

November/December 1987

## Zimbabwe's New Order: Where Do the Churches Fit?

When 1980 brought independence to Zimbabwe, there was a flood of reassurances that although the new prime minister, Robert Mugabe, was a Marxist, he was a pragmatist who was committed to a mixed economy and a multi-party democracy. Above all, we were told Mugabe is a "Christian-Marxist."

Still, the churches in Zimbabwe, which include Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist and others, have been unsure about where they stand in the eyes of the Marxist prime minister and his ZANU (PF) party. Now they know. In a recent official ZANU party publication entitled *Society and Church*, the party has defined the "Role of the Churches in Revolutionary Politics." The document offers disturbing insight into Mugabe's vision of the future, a vision which seems far more committed to absolute party power than to democratic ideals.

When one considers how many are suggesting that South Africa emulate Zimbabwe, the concern deepens.

During the 13 years of guerrilla war, the churches in Zimbabwe (about half of the population calls itself Christian) were divided. Officially, none of the mainline denominations published statements that overtly supported the guerrillas in the bush, either Mugabe and his ZANU forces or Joshua Nkomo and his ZAPU army. However, many church leaders, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, individually declared their affinity with the guerrilla effort. In the Methodist Church, for instance, there was a schism between those who supported Methodist Bishop Muzorewa, the key player in the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia coalition government that preceded Mugabe's ZANU regime, and those Methodist clergy who backed Mugabe. The U.S. Methodist Church also got into the act through its Board of Global Ministries, which lent its support not to Bishop Muzorewa, but to Mugabe and his "freedom fighters."

The recent official ZANU publication recognizes the divided historical role the churches played in the

independence struggle. It separates Zimbabwe's churches into two camps: those that opposed "the new order" that came with independence, and those that supported it. "The challenge that the Church faces today," the document declares, "concerns both that wing of it which supported the colonial order and

that which opposed it, for while the former has now opportunistically adapted to the new situation, the latter might think it has done its job, and may have reached the end of its line."

**It is increasingly clear that the independent churches . . . are becoming less useful to the rulers. Only churches that are submissive to the party will be permitted to exist.**

The party reminds the churches that ZANU is "committed to changing the existing order." That is, ZANU wants to take the revolution further, and the churches had better keep in step. Even to the churches and church leaders that supported the inde-

(Zimbabwe, cont'd on page 2)



Religious News Service photo

*In an unusual shot from the early 1980's, Zimbabwe's Prime Minister Robert Mugabe (left) joins Methodist Bishop Abel Muzorewa in singing "God Bless Africa."*

(Zimbabwe, cont'd from page 1)

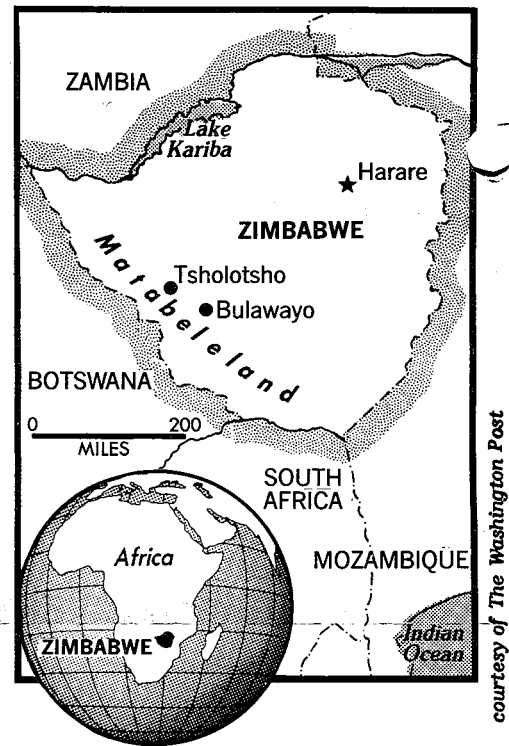
pendence movement, ZANU has a warning: "To the churches we say in unequivocal terms that this is not the end of the road."

What is the end of the road? A "socialist order" with ZANU controlling the political, economic, judicial and cultural sectors of Zimbabwean society — in short, a one-party state. The talk about a multi-party democracy and a mixed economy has vanished. "The end of the colonial rule," ZANU warns the churches, "was only the first stage of ushering in a revolutionary process by which a socialist order would do away with the oppression and injustices of the existing capitalist order."

ZANU's vision of the future clearly reflects the classical Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy of a "two-stage" revolution. What is the churches' role in society as Zimbabwe enters into this "second stage"? The party suggests that the churches look to Latin America and liberation theology as a worthy example. ZANU urges the churches to turn to "Marxism for a discovery of their true vision and true vocation." *Society and Church* tells us that "those sections of the Church that are fearful of Marxism are fearful of the people."

