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SOUTH AFRICA: THE ELECTIONS AND THE PATH AHEAD

By Prexy Nesbitt

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John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

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For Don M.--Banned

it is a dry white season
dark leaves don't last, their brief lives dry out
and with a broken heart they dive down gently headed for the earth,
not even bleeding.
it is a dry white season brother,
only the trees know the pain as they still stand erect
dry like steel, their branches dry like wire,
indeed, it is a dry white season
but seasons come to pass.

For three days in April of 1994 and for the first time in history, South Africans of all races voted in national and provincial elections. People turned out in breathtaking numbers, providing the world with an astounding demonstration of mass political participation. Many people walked 20-30 miles to vote and in some cases, due to organizational problems, were forced to return home only to come back the next morning in order to vote. Some people, frail and sickly, were carried in chairs, wheelbarrows, and on shoulders. They waited on the damp ground or on cold, dirt school floors for hours until their turn came for casting their ballot. This election was unlike anything conducted in the west. People were not just voting for a program or a candidate. It was a ballot for liberation. For the remainder of my life I will consider myself honored to have participated in those three days. So often I have been asked what it was like to have been there. Rarely have I been able to respond with any words or sentences which even begin to capture all that those three days meant.

Looking back now at my South Africa diary, I finally understand what my uncle felt when describing his participation in the International Brigade's defense of Republican Spain in the 1930's. He didn't say much, but often when he spoke about it, the tears welled up in his eyes and it confused and frightened us. Now I know his tears.

In less than four months, South Africa's Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), at a cost of approximately 700 million rand (\$200 million), set up more than 9,000 polling stations and 1,200 counting stations nationwide. They were staffed by 171,000 personnel plus an additional 13,000 staff who had to be trained and stationed in Natal in less than four days. Following the last minute decision of Gatsha Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party(IFP) to participate in the elections, the IEC immediately scrambled to set up polling stations in the Natal area and to redesign the ballots to include the IFP. With an estimated 23 million eligible voters, as many IFP stickers had to be produced and stuck

to the ballots. In addition, there were 10,000 official monitors, 1,770 United Nations observers, 320 European Union observers and more than 2,000 foreign journalists requiring the attention of the IEC. An additional and significant group of observers, many of whom were also peace monitors, came through the Ecumenical Monitoring Project of South Africa (EMPSA) run by the World Council of Churches and the South African Council of Churches.

The first day of the three-day elections, Tuesday April 26, was set aside for people with special needs and the elderly. One innovative approach by some IEC officials was to conduct voter education workshops in hospitals. In many areas throughout the country, mobile polling stations were set up to allow hospital patients, old age home inhabitants, and prisoners to vote. Reaching out to the jails and prisons was very important; in many regions prisoners had to go on strike in order to get the right to vote. Many people waited for a full day in polling station lines to vote. "A short wait," said many, "compared to waiting for the end of 300 years of oppression under whites." The IEC was criticized because numerous polling stations had not received enough ballots and/or stickers. Voting was extended for an extra day in KwaZulu and other selected regions to ensure that everyone got a chance to cast their ballot.

The biggest fear throughout the months leading to the elections was that they would accelerate the country's armed conflict which, with over 13,000 people dead from politically-related violence, was already engulfing the entire nation¹. In the month prior to the elections more than 30 people were gunned down on the East Rand (Thokoza and Vosloorus) and more than one hundred in the Natal region. On March 28, violence came to downtown Johannesburg in the form of an Inkatha-orchestrated offensive aimed at Shell House, the headquarters of the African National Congress. By the end of the day 56 people had been killed and more than 400 injured. As the election date drew nearer, bomb attacks began to take place all over South Africa. In late March, bombs were placed in a squatter camp in an area called Ventersdorp where voter education training was taking place. On Sunday, the 24th of April, a car bomb exploded in downtown Johannesburg killing 11 people and destroying the buildings in a two square block area. Simultaneously, 11 other bombings took place in Johannesburg at taxi ranks and places designated as polling stations. Numerous bombings took place in almost all provinces of South Africa; it was evident that this was a concerted, well-organized effort to disrupt the voting process countrywide.

¹On March 18th, the Goldstone Commission of Inquiry Regarding the Prevention of Public Violence and Intimidation released a report that officially acknowledged for the first time that a "Third Force" involving senior members of the South African Police (SAP) had been involved in hit squad activities in Natal and the Transvaal; and, additionally, had carried out many of the killings on commuter trains where more than 300 black people were killed between 1990 and 1992.

I saw first-hand the terror that a well placed bomb can bring about. I was standing in front of the Empangeni Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) office in northern Natal the afternoon before the elections began. The little shopping square was packed with IEC workers, mostly young people, waiting to get their first pay checks. The day was humid and people were tense, especially since some had been waiting since six and seven that morning for their checks to be processed. Suddenly, a grayish bottle holding liquid and covered with rags was rolled onto the pavement about 10-12 feet in front of me. Someone yelled, "It's a bomb! Look out there's a bomb there!" People ran; they stampeded. One small woman in braces was knocked off her feet and nearly trampled. I ran toward the South African Police vehicle which I'd noticed earlier parked around the corner from the shopping square. I calmly said (with immense discipline) to the two SADF soldiers inside that I was an American observer. I had my blue cap on, but I showed my credentials nonetheless. I told them there was a bomb in front of the IEC headquarters and they should come. With due respect, I must say, they responded immediately--one went directly to his radio, and the other to the back of the vehicle to grab a metal case. Within five minutes various South African armored vehicles arrived; first, an 'Impala' followed by several 'Hippos'--both are fast moving, tank-like vehicles mounted on tall wheels and designed for urban and bush warfare.² From the Impala came several men from the bomb unit. They identified the bottle as a bomb, contained it, and sealed off the area. We were lucky; the bomb failed to detonate. One of the SADF, a tall, very young, very Aryan man, asked me, a little sarcastically, if I wanted a souvenir for the States. I thanked him but declined the offer.

