, seeing negotiations with the ANC as the only conceivable path to a non-violent end to apartheid. This is not, however, a proposition that they embrace with enthusiasm. Adam vents a bitter spleen on a whole range of targets including academic boycotters, professional revolutionaries, and the ANC's external supporters 'particularly among pampered audiences without a worthy cause in the West' (p. 108). Although he admits that 'if the ANC were to accept Pretoria's precondition for legalization — the rejection of violence — it would commit political suicide', he maintains that 'with every bomb which explodes in white areas, the National Party gains new voters' (pp. 103, 105). How then are negotiations to be arranged? Adam does not say.

Le Roux is more temperate, recognizing that the overseas investment and credit that South Africa requires to restructure its economy will only flow to 'a government that is trusted by the people' — which means a government including the ANC and the United Democratic Front (pp. 227, 234). Yet he acknowledges that the cold-blooded raids on Harare and Lusaka which followed the Eminent Persons Group visit in 1986 were deliberately designed to sabotage negotiations with the ANC. Furthermore, he sees the ANC's commitment to the nationalization of the mining industry as an insuperable obstacle to a negotiated settlement, because it would simply not be acceptable to the business elite. The reader is left to conclude that negotiations between the ANC and the government — which alone could bring an end to apartheid — cannot in fact take place.

Other routes to a negotiated solution are considered in the chapter on 'Incrementalists' by Ann Bernstein and Bobby Godsell who do their level best to paint rosy prospects for reform through the Labour Party, Buthelezi's Inkatha movement, 'business' and the Progressive Federal Party. While little can be expected from the Labour Party's claimed membership of 100,000, Inkatha's one million plus supporters look more promising. According to Bernstein and Godsell 'Inkatha's concept of democracy is clearly that of a pluralist or liberal democracy'. (Professor Berger seems to have slipped in up in his 'reality testing' here.) They do not explain, however, how Inkatha can overcome its lack of votes in general elections and its heavy concentration in Natal-KwaZulu.

'Business', they assure us, is fundamentally committed to a 'nonracial democracy'. This is to be seen in the 'important ways [in which] the factory, mine and office have emerged as beachheads of apartheid-free South Africa, where racism has been banished, power shared, and a new normative order and set of decision making processes have emerged' (p. 172). However, Bernstein and Godsell are equally adamant that business lacks the power to end apartheid. The best it can do is to assist 'black organizations committed to negotiation', support 'urban informal settlements', suggest changes to racially discriminatory laws' and put resources 'into sophisticated marketing programmes to change the public environment' (p. 192).

That leaves the Progressive Federal Party, whose massive rebuff at the general election of 1987 came in the midst of the *Beyond Apartheid* research programme. Bernstein and Godsell use statistical magic to snatch victory from the jaws of the PFP's defeat:

One way of interpreting the results is to say that on the scale of "Less Reform" [the ultra-right conservative and fascist parties], "Reform At the Present Pace" [the National Party] and "More Rapid Reform" [the PFP], three out of ten whites chose less reform or no reform, five chose reform at the present pace, and a little fewer than two out of ten opted for more rapid reform. (pp. 80-81)

Even this breathtaking analysis falls short of showing how the more 'rapid' reformers might eventually triumph.

In the end the Anglo-American team pins its faith on the master class abolishing its own supremacy. Berger and Godsell in their concluding chapter dismiss the possibility of a solution along the lines of Rhodesia or Algeria, because there is no colonial master to hold the ring and the ruling regime is immune to most forms of outside pressure. Their hope is that the elite might imitate the example of Meiji Japan and carry out a 'revolution from above'. Here their lack of historical sophistication is embarrassingly in evidence. The Meiji regime built its reforms on a compelling slogan of national unity — 'wealthy country, strong military' — deliberately designed to transcend class consciousness. They inducted the bottom layers of the peasantry into the army and navy where they were inculcated with patriotic slogans and the rudiments of a technological education. They delivered modernization without democracy but avoided revolution by keeping the peasantry in the countryside and raising agricultural productivity on its pre-existing base.

South Africa in contrast, has already carried out its own version of modernization without democracy. In the process it has so devastated most of the rural landscape that there is no base on which to support a peasantry. (To find out just how devastated, read the fine chapters by Colin Murray and David Cooper in *After Apartheid*) The ruling clique has spent more than four decades vigorously propagating slogans of national disunity. Incorporating the masses in the armed forces has always been notoriously unthinkable to white South Africans. Passing over such minor difficulties, Berger and Godsell plough on to a conclusion of stunning fatuousness.

What is needed is not only new political parties, but a new political process. In such a process the nature of leadership will be different. Leaders will appeal to ideological rather than ethnic allegiances. In so doing they will change the symbolic reality of South Africa. They will help to manufacture the symbols of national unity that will enable South Africans to develop a loyalty to the land and to the nation.