At independence in 1980, Robert Mugabe found himself sitting on top of a well-run economic and governmental infrastructure. In those first months of independence he moved carefully under a policy of "na-

(Zimbabwe, cont'd on page 5)



## NCC Averts Personnel Showdown

The governing board of the National Council of Churches, meeting in Jacksonville, Florida, in October, narrowly avoided a major confrontation between top executives. Shortly before the board meeting, NCC General Secretary Arie Brouwer had requested the resignation of Richard Butler, who heads Church World Service, the relief agency which is the largest division of the NCC. The conflict was over the degree of integration between the NCC and Church World Service. Brouwer sought a rapid merging of many NCC and CWS operations, while Butler apparently wished to preserve more CWS autonomy. In a tense closed session, the NCC Executive Committee voted to establish a five-member group of advisors to work with Brouwer and Butler in settling the ongoing organizational disputes.

The incident, which at first appears to be merely bureaucratic infighting, is in fact a revealing episode in the NCC's ongoing efforts to shore itself up following the blistering media attacks of five years ago on its radical political agenda. At that time the governing board realized that the NCC was being criticized for actions often undertaken by quasi-independent groups over which the central governing board had little or no control. A special NCC "Presidential Panel" recommended thorough restructuring and reorganization of the ecumenical council, with tighter centralized control. The restructuring gives the governing board (on which at least some mod-

erates, notably in the Orthodox communions, sit) more authority over smaller and often more radical units. Whether or not this reorganization will eventually result in substantive changes in NCC policies and programs is still unsettled, although the evidence to date is not encouraging.

But the restructuring, particularly regarding Church World Service, could give the NCC a public relations boon. As one backer of Brouwer in the recent controversy told Religious News Service that the NCC "will never have the kind of image it's looking for" until it is linked in the public mind with CWS and its generally well-regarded relief work.

On the other hand, the tactic may not work. Some CWS supporters are not interested in seeing the relief work co-opted. They particularly oppose a plan that would force CWS to put 40 percent of its gains from short-term investments (totalling \$2 million a year) into a common fund that would help finance other, often more controversial, NCC units.

Those who are eager for genuine reform of the NCC are caught in something of a dilemma. The restructuring could be, on the whole, a step with potential for positive change. Nevertheless, using Church World Service for public relations purposes — and relief monies to fund more controversial initiatives — would only paper over the continuing serious crisis in the ecumenical council.

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## International Affairs: A Stacked Deck

After the temporary pacification of the CWS flap, the rest of the NCC governing board meeting was less eventful. Four major foreign policy issues were addressed -- three less than satisfactorily.

**Haiti** -- A resolution on Haiti commendably supported Haitian Christians who are working to ensure fair and open democratic elections in Haiti.

**Central America** -- A resolution endorsing the peace initiative of the Central American presidents conveyed the NCC's "moral and spiritual support" to Dr. Gustavo Parajon "in his role as a member of the Reconciliation Commission of Nicaragua," while neglecting to mention the other Christian, Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo, who is Chairman of the National Reconciliation Commission. Suspecting the omission might have been related to the Cardinal's more consistent criticism of the Sandinista regime (a criticism the NCC has been loathe to imitate), I asked the head of the NCC's Latin American office, Oscar Bolioli, why Cardinal Obando was not mentioned. The ecumenical officer responded that the Cardinal was Roman Catholic, but the reference to Parajon is justified because "we are Protestants communicating to a Protestant" (one wonders where this leaves the NCC's Orthodox members).

Bolioli went on to volunteer a qualification for his support for the peace plan. Calling the peace plan a "white" political agreement, he argued that it neglected the needs of the native Indian populations who were not, he noted dismissively, so interested in things like elections and a free press.

**South Africa** -- The NCC governing board heard an address by Frank Chikane, the new General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches. Chikane is credited with making major contributions to the Kairos Document, which embodies African-style liberation theology. Chikane, who argued that he was for non-violent change in South Africa, claimed that South African blacks want comprehensive sanctions and an embargo against South Africa. In a press conference, Chikane revealingly distanced himself from more centrist approaches to South African reform such as the National Initiative for Reconciliation. Although he said his "solution" was "to go to the conference table tomorrow and talk about the future," he still had "basic problems" with the Indaba, a negotiated attempt at racial power-sharing by the people of Natal. His problem with the Indaba is no doubt related to his easy dismissal of Chief Gatsha Buthelezi (a major black opponent of both apartheid and the African National Congress, who was a significant figure in the Indaba negotiations) as a "government employee." Chikane is, nevertheless, an articulate and personable figure. NCC governing board members were disinclined -- or, for lack of balanced information, even unable -- to engage him critically. Instead he got a standing ovation and a generous free-will offering.