It is important to understand and contextualize the violence in South Africa. Its nature and origin must be illuminated and examined. There needs to be much more clarity about what causes the violence. It is now axiomatic, particularly in the USA, that the violence in South Africa (like the violence throughout the African continent and maybe wherever black people reside) is consistently perceived as "black on black," stemming from some primordial set of African instincts and passions. As Southern African historian and scholar, Dr. Lisa Brock points out in a recent article,

A content analysis of the three major television news networks, the top three news journals, as well as the twelve most widely read newspapers reveals . . . that news reports have largely portrayed the conflict between Inkatha and anti-apartheid activists (the ANC, UDF and COSATU members and supporters) as 'black-on-black

²Like razor wire and the razor wire spreading machine, these vehicles are uniquely the products of South African militarism. They were invented out of the necessity of going through hundreds of tiny cardboard shacks or doing crowd control with large mobs of rock throwing youth.

violence', 'tribal violence,' or 'factional fighting.'³

In the article she poses the question, "why has the image of tribal warfare in South Africa become the most persistent image from South Africa (and Africa in general)?" Noting that the "western media creates the images, the phrases, and the paradigms that encapsulate African affairs," she concludes in a powerful argument:

The images of irrational, tribal, primordial inclinations and warfare provide the smoke and mirrors . . . [they] reflect a convergence of market policy of news makers with the interest of powerful corporations, white South African leaders, and Western racial mythology.

But the reality of the violence in South Africa is far more complex than a media blip of snarling African men with spears, just as the drug-related violence in urban America is more multi-faceted than a few, young, heavily armed black men riding around in white stretch limousines.

In general, the violence in South Africa has largely been concentrated in black residential areas and has manifested itself in three primary forms: 1) armed confrontations between contending small and large groups; 2) violence triggered by an event, such as a mass march, funeral or gathering; or 3) low intensity conflict. Categorizing the violence tends to be unproductive since much of it is all linked together. However, it is this third type of violence, which includes inter-racial violence, that is the most ominous. For it is here that one sees the role which the apartheid state consistently played from the late 1970s onward by producing, maintaining and distributing violence.

For instance, during the time I was in South Africa, news broke through the Goldstone Commission that one of the largest regular sources of automatic weapons had been the parastatal agency called the Electricity Supply Commission (EsKom). To cite but one case--in late March the electricity utility sold 1,000 semi-automatic rifles to Inkatha's chief police training official, Mr. Phillip Powell, for the sum of 2.1 million rand. Thereby giving the two intermediaries involved a profit of 1.4 million rand.

The EsKom revelation has led to other parastatals like ISCOR (the Iron and Steel Corporation) and SaSol revealing that they too, as part of the 1980 National Keypoints

³see Brock, Lisa, "Inkatha: Notions of the 'Primitive' and 'Tribal' in Reporting on South Africa," in Hawk, B., ed., *Africa's Media Image* (Praeger, 1992).

Act designed to stop the "total onslaught,"⁴ kept stocks of thousands of weapons beyond those issued to employees (the scale of the problem is made clear by the fact that the National Keypoints Secretariat managed 7,850 security personnel at various keypoint sites). What should be noted about South Africa during the apartheid years is the South African state created one of the world's most successful arms industries by utilizing huge, state subsidies. The fact that some South African war products like the G5 and G6 long range artillery, armored cars, the Rooivalk helicopter, and mine detection equipment, are amongst the world's most popular military and policing equipment attests to the lengths to which the state would go to promote and sustain the armaments industry.

Further evidence of the state's responsibility for many of South Africa's 15,000 political deaths since 1990 was provided in the March 1994 Goldstone Commission's report. A full discussion of the scale and sophistication of this collaboration is beyond the objectives of this commentary. Several key points however, must be mentioned: South African Police officers were identified as a major mode for transferring weapons from RENAMO in Mozambique to Inkatha in South Africa; the Commission presented to the public concrete and undeniable proof "that members of South Africa's security forces, especially the South African Police (SAP) and the KwaZulu Police (KZP) had stoked, sustained and orchestrated violence aimed at thwarting the country's democratic transformation (Weekly Mail and Guardian, March 25-30, 1994); the Commission highlighted convincing evidence that elements of the KZP had been and still were involved in hit squad activities in Natal and the Transvaal; lastly, the Commission showed that in the core of attacks only a few months previously in the Esakhawini area of Northern Natal, "survivors of several massacres came back later in their capacities as KZP policemen to investigate the crime."

Less than a week before the start of the elections, the man and political organization most observers identify as the main source of South Africa's political violence, Chief Gatsha Buthelezi and the InKatha Freedom Party (IFP) announced a reversal of their previous position. They decided to field a slate of candidates for both the national and provincial elections. This development was major and dramatic. It is undoubtedly the single most important reason that the South African elections were conducted in an atmosphere of relative peace and calm. In fact, the total number of deaths nation-wide linked to the election process between January and May 1994 was only 103. While the election days themselves were notably without the levels of violence present only days before the elections began, violence and the threat of violence remains a constant factor in South Africa.

⁴This phrase was used by the South African government from 1977 on to describe what they believed was an offensive against South Africa led by the forces of international communism ranging from the Soviet Union and Cuba to the United Nations, the World Council of Churches and various city governments throughout the United States.

