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SADCC, Liberation Movements and Regional Development in Southern Africa

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People are both the instruments and the beneficiaries of development.

And what the evidence of these revolutionary movements goes to show is that they can hope to succeed where reform is bound too fail.

This paper attempts an assessment of the foundation and prospects of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) as based on some key aspects of protracted armed liberation in Southern Africa between 1961 and 1967. I argue that SADCC is among the major developments in the region arising from the support which peasants and workers gave to armed liberation movements. Thus, the success of SADCC, like that of liberation movements depends on the level at which it remains rooted in the realization that the peasants and workers of Southern Africa endured most of the capitalist exploitation. The liberation movements realized this, and set the social structure and historical experience of the peasants and workers as the context for a radical transformation of a capitalist and racist political domination of the region.

The contemporary nature of regional cooperation in Africa could easily lead to elusive, superficial and ahistorical conceptualization of development problems, and their solutions. The Lagos Plan of Action which the Organization of African Unity (OAU) adopted at its economic summit in Lagos, Nigeria, in April 1980 for continental development expressed sensitivity to this fact. This is extended and more focused in the SADCC. The SADCC states have the stressed strengthening of their transportation and communication as the principal objective of regional integration and reducing dependence on South Africa without which all strategies of regional cooperation in Southern Africa would be impractical. The precise formulation is that:

This dependence is not a natural phenomenon nor is it simply the result of a free market economy. The nine states and one occupied state of Southern Africa (Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe) were, in varying degrees, deliberately incorporated by metropolitan powers, colonial
rulers, and large corporations into the colonial and sub-colonial structures centering, in general, on the Republic of South Africa. The development of national economies as balanced units, let alone the welfare of the people of Southern Africa, played no part in the economic integration strategy. Not surprisingly, therefore, Southern Africa is fragmented, grossly exploited and subject to economic manipulation by outsiders. Future development must aim at the reduction of economic dependence not only on the Republic of South Africa, but also on any single external state or group of states.

More specifically, during the last one hundred years from the start of large scale mining of gold in 1886, international capital, in alliance with its outposts in South Africa, Zimbabwe, and various enclaves of mining and capitalist farming in the region, exploited African peasants and workers. This exploitation is broader when conceptualized as primitive accumulation than as the classic expression of the contradiction between labour and capital. It was a contradictory and uneven development involving preserving noncapitalist forms of production and sustaining regional migration of labour. Both processes were essential to a high level of surplus accumulation because the reproduction of labour and the social formation from which labour was derived were assigned to the noncapitalist economy. This culminated in a partial restructuring of the noncapitalist production whose labour units became families split into peasants and workers. The African nationalist movements of the 1950s and 1960s, which were populist and loose alliances of peasants, workers and various elites, negotiated political independence without fundamentally raising the implications of the historical relationship between international capital, the peasants and workers. In contrast, armed liberation in Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe raised the level of the peasant-worker structural alliance as a basis for the struggle and aspired to a radical restructuring of the regional economy.

In the wake of the victories of these liberation movements, SAOCC was established in April 1980. But SAOCC is largely presented as an economic reconstitution of the Front Line States (FLS) after their triumphant coordination in ending minority and racist rule in Zimbabwe. It is strongly held that concerted action to complete decolonization in the region will lead to further significant achievements in the economic reorganization of Southern Africa. The emphasis from the SAOCC leaders is that "the strength and effectiveness of coordinated action in the political liberation encouraged us to believe that a similar dynamic of coordination is
attainable on the economic front." It was considered that the liberation of Zimbabwe in particular would open the door to the decolonization of Namibia and South Africa; and that Zimbabwe's highly developed agriculture and industry were a potential for an economic regrouping that would increase pressure on South Africa by reducing dependence on it and international capital in the region.