**Korea** -- A year ago the NCC adopted a major policy statement on "Peace and the Reunification of Korea." To follow up the policy statement, an NCC



courtesy of the NCC

*Presbyterian Patricia McClurg, the newly elected President of the National Council of Churches, is the first ordained woman to head the ecumenical council.*

delegation visited both North and South Korea this summer. This new NCC initiative (which will be treated more fully in a forthcoming issue of Religion and Democracy) offers disturbing evidence that the NCC is still unmoved by Marxist-Leninist oppression. The delegation report:

- \* is effusive in its descriptions of "colorful," "modern," and "aesthetically pleasing" North Korea, while describing South Korea largely in terms of U.S militarization.
- \* explains that "while North Korean political thought grows out of Marxism-Leninism, it goes far beyond this materialist doctrine to a 'man-centered' philosophy," which "has some things in common with Christian thinking."
- \* claims that "we can only speculate" on the trials which North Korean Christians have had to endure, but offers only the most incomplete speculation as to why there is a dearth of trained pastors. This shortage, according to the report, is because "Christians either left the north or were cut off in the south at the signing of the Armistice Agreement. Others, we were told, became disenchanted with or lost interest in the Church."
- \* commendably supports moves toward greater democratization and human rights in South Korea, but neglects to mention any need for democratization or respect for human rights in North Korea.

### New President-Elect: A Sign of Hope

The news from the NCC was not all discouraging, however. There was one very constructive action in the choice of Leonid Kishkovsky, of the Orthodox Church in America, as the president-elect of the Council. The Orthodox members of the NCC consistently act as a politically moderating and theologically perceptive influence on the Council. (One amusing example: a Greek Orthodox delegate asked in a committee meeting why the "vision statement" of the Division of Overseas Ministry called for relations with "socialist" societies when what was meant was "communist" societies. It was obvious that the sensibilities of some governing board members were

# The Book Shelf: The Capitalist Revolution

"By comparison with socialism, capitalism is uncontrolled, turbulent, messy!" Hence, capitalism implies revolution, not conservatism. So concludes renowned sociologist Peter Berger in his latest book, **The Capitalist Revolution: Fifty Propositions about Prosperity, Equality and Liberty.**

Berger looks to the "Western democracies," as well as the more recently developed East Asian economic systems, to supply empirical data for his "fifty propositions about prosperity, equality, and liberty." The chapters on the emerging capitalist nations in the Pacific Rim are particularly potent, as they provide the data which led to Berger's own intellectual conversion to the positive realities of a market system.

Proposition: "All democracies are capitalist; no democracy is socialist; many capitalist societies are not democracies." The evidence linking capitalism and democracy is substantial and obvious so Berger moves on to the next phase: Why does this link exist? Or is it simply an historical accident with no intrinsic connection between the two? No, Berger explains. The solution rests with the modern state's natural tendency constantly and endlessly to project its power into every nook and cranny of society. That capitalism resists and limits this encroachment is what causes "the fit" between democracy and capitalism. "Whatever else the government then controls, it does not fully control this (economic) zone, which ipso facto limits state power." The good news for capitalism spells some uncomfortable realities for socialists: "Whatever else socialism may mean as a utopian vision, empirically it has consistently meant an immense expansion of state power."

Berger is quick to note in his definitions that there are no "pure" cases of capitalism and socialism hence all existing economies are to some extent "mixed." "If capitalism 'fits with' democracy, the question is what degree of admixture of political intervention in the economy would tilt a society into a non-democratic polity." Berger's proposition on these "tilting points" concludes that a capitalist economy



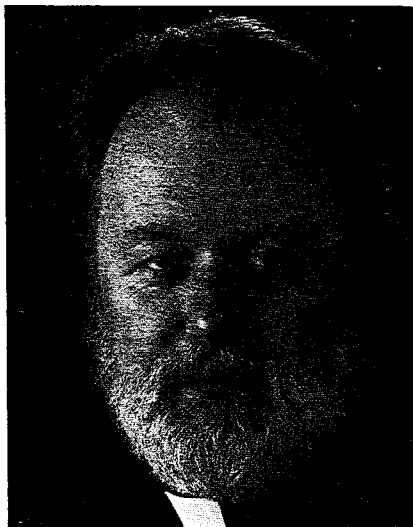
photo by Rebecca Hammet

*Peter Berger, member of IRD board of advisors and author of **The Capitalist Revolution**, speaks at an IRD conference.*

can be subjected to enough state control that a democratic governance becomes impossible. On the other hand, there is a "tilting point" when a socialist economy is opened up to market forces to such a degree that democratic governance becomes a possibility. The recent events in China highlight well the tension which can exist when movement towards a more open economy brings with it pressure towards democratization.