Violence manifests itself in many ways as an everyday feature of life in South Africa. Even more than in the United States, in most communities, but especially in the white areas, guns are like pencils and pens. Everyone has them. At many white churches in the Orange Free State there are special canisters and racks to leave your guns (off, but accessible) as you worship. There are jokes about adolescents taking ballroom dancing and constantly colliding with a gun. Restaurants and schools, especially in white areas, have racks where you hang your guns as you enter. In the late 1980s, just before the release of Nelson Mandela and the unbannings of the major African political organizations, South Africa's million plus legal gun holders owned an approximate 2.5 million hand held firearms with 200,000 new firearm licenses being issued each year. And this was the rate before the release of Nelson Mandela!

Most observers point to the Buthelezi decision to participate and/or to the massive deployment of South African security forces--especially the South African army and South African Defense Force (SADF)--as the main reasons for the success of South Africa's elections. Others focus on the extent to which the elections were conducted with maximal, international public visibility, i.e., the more than 10,000 international media personnel, the 5,000 international observers and the 30,000+ national monitors and observers. I contend that the real reason South Africa was able to conduct its elections was the political will of the South African people. Perhaps, future generations of scholars will identify these April 1994 days as South Africa's defining moment as a nation. The visual images, the film footage, the photographs of the long, long lines, the hilltops re-molded with row after row of people waiting hours and days to vote, all these images simply cannot convey the significance of the South African elections. Descriptions highlighting "the power," "the grace," "the impact," of South Africa's mobilization for those three April days cannot succeed in accurately describing the story. Cheryl Carolus, the ANC's overall policy coordinator, believes that the strength of the South African democratic process lies in "the existence of a vibrant civil society." Moreover, in a powerful and penetrating recent speech to a conference jointly sponsored by the African American Institute and Peggy Dulany, Cheryl notes another characteristic:

Another strength in South Africa is that we are a people who know how to make ourselves ungovernable. And it's a wonderful strength precisely because despite the fascist nature of the previous regime, not only did we manage to get on with our lives, but we managed to build alternative structures which have shaped and even built the moral fabric of our society today.⁵

⁵"The Real Struggle Begins", by Cheryl Carolus Africa Report, July-August, 1994.

I understand fully what Cheryl is saying. In one school house voting station in Natal, I watched, the whole room watched, barely breathing, as an old man was brought in on a stretcher made from someone's wooden door and white plastic-USAID corn sacks. The stretcher was lowered to the floor right in the middle of the room. It was all the wrong procedure. The old man was entitled to privacy as he cast his ballot. He rose up a bit on his elbows. The polling station's pot-bellied, balding, white presiding officer walked over--a little less officiously than usual, without his cigar for once. The old man rose a bit further and said in his tenor voice

with a slight crack, "I am here to vote for Mr. Mandela." It was a declaration, not a statement. Certainly no longer a hat-in-hand-head-bowed-request to a white. The official

The Truly Great
By Stephen Spender

Near the snow, near the sun, in the highest fields,
See how these names are feted by the waving grass
And by the streamers of white cloud
And whispers of wind in the listening sky.
The names of those who in their lives fought for life,
Who wore at their hearts the fire's centre.
Born of the sun, they travelled a short while toward the sun
And left the vivid air signed with their honour.

brought a ballot and asked the old man to point to his choice. In response and clearly with great pain, a skinny arm extended and took the white man's arm bringing the ballot closer to his eyes. After a long time, during which everything stopped in the room, the same scratchy voice said, "that one sir" and an ashy bony finger was placed on top of Mandela's caricature. The old man laid back down saying to the still hushed room, "now I can die."

I realized that day that this was what the South African elections were about. They were a moment within a historical process. They were an integral part of that process, just as the deaths of Steve Biko, Ruth First, Neil Aggett, Dulcie September, Lal Naidoo, Joe Quabi, Claire Stewart, Amy Biehl, and so many others. Part of the process like all those people whose images I saw and dreamed about throughout the days and nights I was in South Africa. The elections and these departed friends were organically and inextricably part of "the river" which is South Africa's history and process. I think here about the image of "the river" because of the force and power of this assemblage of people. The voters came out in numbers that were overwhelmingly beyond any and all predictions. Near Empangeni, Natal, as I stood watching the lines snaking around a hillside, I asked one trade unionist organizer--a woman who had been a unionist for thirty years--

why she thought so many were voting. She answered, "because they murdered Chris Hani. They made a mistake then," she said, "a big one. The old people in the lines have been singing a song. It means something like, you can blow out a candle, but you can't blow out a fire."

South Africa--The Path Ahead

It is now several mornings after South Africa's April, 1994 elections. There is a new parliament and a new cabinet (the full membership is appended to this report) under the leadership of a man who is undisputedly the world's most popular and charismatic political figure. But all is not nirvana in Africa's southern tip. Given the physical, social and economic infrastructure of inequality which will remain for many years to come, South Africa is now entering the most difficult part of "the river." The Washington Office on Africa recently quoted renowned South African sociologist, Francis Wilson, as saying in a speech to the Southern African Grantmakers Network that South Africa, now emerging from apartheid, is like the US when it emerged from slavery. He stated, "We don't want to make "the same mistakes you made in returning to inequality under a new guise." Today's South Africa is facing the structural inequities and injustices of centuries of racial oppression. Realities like poverty (over half of all African families earn less than \$190 per month), unemployment (with seven million unemployed, the unemployment rate among job seeking blacks is a minimum of 50%), illiteracy (the rural South African illiteracy rate is over 66%), homelessness (7.7 million people homeless=1 out of every 3.5 inhabitants) and health problems (South Africa's HIV infection rate doubles every 13 months and less than 20% of blacks--compared to more than 80% of whites--have medical insurance)⁶ are what motivated President Nelson Mandela to observe, with the particular clarity he brings to political phenomena, at Clark Atlanta University nine months before the elections:

While providing the rights associated with democracy, our constitution should also create the basis for an expanding floor of entitlements so as to accord every citizen that measure of dignity intrinsic to being human. A democratic constitution must address the issues of poverty, inequality, deprivation and want in accordance with internationally recognized standards of the indivisibility of human rights. A vote without food, shelter and health care would be to create the appearance of equality while actual inequality is

⁶For further sobering details, see the chart appended to this report from William Minter's May 16, 1994 In These Times article, reprinted in Covert Action Quarterly, Summer 1994.

entrenched. We do not want freedom without bread, nor do we want bread without freedom.

President Mandela's reflection, in fact, brings me to a major concern I have about South Africa as I look at the path ahead. It is related to the so-called 'Mandela factor', i.e., what happens if and when "Madhiba," as he is affectionately known, is no longer there. I have no doubt that there is a plan in place. Further, I have tremendous respect for the organization and leadership skills of other leaders, like Cheryl Carolus, Cyril Ramaposa, Pallo Jordan, Frene Ginwala, "Bantu" Holomisa, and "Tokyo" Gabriel Sexwale, premier of the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereniging (PWV) region. Amongst these and many others--inside and outside of the parliament and the government⁷--is a quality of leadership, commitment and vision that reminds one of what black American theologian and civil rights activist, Vincent Harding, calls "signposts"--people whose lives open doors beyond darkness. There is also an impressive style of collective leadership and mutual consultation. Both this caliber of leadership and the style are sadly absent in the USA. While there, I discussed leadership and how to develop the capacity for leadership many times. Ironically, the many visits there of certain US personalities has made South African activists very sensitive to a point made by Cornel West in Race Matters:

We need leaders--neither saints nor sparkling television personalities--who can situate themselves within a larger historical narrative of this country and our world, who can grasp the complex dynamics of our peoplehood and imagine a future grounded in the best of our past, yet who are attuned to the frightening obstacles that now perplex us.

Nonetheless, despite the strength of the leadership--symbolized in the very persona of the unmatched Nelson Mandela and derived from training experiences like the university which Mandela, Mbeki, Sisulu and many others created in their Robben Island prison cells--I have two strong concerns about the choices which are being made by South Africa's leadership. The first is a certain parochialism and myopic vision in terms of crucial questions regarding South Africa's relationship with Southern Africa and regional growth and development. The second is the South African leadership's perspective on the growing USA-South African connection.

In regard to the first point, let us remind ourselves that for years the neighboring Southern African people and nations have paid with lost lives and destroyed infrastructures for the solidarity which they gave to the South African liberation struggle.

⁷A full list of the South African cabinet is appended to this note. A growing issue voiced by some is that too many leaders have been taken from key grassroots, labor and church organizations to serve in the government, leaving those constituencies without direction and experienced leadership.

Mozambique and Angola paid (and continue to pay) a particularly high portion of the bill rendered by South African apartheid violence. It is a genocidally tragic tally that has resulted in 1.6 million lives being lost; more than 11 million people, largely women and children, being made homeless; over 750,000 children orphaned or abandoned; and at least \$60 billion in war damage to roads, bridges, schools, factories, mines, and development projects. As renowned South African lawyer and human rights scholar, Albie Sachs put it to an audience in Mozambique: "I hope you, our friends in Frelimo in particular, get some pride in terms of what is happening in South Africa today because you paid a terrible price. Half the problems today stem from the fact that you challenged apartheid in South Africa and you gave us support." But is Albie Sach's observation the shared feeling of most of South Africa's citizenry? Of its new leadership? Renowned scholar and activist, Dot Keet of the University of the Western Cape (UWC, aka "the university of the working class") shared with me her fear that rather than being a partner for development of the region, South Africa might become the agency for continuing domination of the region and deepened patterns of exploitation--even if stemming from ebony instead of ivory hands.

Sometimes the leadership of the ANC is much less than 'thoughtful' in both public and private utterances about their participation in the region. When I was in South Africa during the heady atmosphere of the elections, I was stunned--as were many others--to hear Adelaide Tambo, prominent female ANC spokesperson and widow of the late President Oliver R. Tambo, say in a press interview "to hell with the region," when she was asked about how the ANC intended to assist with the Southern African region's multitudinous development problems. One day in an elevator, I ran into two ANC staff people whom I've known for many years. I met them when, as refugees, they were hosted by first Tanzania, then Zambia, then Angola. They noticed that I had my bags and asked how I could possibly be leaving prior to Mandela's inauguration celebration. I explained that I was en route to Maputo to talk about the elections coming up there. They replied (at first I thought they were joking, but then I soberly realized they were not), "Oh, is Mozambique having elections too?"

While there may be problems of a myopic political vision and parochialism amongst some of the ANC leadership, I think that the top leadership in the country--governmental and nongovernmental--remains committed to a political perspective that embraces Southern Africa and not just the Republic. Clearly, this is the case with President Mandela as evidenced in the early July Pretoria meeting he hosted to bring together the Presidents of Zaire, Angola and Mozambique. The same regional orientation was to be found in the July 21 state visit (his first ever) which President Mandela paid to the Mozambican capital, Maputo. During the state visit, besides signing a multi-faceted cooperation pact covering defense, transport, agriculture and research, President Mandela committed South Africa to both assistance with the rebuilding of all the countries destabilized by South Africa (including Angola) and to eventually formally

joining in SADC (the Southern Africa Development Community).⁸ Interestingly, the trade union leadership, especially the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) consistently embraces and demonstrates more regional solidarity than those in exile in regional locations, given the fact that so many of them inside the country were often cut off from hard information because of apartheid censorship. This issue will come forward more often as the idea of the new South Africa paying reparations to Angola receives more attention.