Neither paradise nor Armageddon awaits South Africa. Instead, a slow and often painful march towards modernity is on the agenda. A nonracial democratic and prosperous society is possible. South Africans simply have to make it happen. (p. 298)

Thus, the reader who picks up *A Future South Africa* to find a way out of the present mess ultimately receives the reply the American hill-billy gave to a lost traveller who asked his way to a

nearby town: 'Brother, you can't get there from here'. Which brings the scenario back to non-constitutional change, either by coup or revolution.

On our last question — what types of new regime could ultimately supplant the rule of apartheid? — there is a definite clash of opinion between the two teams of experts on what is desirable. According to the two editors of *A Future South Africa*, 'Capitalist forms of organization ... have been more successful in producing wealth, alleviating poverty and achieving equality than socialist systems' (p. 297). The contributors to *After Apartheid* are equally certain that capitalism will mean continued misery for most of the population.

When it comes to assessing likely outcomes, the distance between the two panels narrows dramatically. Le Roux's chapter, 'The Economics of Conflict and Negotiation' in *A Future South Africa* dismisses the idea that a negotiated settlement would run according to the visions of free marketeers. And while he believes that the business elite will resist to the end any nationalization of banking and mining, they might well accept some form of social democracy that placed workers on boards and gave government real power to constrain and direct the private sector. This would, after all, not be so very different from the present situation.

This sort of solution is foreseen from the socialist side by Rob Davies who perceives clear signs that 'monopoly capital is preparing to do battle on the terrain of a post-apartheid — or at least post-National Party ruled — South Africa', provided there are ... guarantees protecting certain legal property rights for big capital' (pp. 180-81). In a country where one quarter of all corporate assets are already held by the state and the top three corporate groups control almost 58% of all non-government assets, nationalization would be a relatively simple matter. Judging from Davies' statistics, the nationalization of the Anglo-American group alone would propel South Africa to the front rank of non-communist, state-controlled societies. What the economists worry over in *After Apartheid* is whether it would help the masses.

Terrence Moll, looking at the results of attempts to redistribute wealth in Chile, Peru, and Argentina, concludes categorically that 'nationalization will not reach the unemployed and rural poor' and that 'state involvement in production often undermined efficiency and vastly increased government spending, with limited economic benefits' (pp. 28-29). Peter Robbins' lucid and cynical chapter on the mining industry reminds us that when nationalization looms as a possibility companies have a vast array of dirty tricks for stripping assets and getting them out of the country. Vishnu Payachee likewise points to the multifarious ways that the international financial community can punish countries who embark on socialist transformations.

There is also the problem of investment. According to the economists, the redistribution of the present wealth of South Africa will not begin to eliminate poverty. Simply maintaining present standards for a rapidly increasing population will require large amounts of investment capital. Jerome Blumenfeld sees little scope for raising more savings

from taxation in a society where government revenues have already risen to almost 22% of the Gross Domestic Product. But without increased savings new jobs will not be created. This leads him to conclude that substantial foreign investment will be needed by a new regime. And this will only come about if the new government maintains a reasonable balance of payments, controls inflation, and services the external debt.

And that's not all. After apartheid the people will expect the government to deliver freedom from hunger and access to education. Georgina Jaffee & Collette Caine point out that women will be making costly demands. David Cooper's survey of agriculture concludes that most of South Africa's land, even in the white-owned areas, is unproductive. If food supplies are to be maintained, a new government would probably follow Zimbabwe's lead and leave the productive sector in the hands of existing producers. James Cobbe's consideration of educational strategies places similar emphasis on keeping the skills of the white population in the country and in the school system. He estimates that the costs of delivering even secondary education to the entire population to be too great to be contemplated. A new education system might be able to deliver equality of opportunity for access to secondary and higher education, but that access would have to be severely limited.

All these considerations push most of the economists in Suckling and White's collection reluctantly to conclude that the economy of a post-apartheid society would not be so very different from the present economy. Land could be redistributed on a massive scale, but it would mostly be land in the unproductive sector. Public housing likewise could be substantially increased. Attempts to push redistribution farther would risk alienating vital foreign sources of investment and generating runaway inflation.

That is to say, if you want a truly socialist South Africa you can't get there from here, at least in the short and medium term. The only author to dispute that conclusion is Colin Stoneman. He admits that if South Africa continues to remain an integral part of the capitalist world market, the cost of creating new jobs will be prohibitively high. Consequently, he recommends a withdrawal from the capitalist system, a policy of forced full employment in existing industry and agriculture, and some sort of alliance with the Soviet bloc to protect the state from foreign retaliation.