Berger's 50 propositions are precisely written and will undoubtedly evoke comment and amplification from both democratic socialists and laissez-faire capitalists. This well-reasoned and empirically grounded book is a welcome antidote to the unsubstantiated rhetoric which so typifies church commentary on economic matters. For those writing and reading pastoral letters and "liberation" theologies, Berger's **The Capitalist Revolution** will prove an indispensable tool in understanding the economic, social, and political choices that must be made in the years ahead. (The book is available from Basic Books for \$17.95.)

—Walter Kansteiner



*President-Elect of the NCC, the Rev. Leonid Kishkovsky of the Orthodox Church in America.*

courtesy of the NCC

(NCC, cont'd from page 3)

profoundly offended at such use of the "c" word.) Father Kishkovsky's sure hand was seen in his subtle editing of a message which the NCC sent to Patriarch Pimen and the people of the Russian Orthodox Church. In congratulating them on the 1988 millennium of the Church in what is now the Soviet Union, Kishkovsky's text acknowledged their "daily sacrificial witness to Christ's death and resurrection." Pointing out that Soviet authorities often try to limit recognition of Christianity to Russian history, he pressed for language recognizing "that the past, present, and future of your people and land are inseparably connected with the Good News of Christ." In the end, the message sent was a fine one. Perhaps the NCC will develop a similar sensitivity in developing relations with Roman Catholics and other Christians in the USSR who pay a price for resisting any attempt by Soviet authorities to use them.

—Diane Knippers

(Zimbabwe, cont'd from page 2)

tional reconciliation" which sought to establish a broad coalition. That coalition included his own ZANU party (primarily from the Shona ethnic group), his fellow guerrilla fighter Joshua Nkomo and his ZAPU party (primarily of the Ndebele ethnic group), agricultural leaders (primarily white farmers), some industrialists, and church leaders. Zimbabwe's population is about 80 percent Shona, 19 percent Ndebele, and less than 2 percent white.

In the last seven years, ZANU has been steadily consolidating power. As it tightens its control over every aspect of Zimbabwe's society, the original coalition members have become expendable. In the early 1980s, ZANU quickly established itself as the political power in Harare as the armed forces and the civil service were rapidly brought under party control. The draconian state-of-emergency imposed by the white minority regime of Ian Smith was kept on the books, allowing, among other things, detention without trial. In 1981 ZANU took firm control over the media -- print, radio and television -- via the "Mass Media Trust." Labor unions became ZANUized under the partisan Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, which "recognizes the party's supreme authority." ZANU has also set up youth brigades and people's militias, extending party influence throughout the country.

At the Second Party Congress in 1984, ZANU formally and explicitly declared the dominance of party over government.

Now that ZANU has openly declared its goal of a one-party state, the original coalition members can either hew to the party line or be purged from the coalition. In 1982, when Mugabe dismissed Nkomo from his cabinet, a confrontation with ZAPU became inevitable. In the following year, ZAPU learned the cost of resisting ZANU's goals when some 1500 rural Ndebele civilians were executed in a campaign to eliminate ZAPU "dissidents." The military campaign in the Ndebele homeland of Matabeleland was carried out by the North Korean-trained Fifth Brigade. In 1984, during a severe drought, several hundred thousand Ndebele were systematically denied emergency relief supplies. In its most recent move, Mugabe's government ordered all ZAPU offices closed indefinitely. In early October, Home Affairs Minister Enos Nkala said that henceforth ZAPU will be treated as "a hostile organization." He continued: "ZANU rules this country. Anyone who challenges this is a dissident and should be dealt with."

It is increasingly clear that the independent churches, like the other original coalition members, are becoming less useful to the rulers. Only churches that are submissive to the party will be permitted to exist. The Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, a church-funded human rights organization, has already felt the heat. Once a thorn in Ian Smith's side, the Commission is now the only human rights group operating in Zimbabwe. In 1985 and 1986 it released reports detailing the arrests and subsequent torture of hundreds of ZANU's political opponents. Last year the two top officers of the Justice and Peace Commission were detained, then released only after an international outcry. The Roman Catholic bishops

issued a pastoral letter of concern after the atrocities in Matabeleland in 1983. Mugabe answered their call for investigations with a stinging rebuke, and charged that the bishops were attempting to tarnish his government's reputation before the world.