As John Saul, author of the recently published Recolonization and Resistance: Southern Africa in the 1990's and long time colleague/participant/observer says, "Now for the hard part, that is the challenges before the new post-apartheid government." The second major concern I have, i.e., the plunging roller coaster which is the growing connection between the USA and the RSA (Republic of South Africa) brings me to the final section of this commentary. How the substance, direction and quality of the bilateral relations between South Africa and the United States will finally evolve is one of various serious challenges which the new South Africa now faces.

The East-West Cold War paradigm that drove US policy towards South Africa and Africa in general is now largely dead. It has been replaced by a new framework in which development in South Africa is motored by a market economy awash with McDonald's and coke bottles. As Vice President Al Gore stated (opening by citing, ironically, W.E.B. DuBois' historic contribution) on inauguration eve at Johannesburg's Market Theater in a speech that deserves to be quoted at length:

For the United States, this transformation (the dismantling of apartheid) has special significance. After all, for decades Americans agonized over the horrors of our own apartheid.... We start on this partnership from a strong similarity and outlook. President-to-be Mandela...has committed himself and his government to an economic policy and program that eschews failed ideologies...the businessmen and women of the United States are genuinely excited.... We know how good it can be.... We want to join South Africans in helping to rebuild the economy...to expand opportunities for the previously disadvantaged to be successful entrepreneurs in

⁸SADC's current membership is: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. South Africa joining SADC in a substantive and serious way could be an extraordinary development. In 1990, for instance, South Africa's GNP was \$102 billion, three times as much as the \$30 billion dollars combined GNP of the ten current SADC members. The additional point to bear in mind though is that it is not automatic that South Africa joining SADC will lead to a strengthened SADC and more equitable and sustainable development throughout the region.

order to share in the dynamic growth of the economy.

Perhaps a Christian Science Monitor article (June 6, 1994) said it best when it headlined "US Pushes South Africa as a Model." The accelerating US involvement in South Africa is not directed at the 7 million homeless South Africans or the 25% living in abject poverty. Rather, as James Hackney, counsellor to US Secretary of Commerce Rön Brown, notes (in the article cited above): "...we're looking at a \$20 billion opportunity for foreign firms over the next four to five years." Many key US firms are yet to venture towards South Africa. For them, Africa remains a continent non grata. And sadly, many now advancing on South Africa do so moved by the opportunity to cut some deals (see the June 5, 1994 Washington Post article entitled "USIA Hosts Deal-Making Conference for US and South African Firms") rather than make a contribution to South Africa's reconstruction and growth..

So it is that I left South Africa concerned about the McDonaldization going on, a process of absorbing all things American that is building upon a long and developed historical tendency to love and emulate 'the Yanks!' As I traveled around South Africa this trip and kept seeing the US automobiles, television shows, C.D.s, fashions, movies, 100,000 phrase super talk barbies, computers, etc., I kept hearing in my head the Michael Jordan 'Be Like Mike' ditty.

My concern is derived not only from the fact that the log cabin-to-white house mythology has not worked any to well for large segments of the USA population. Nor is it just the product of serious doubt that the Clinton administration at the end of the day will produce what it says it will produce (For example, the so-called new policy towards Angola has not resulted in any substantive change in policy). And already facts like how the \$600 million new funds Clinton promised South Africa will, in reality, simply be old funds drawn from moneys promised to other African countries make me join Africa Policy Information Center Director, Imani Countess when she observes "the most substantive changes contemplated seem to be organizational (and ornamental) rather than substantive, perhaps a trip by President Clinton to the new South African success story."⁹

My concern about the USA-RSA nexus also stems from the scale and complexity of the problems which South Africa confronts. In 1991 the US government committed to help Mozambique with its crises through a massive infusion of aid. That year 3,000 foreign technicians earned \$180 million, three times the entire wage bill of Mozambique's

⁹Are we going to now take funds designated for crisis aid in places like Rwanda and shift it to South Africa or are we going to now shift newly promised South Africa-bound funding and shift it back to Rwanda? Obviously, what is missing is major commitment to Africa on the part of US decision makers. "Dead African children are like dead flies to the Americans," one friend in Maputo siad to me.

100,000 member civil service including teachers and health care workers. How, in light of this record and what I know of the USA, I find myself at times querying, will flooding South Africa with US technicians, consultants and peace corps help address tasks like creating training programs and jobs for 2.5 million people over the next 5 to 10 years? Or another case, what wisdom can the US offer, given US attitudes towards government intervention into health care, in a situation where to create a minimum health delivery system in South Africa will require an initial government injection of \$300 million per year?

Challenges: Old, Continuing and New

President Nelson Mandela said in his inspiring and poetic May 10 inaugural speech that "our daily deeds as ordinary South Africans must produce an actual South African reality that will reinforce humanity's belief in justice, strengthen its confidence in the nobility of the human soul and sustain all our hopes for a glorious life for all...." He closed by saying that "the sun shall never set on so glorious a human achievement."