The prospects for Stoneman's socialist, fortress South Africa, like the prospects for the present siege economy, depend critically on the political factors which *After Apartheid* leaves out. How likely is it that the country will survive as an integral state after the abolition of apartheid? If it does, will the new regime have enough backing and power to pursue the lonely path of independence from the world market place? Will the Soviet bloc continue in the Gorbachev era to prop up client states engaged in socialist experiments? If the new regime is democratic in the ordinary sense of the word it will have promises to fulfil to its backers. Its determination to effect basic transformations may falter when the going gets tough. Moll's survey of Latin American experience and the compromises reached by Mugabe's Zimbabwe show that even the most enthusiastic

advocates of socialist transformations are capable of U-turns in the face of hyperinflation, foreign-exchange crises and flights of investment capital.

If this seems too gloomy a note to end upon, it can be observed that pressures of equal gravity face the apartheid regime and the ultra-rightwingers who dream of going it alone. The laager economy will stagnate and decline according

to every available economic assessment. How much decline will the controllers of monopoly capital accept? Despite what the authors of *A Future South Africa* say, there is no doubt that business has the power to bring the current regime to its knees. The cunning devices which Robbins outlines for stripping assets from mines and transferring them out of the country are already available to the great conglomerates who have estab-

lished outposts of investment all over the world. To what extent has the asset-stripping already begun? The all-white franchise, which is the insuperable barrier to a peacefully negotiated end to apartheid, is capable of causing as many problems to the government of South Africa as the Peronist legacy in Argentina. Astronomical inflation leading to the flight of capital and precipitate economic collapse is far more likely to provoke the

final crisis of apartheid than any of the external or internal liberation movements. It is a shame that Berger and Godsell give us so little indication of how Anglo-American will react to those circumstances. □

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## Radical Peasant Populism

David Moore reviews the best book on Zimbabwe's political economy to date. He believes Cliffe and Stoneman are the two most *engagé* students of Zimbabwe, but their assessment of ZIPA as 'politically immature' raises his hackles

Having just passed what seems like a lifetime writing a doctoral thesis on politics and ideology in Zimbabwe, and having concluded that the radical young guerrilla commanders who constituted the Zimbabwe People's Army (ZIPA) deserve better than their official historical label of 'counter-revolutionaries', I immediately scoured the index, when I received this book, for mention of my *idée fixe*. Imagine my expectations on finding the first reference to ZIPA. Here, finally, was going to be a balanced treatment of what I consider to be the Zimbabwe African National Union's (ZANU) most important ideological 'movement'.

Stoneman and Cliffe are two of the most progressive — nay socialist, even Marxist — and *engagé* students of Zimbabwe around. Surely they would not dismiss ZIPA as 'ultra-leftists', in the mold of Martin and Johnson's *The Struggle for Zimbabwe* (Faber, 1981). Certainly the young radicals would not be written off, *à la* Astrow's *Zimbabwe: A Revolution that Lost its Way?* (Zed, 1983), as simply more of the same shallowly nationalist petit-bourgeois politicians. Definitely, the inquisitive but 'non-specialist, mainly student audience' for whom *Zimbabwe: Politics, Economics and Society* (ZPES — acronyms are an essential part of Zimbabwean political analysis) is meant, for whom 'Marxist Regimes' may hold more than passing interest, and whose detailed exposure to Zimbabwe may end (but could well be encouraged to begin) with this book, would not be put wrong on what in my opinion is the most crucial factor in the development of ZANU's official, but less than pervasive, Marxism.

My eager quest soon came to a disagreeable halt. When I read that ZIPA was a 'radical but politically immature group' (p.23) I was so incensed I could not pick up the book for days. Instead, I paced the floor, scowling and grumbling. That one word — 'immature' — set me on edge. Should ZPES be glued into what Neal Ascherson, in his acerbic critique of the *Independent's* Victorian indignation at the sight of Graham Greene embracing Daniel Ortega, has called the 'English *sottisier* — the album of national fat-headedness?' (*Observer*, 14 May 1989.) Would not Zimbabwe seem a bit more like Nicaragua if ZIPA had carried the day? Certainly, with all the recent revelations of the 'Willowgate' scandal it would seem as if a good proportion of the 'old guard' responsible for ZIPA's sidelining were the politically

puerile ones. And what of those 1977 'conflicts' (p. 24) leading to detention in Mozambique? Had the authors chosen to hedge their bets on relations with the Zimbabwean regime, and go little further than official history in their consideration of the young turks?

It was a good thing my maturity and responsibility forced me to go on with the task at hand. Indeed, the foregoing

The ideas they espoused perhaps contributed to the multifarious mainstream of ZANU thinking, and also, via their input into political education of guerrillas and hence peasants, to popular consciousness ... [they] demonstrated what a programme for a social transformation towards socialism, worked out on Marxist lines, might look like (pp. 39-40, emphasis mine).