Recently the evangelical churches, while experiencing rapid growth, have come under increasing attack by the government. ZANU party officials have charged that the evangelicals might be using religion as a cover for political organizing against the Mugabe regime. Zimbabwe's President Canaan Banana, a Methodist minister, suggests that some of the evangelical missionaries might actually be "on the payroll of South Africa."

"Revolutionary theology" is the new order of the day for Zimbabwe's churches. Mugabe's government is boldly marching into the realm of spiritual affairs. Many of Mugabe's supporters in the West, however, claim this is nothing more than the prime minister's usual rhetoric which, we are told, is firmly rooted in his Jesuit school training and his "non-practicing Christian-Marxism." We are assured that those who care about human rights and religious liberty need not be dismayed about this new approach to the churches; apparently, Mugabe has insisted that "God Bless Africa" is still to be played nightly before the state-controlled ZTV (Zimbabwe's television station) signs off.

Regardless of these vacuous reassurances, the church in Zimbabwe has a deep cause for alarm. ZANU, apparently for the first time, is explicitly naming and enlisting the churches as key institutions that will be used to usher in the new, revolutionary order. "The churches are well placed to perform this revolutionary task because they deal with the people at the grassroot levels," observes the ZANU party Society and Church statement. "But for them to do this, they must not become witting or unwitting agents of perpetuating the existing order. Their vocation must be, as of all revolutionaries, to change this order."

## Religious Liberty Alert

*You may protest the attempt to co-opt the churches of Zimbabwe by writing:*

*President Canaan Banana  
Office of the President  
P.O. Box 368  
Harare  
ZIMBABWE*

*(Methodists may want to remind President Banana of their common denominational affiliation.) The IRD also suggests contacting your congressional representatives, as well as your denomination's leaders, and appeal to them to protest to the government of Zimbabwe.*

Already the "servant church" advocates are building their base. In the past year there have been frequent conferences and seminars on the "Christian-Marxist" dialogue and "Socialism and Christianity." President Canaan Banana is often the keynote speaker at these affairs, couching the party's vision in the "Christian" light. On one occasion he declared: "All the government is saying is let us rid our society of social drones, of the Ananiases and Sapphi-

(Zimbabwe, cont'd on page 6)

(Zimbabwe, cont'd from page 5)

ras of our age, so we can, like the disciples, be one well-supplied family. Let us destroy individualism so that we can rediscover our true identity within the context of the collective. To sanction the unscrupulous protagonists of capitalism would amount to a miscarriage of justice and an acquittal of the rapists of the powerless and subjugated. Genuine Christianity and capitalism can never be bedmates.... We can ill afford to perpetuate a state where capitalism and socialism are mutual tenants."

The church in Zimbabwe is facing a serious and

dangerous threat. ZANU's ultimatums are not to be taken lightly. Zimbabwe is emitting unmistakable signals that it is slipping further into the grip of a party elite which strives for nothing less than complete domination. One Zimbabwean churchman who was active in the war against the Smith regime put it simply: "When they adopt a one-party system, freedom will be absent. I did not fight for independence to have no freedom."

"God Bless Africa," drones the TV at the end of each broadcasting day. "God Help Zimbabwe," if Robert Mugabe succeeds in co-opting the church.

— Walter Kansteiner

## From the Director's Desk

In the last issue of *Religion and Democracy*, I introduced three of my senior colleagues on the Institute on Religion and Democracy staff. More recently, we have added the position of Office Manager, which is being capably filled by Maria Mulvey. Maria is a native of Spain, where she attended the University of Madrid before emigrating to the United States in the early sixties. An active Roman Catholic laywoman, Maria's Washington experience includes working on the staffs of Senator David L. Boren (D-OK) and former Speaker of the House Carl Albert. Most recently, Maria worked for the U.S. Committee for Refugees. Her computer and accounting experience is particularly useful to our operations, and we are very grateful to have her joining the IRD's efforts to work on behalf of democracy and religious liberty.

— Kent Hill

### IRD Sponsors Trip to U.S.S.R.

The Institute on Religion and Democracy, along with the Slavic Gospel Association, is planning a two-week

#### *Millennium Tour of the Soviet Union March 26 through April 11*

This special tour will visit Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Tallinn, Riga, and will also include other historical centers of religious cultural life such as Suzdal, Rostov, Vladimir, and Bogolyubovo. Other major tourist attractions of the contemporary Soviet Union will be visited as well. This "Millennium" tour will occur in 1988 — the year in which we commemorate the coming of Christianity to the Eastern Slavs in Kiev in 988. The cost of the tour is approximately \$2,250.

**Space is limited.** If you are interested in more information, call or write:

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