Related to President Mandela's epiphany and an illustration of its application to "ordinary South Africans" is a story that a friend told me. He said that he and his father were in a medium sized food shop purchasing on the first day of elections. The shop was crowded for such an early morning. But then, it was a special day. Suddenly, it became a bit quiet when an older, homeless, 'coloured lady,' wearing a warm red shawl, began pan-handling all the customers and employees, a little in the celebrant mode. Each of them gave her something and steadily the realization grew that nearly all had done that. They, especially a fat manager, began to hassle her, telling her it was time to leave and that she couldn't keep getting food off each of them. The old lady walked out in a slow dignified march. When she reached the doorway, she turned and pointed her finger at all of them. She said, voice rising to the occasion, "Mandela's taking over tomorrow. He's coming to take care of each and every one of you people!!" Then she turned, squared her shoulders, shook her butt and left.

What Madhiba's words and the old woman's action together constitute is a telescopic view of the comprehensiveness of the challenges facing the new South African government. Tremendous tasks lie ahead. First, there is the need to transform political, economic and social institutions which for the last three centuries have been the building blocks of apartheid. A system of social relations forged almost wholly within a racially-based, socially engineered modality of super exploitation, must be turned into a non-racist society. How to reach the goal of a non-racist, non-sexist society? The ANC has decided that by working with other political parties in a government of national unity, steps can be taken towards healing the bitter racial scars of white oppression while combining black aspirations and labor with white capital and know-how, thus making South Africa a viable contributing partner in Africa. It has yet to articulate, however, detailed and specific plans for eliminating the racism and racial privilege and chauvinism that yet abounds throughout South Africa.

A related task that must be confronted in a radical, substantive and sustained manner is that of transforming South African society so that women can fully and equally participate. Today, the reality often totally contradicts the rhetoric of a non-racist, non-sexist, non-homophobic society. Women are abused, objectified, exploited, and brutalized in all aspects of their lives. Ultimately, perhaps, the essential prerequisite to asserting and achieving full equality and participation for women in South Africa is going to be the extent to which women organize, but in the meanwhile it must be noted that simply passing a non-sexist constitution and bill of rights is a far cry from the elimination of gender oppression and exploitation.

Secondly, the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) must be implemented in a timely and highly public fashion. It is fully understood by almost all in South Africa that the election victory is only a first step, that electing Nelson Mandela is meaningless; it is urinating on the graves of all those who sacrificed their lives unless real change begins to appear confronting the daily misery which most black South Africans face.

Apartheid in a sense was non-discriminating. Whether through the inequality it ensconced, the underdevelopment and ignorance it sowed, or the violence it inculcated as the synapse of all people's existence, "there is not a single sector of South African society, nor a person living in South Africa untouched by the ravages of apartheid." Moreover, just as millions of South Africans suffered as a result of apartheid policies, practices and violence, millions of ordinary South Africans also struggled in various ways against apartheid. Because of this legacy of mass struggle and mass aspirations, the ANC adopted an approach to change linking "growth," "development," "reconstruction," and "redistribution" into one unified program based on the concept that their people with their aspirations and collective determination are their most important resource. The five key elements of the RDP are :

- meeting basic needs
- developing human resources
- building the economy
- democratizing the state and society
- and most of all, implementing the RDP

It is an ambitious undertaking and many, many details remain to be fully understood, let alone introduced into people's everyday lives. But the 39 billion Rand (\$11 billion US) RDP is, at minimum, a plan to provide jobs, houses, education and health care to the millions brutalized by apartheid. Indeed, some aspects of the RDP are breath takingly ambitious and as I listened to people explain it throughout the country, I wondered why we in the world's richest country could not share the admirable aim of goals like seeing everyone live in a house.

True enough, the RDP will be difficult to actualize, but it represents a generalized will to put seven million people now in squatter camps into a million units of low-cost housing in the next five years; a will to electrify 2.5 million households by the year 2000 despite the constraint of a shrinking economy and a growing world recession. Most of all, what strikes me as admirable and unique is that the RDP results from a process of envisionment and participation that took place throughout the country over a period of more than a year. The RDP also continues an impressive tradition of consulting with people and providing the political space for people to participate that was started in 1955 when thousands of Africans, coloured, Indians and whites gathered defiantly at Kliptown, outside Johannesburg, to debate and adopt the world-renown Freedom Charter.

A third major challenge which faces the new South Africa is what I identify as the disarming of South African society. It entails the demilitarization of South Africa, the denuclearization of the country and gaining control over a defense and arms industry gone wild. Several days spent with a South African brigadier, who had led SADF forces in Angola, Namibia, and Soweto gave me much insight into the nature of the military mindset in South Africa. We were together at the May, 1994 Cairo Conference on Peace Keeping in Africa sponsored by the International Peace Academy. I was sitting behind the brigadier and I listened as he derisively mocked every plan brought forward for introducing multilateral peacekeeping contingents into conflict situations so as to minimize loss. "My perspective," he said, "is simple. You must simply deploy the boys better armed, better equipped, better trained, better led, better fighters and ready to run it." His forces had learned from the Americans in Vietnam that the best kind of peacekeeping was "grab them by the balls and the hearts and minds will follow!"

Indications of the scale of conversion that must take place in South Africa are also evident in the amazing information that is now being unearthed about how sophisticated South Africa's military and nuclear programs have become. David Albright's article in the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists (June 1994) about South Africa's six gun-type, easily transported nuclear weapons built by government-owned Armscor are but the proverbial tip of the iceberg in terms of potential South African military and nuclear capacity. And the intensity of the debate now raging in South Africa about how to convert from a war-centered polity to a more normalized country where war is a component part, is at a level far deeper and more generalized than the conversion debate being conducted in the USA. The quotations below, excerpted from a discussion paper "The Armaments Industry Debate: A Cost Benefit Approach" (June, 1994), give a flavor of the challenge. Currently, the paper is being circulated in the ANC's Department of Economic Planning.