For a 'textbook' that covers the days

### Zimbabwe: Politics, Economics and Society by Colin Stoneman and Lionel Cliffe

Pinter, (London), 'Marxist Régimes Series'  
210 + xxii pp., £25/£9.95, January 1989,  
0 86187 455 2

words say much more about the teetering sensibilities of one on the edge of full-fledged PhD-dom than they do about this book. My worries, based on a blown-up extrapolation of that unfortunate description of ZIPA, were wrong. *Zimbabwe: Politics, Economics and Society* is the best work on Zimbabwe to date. It exceeds by far the bounds of a 'basic textbook'. It could even be that the form demanded by such an approach clarifies its context. ZPES's straightforward language gets right to the heart of the widely and excellently covered debates, and the emphasis on the presentation of comprehensive data gives them ample illustration.

Further, to my own relief and appreciation, ZIPA (along with its parallel movement in Zapu, the March 11 Movement of 1971) is later treated much more judiciously, if still circumspectly. Stoneman and Cliffe's discussion of Marxist influences in the struggle for liberation suggests that the processes within the nationalist movement and the guerrilla war had by 1975 at best led to:

only a partial working out of the implications of a Marxist approach for the strategy of struggle in the specific context of Zimbabwe, in terms of which class forces could be mobilized for which demands and for which kind of post-independence transformation — even in the thinking of those (by no means a majority) influenced by such thinking.

These developments at least went 'a little further' with the young commanders in ZIPA.

of settlerdom until 1988, those words on what was, after all, a pretty short moment in Zimbabwe's history are perhaps the best that can be expected. ZIPA, and all that it stands for, was not just a manifestation of 'left-wing infantilism', nor mere proof of the ineffectiveness of radical fractions of the aspiring ruling class. Rather, it represents an instance of the potential for socialist transformation within the processes of national liberation, a propensity for radicalization dependent on the 'emerging character of the nationalist movement, the form of its struggle and the particular dialectic in the relationship between political activists ... and the masses'. If in spite of the 'essentially rhetorical character of Zimbabwe's "Marxism" thus far' socialism might not be a complete sham (pp.4, 6), such a perspective, allows ZIPA lasting import. Content at last, I could proceed through the rest of the book with relative dispassion.

And it is dispassion, albeit a dispassion not without Marxian vision (and even, at times, a touch of romanticism), which characterizes this book. From the preface onwards it tackles the messiness of Zimbabwean reality with the recognition that 'the literature, and indeed our own perspective, is ambiguous'. Whether in spite of, or because of, that warning, it jumps right into the corpus of Zimbabweana and deftly weaves its way through the many debates on the nature of the political economy of the settler regime, the nationalist movements, and the possibilities for

Zimbabwe's future. ZPES's great merit is that it quickly gets to the core of these various interpretations of past and present, and brings them together in a way that adds to one's appreciation of Zimbabwe's complexities.

Perhaps the basis of this clarity is an up-to-the-moment stretching of Giovanni Arrighi's formula for the analysis of the class fractions within Rhodesia's apparently monolithic racial blocs. Indeed, Arrighi's framework informs Stoneman and Cliffe's prescriptive, if tentative, conclusions. If in the 1950s and 1960s the various fractions of capital exercised differing political options, including those of 'reform', why not now? What would be the possibility:

of a "post-settler" development path that is oriented to "national" growth promoted by an alliance of locally based, (almost entirely) white industrial capital, sections of the black petty bourgeoisie and middle classes, and based on mass consumption of the black working population rather than luxury consumption of a limited, but highly paid, white market (pp. 55)

Given that ZPES allows for the fact that the distinctions between national and foreign capital may be blurred (pp. 58, 194), and that sectors of the latter may be harnessed to a nationally oriented trajectory just as much as the former, such a strategy could be labelled 'nuanced neo-colonialism'. (Stoneman and Cliffe first bring it up as a 'prospect that contrasts with [an] unambiguously neo-colonial path', and it is later discussed, e.g. pp. 96-7, as a 'national democratic strategy'.) To be sure, its suggestion indicates a climate of diminished expectations. Yet, reliant as it is on a propitious balance of social forces and a careful, coherent, and calculating core of leaders at the centre of Zimbabwe's ruling bloc, even it has a limited chance of success. And within this ever-decreasing circle of promise, what is the probability of the shades of socialism in contemporary Zimbabwe getting into the light? To put it at its best, one can only repeat the authors' observation that 'Zimbabwe's prospects are still not completely determined' (p.194).

Such equivocation is the only possible route to take if one is not to be totally pessimistic. Of course, at times — perhaps most of the time — it is difficult not to fall prey to pessimism of intellect and will. Certainly much of the data in ZPES's broad, but inclusive, sectoral survey, lends support to a deprecatory

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***PUBLISHER:***

*Publisher:* **Historical Papers Research Archive**

*Collection Funder:* **Bernstein family**

*Location:* **Johannesburg**

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