...Arms control policy must stem from foreign policy, not the other way round. Unless this happens, the battle-testing in countries like Yugoslavia, and arms exports to countries like Rwanda could damage our post apartheid credibility.... Today many nations that have invested heavily in defence in the past have turned their attention to converting defence activities into competitive

commercial activity. While the results have not been promising, South Africa should also seek to establish how the heavy investment in militarism of the past can be turned into civilian focused benefits. Government is especially important in this regard since defense conversion requires a nation effort."

A fourth immediate challenge facing South Africa is that of the local level elections scheduled for the fall of 1994. Presumably, these will not be conducted until conditions permit them to be held simultaneously in towns and rural areas throughout the country. And theoretically already in place are transitional local authorities who are to deal with administration and maintenance of local services (roads, water, electricity, sewage, drainage, fire departments, hospitals, museums, etc.) until the local elections are held. These transitional local authorities were to emerge from local level negotiations being held throughout the country, a process which usually involved black township representation or the civic associations ("civics") negotiating with nearby white city councils. However, there are problems, big ones. The immediate problems have been both juridical and political. They have involved delineating boundaries of authority, where cities end, where suburbs begin, how the political parties get integrated into the process and how the newly evolving local authorities relate to provincial and national structures. There are also essentially political problems like getting white councils to negotiate in good faith with black communities or getting black local residents to end years of rent boycotts and other tax resistance traditions so as to garner the revenues needed to run the new society's services and facilities (incidentally, in the midst of all this, South Africa's right wing has determined that local government will be their new strategic terrain on which to contest for power in many key areas). These are problems linked to the much bigger ones discussed earlier like the de-racialization of society.

But in a way the local elections challenge is not an unpredictable one. As with other tasks, like creating a new national and inclusive culture reflective of all the rich mosaic of peoples, languages, and habits which South Africa offers, this is part of the new pathway which is being travelled in South Africa. President Mandela, a long time student of other situations where there was harsh and quick transition from liberation movement to government, pointed out in his May 9 address at Cape Town that the "task on hand would not be easy." And, in general, the mood amongst thirty year friends and colleagues that I talked to when I was there for those days, while jubilant, also contained a measure of grim acknowledgement that ahead are the most difficult portions of the journey. It's all part of waking up in the morning in the new South Africa.

Pallo Jordan, a pal from Madison, Wisconsin during his exiled childhood (before being banished from the USA), now the Minister of Posts, Telecommunication and Broadcasting, said to me as he embraced me at a mid-elections celebration, "now I understand why the Angolans changed their slogan from 'A Luta Continua. A Vitoria e Certa!' [The struggle continues. Victory is Certain] to 'A Vitoria Continua. A Luta e Certa!' [Victory is a continuous (process). Struggle will definitely be there].

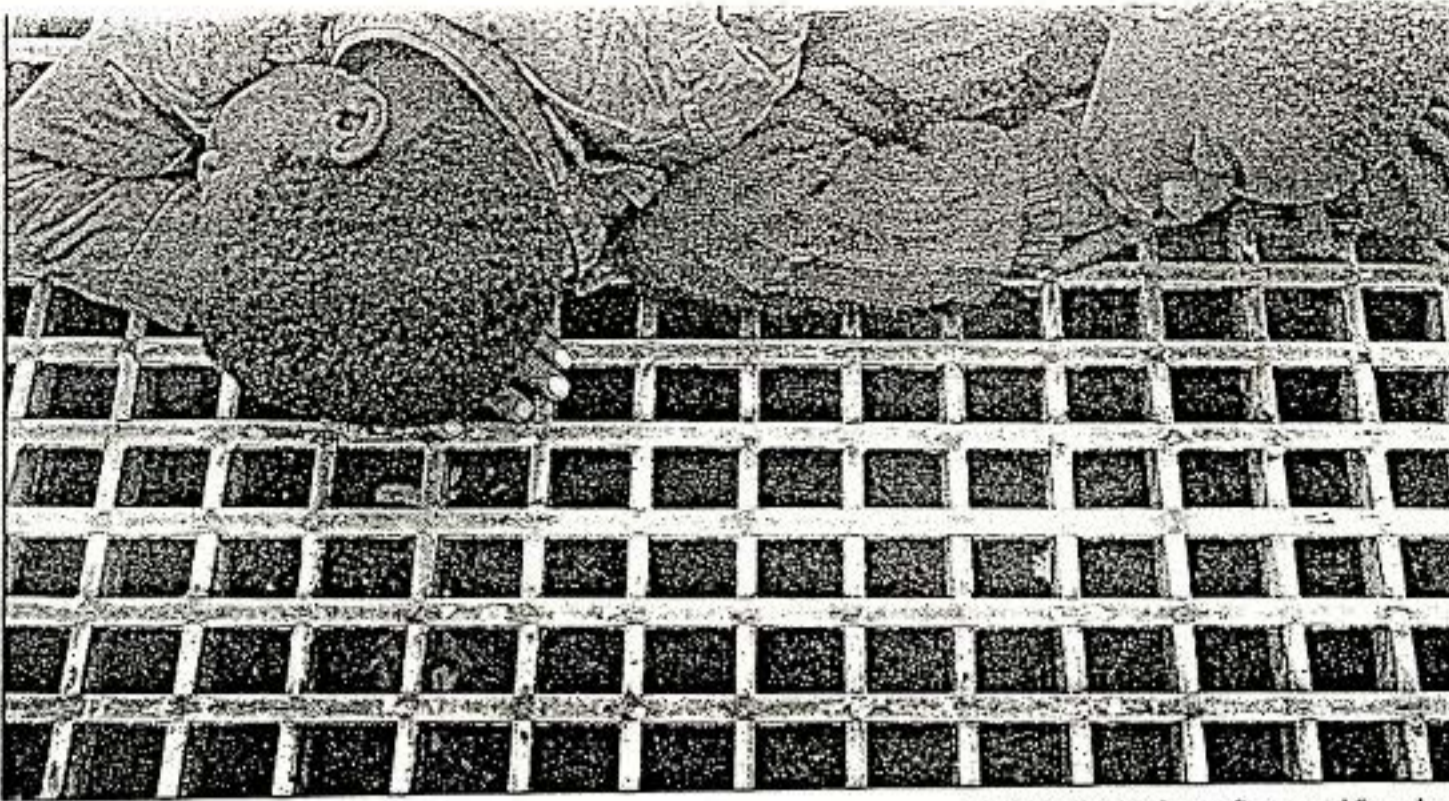
SOUTH AFRICA'S GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY CABINET ANNOUNCED BY
PRESIDENT NELSON MANDELA, 11 MAY 1994

1. President	----- Nelson Mandela (ANC)
2. First Deputy President	----- Thabo Mbeki (ANC)
3. Second Deputy President	----- Frederick De Klerk (NP)
4. Minister of Justice	----- Dullah Omar (ANC)
5. Minister of Defence	----- Joe Modise (ANC)
6. Minister of Safety and Security	----- Sidney Mufamadi (ANC)
7. Minister of Education	----- Sibusiso Bengu (ANC)
8. Minister of Trade, Industry and Tourism	----- Trevor Manuel (ANC)
9. Minister of Foreign Affairs	----- Alfred Nzo (ANC)
10. Minister of Labour	----- Tito Mboweni (ANC)
11. Minister of Posts, Telecommunications and Broadcasting	----- Pallo Jordan (ANC)
12. Minister of Transport	----- Mac Maharaj (ANC)
13. Minister of Provincial Affairs and Constitutional Development	----- Roelf Meyer (ANC)
14. Minister of Land Affairs	----- Derek Hanekom (ANC)
15. Minister of Public Enterprises	----- Stella Sigcau (ANC)
16. Minister of Public Service and Administration	----- Zola Skweyiya (ANC)
17. Minister of Housing	----- Joe Slovo (ANC)
18. Minister of Public Works	----- Jeff Radebe (ANC)
19. Minister of Correctional Services	----- Siphosizwe Mzimela (IFP)
20. Minister of Finance	----- Derek Keys (NP)
21. Minister of Agriculture	----- Kraai van Niekerk (NP)
22. Minister of Sport and Recreation	----- Steve Tshwete (ANC)
23. Minister of Home Affairs	----- Mangosuthu Buthelezi (IFP)
24. Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry	----- Kader Asmal (ANC)
25. Minister of Health	----- Nkosazana Zuma (ANC)
26. Minister of Environmental Affairs	----- Dawie de Williers (NP)
27. Minister of Mineral and Energy Affairs	----- Pik Botha (NP)
28. Minister of Welfare and Population Development	----- Abe Williams (NP)
29. Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology	----- Ben Ngubane (IFP)
30. Minister without Portfolio	----- Jay Naidoo (ANC)

DEPUTY MINISTERS

1. Foreign Affairs	----- Aziz Pahad (ANC)
2. Provincial Affairs	----- Valli Moosa (ANC)
3. Justice	----- Chris Fisser (NP)
4. Home Affairs	----- Penuell Maduna (ANC)
5. Arts, Culture, Science and Technology	----- Winnie Mandela (ANC)
6. Finance	----- Alexander Erwin (ANC)
7. Environmental Affairs	----- Bantu Holomisa (ANC)
8. Land Affairs	----- Tobie Meyer (ANC)
9. Education	----- Renier Schoeman (NP)
10. Safety and Security	----- Joe Matthews (IFP)
11. Agriculture	----- Thoko Msane (ANC)
12. Welfare	----- Sankie Nkondo (ANC)

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Fernando Molerres/Impact Visuals

Poverty and homelessness will challenge the new ANC government. The legacy of inequality and deprivation from apartheid South Africa is staggering:

- The GDP growth rate has declined from almost 6% in the 1960s, to 4% in the 1970s, to barely 1% in the 1980s.
- Per capita income has declined in each of the past 12 years.
- Over half of black families and 2.6% of white families live in extreme poverty.
- At least 7 million are homeless.
- Millions of blacks live in shacks with no sewage systems, water, or electricity.
- Half the population is illiterate.
- Malnutrition causes 61% of infant deaths among black families.
- Per capital income for whites is 9.5 times higher than for blacks, 4.5 times higher than for mixed races, and 3 times higher than that for Asians.
- Of the 36 countries for which data are available, it has the most unequal development: The poorest 40% of households earn 4% of total income, the richest 10% earned more than 50%.
- Only 1.6% of directorships in the top 100 companies on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) are held by black Africans.
- Five corporations own 80% of all stocks traded on the JSE.
- Of the 3 black-owned companies traded, two were established last year.
- All black-owned businesses account for less than 1% of economic output.
- Black Africans fill 1% of senior management positions, compared to 98% held by whites.
- Fewer than 10% of the 700,000 African businesses are in manufacturing or related fields.

William Minter, "The Morning After," *In These Times*, May 16, 1994, p. 14 (from *Washington Notes on Africa*, Spring 1994); and the South African Institute of Race Relations, "State of the