The SADCC founding document states that "while the struggle for genuine political independence has advanced and continues to advance, it is not yet complete... Our urgent task now is to include economic liberation in our programmes and priorities." This realization was not totally new; it was a systematic codification of earlier developments such as the railway and oil pipe line between Tanzania and Zambia and the various programmes of the liberation movements in the region. The tradition of the FLS is emphasized more than that of the liberation movements. SADCC has adopted the informal practices of the FLS in its approach and inspired many optimistic assessments about its prospects.

SADCC aims at: a coordinated reduction of dependence of the independent states in Southern Africa on any single country, especially South Africa; forging links for equitable and genuine regional integration; mobilizing resources within the region for implementing national, interstate and regional policies; and finally taking concerted action in securing international finance and technical cooperation for the social and economic development in Southern Africa. These objectives are interlinked battlegrounds. The fourth objective could well be considered a critical strategy for realizing the first. Both further point to the significance of a realistic conceptualization of the internal problems and resources alluded to in the second and third goals as a basis for fundamental transformation.

The ambition to reduce external dependence while counting on outside support raises the significance of self-reliance. According to the President of Mozambique, Samora Machel, SADCC should develop programmes and institutions perceived as real regional needs. In his own words, "therefore, the economic plans have to be conceived and prepared by ourselves. There is no one better than ourselves, no one who knows better our needs and priorities. We must not accept the habit of plans made outside of our region." Machel's position had developed in the concrete conditions of the Mozambican liberation struggle. He had noted in 1972 how the Marxism-Leninism philosophy that guided the struggle evolved out of the specific situation in Mozambique. Despite earlier theorization under different conditions elsewhere, it did not appear in Mozambique's struggle as "an imported product."
SAOCC was founded to extend the programmes of liberation movements and the FLS in Southern Africa, and to counteract South African ambitions for a constellation of Southern African states (which would be orbiting around apartheid South Africa) and western (essentially American) initiatives as authored by Henry Kissinger during 1974-76. Kissinger put forward a sort of Marshall Plan for the reconstruction of the region after more than a decade of devastating wars, and as a concealed racist concern for whites under "democratic" rule. The South African and American initiatives floundered because of a total lack of appreciation for the dynamics of liberation movements which formed the basis of the FLS and later, the SAOCC.

SAOCC, then, is a reassertion that fundamental change in Southern Africa is related to the initiatives from within the region into which external resources will be channelled. The SAOCC founding document affirms that:

It is our belief that in the interest of popular welfare, justice and peace, we in Southern Africa have the right to ask and to receive practical international cooperation in our struggle for reconstruction, development, and genuine interdependence. However, as with the struggle for political liberation, the fight for economic liberation is neither a mere slogan to prompt external assistance nor a course of action from which we can be deflected by external indifference. The dignity and welfare of the peoples of Southern Africa demand economic liberation, and we will struggle toward that goal.

This bold statement of an African initiative also outlines a choice for the West between multiracial independent statehood and racist South Africa with its visions. This is a reformist essential position in courting the West which is primarily concerned with the immediate profitability of its investments in Southern Africa.

Yet, it is clear to the West that "SAOCC has become for them a soft option, a face-saving commitment, a dubious counter-balance to their continuing involvement with South Africa." Representatives of Western countries attended (indeed they are invited to most SAOCC meetings) two important meetings held in November 1980 and 1981 in Mozambique and Malawi respectively. These meetings set priority projects and sought international financial support. The Western countries and transnational corporations and multilateral development institutions pledged U.S. $650 million towards an estimated U.S. $1 to 2 billion. There are many specific and broad contradictions in Western support. For example, the United
States pledged $50 million to SADCC in 1981 and an initial $27 million early in 1986 to Jonas Savimbi's UNITA a South African force which destabilizes SADCC economies. Such support has enabled UNITA (and other insurgents in the region) to paralyze the Benguela railway which is critical to the SADCC development strategy. Western double dealing has a long history. Between 1964 and 1973, they provided Portugal along with U.S. $735 million in military and development funds. Further, western countries and multilateral development institutions have generally supported precisely those projects such as railway transportation which strengthen the export oriented structure of SADCC. This follows a historical pattern of emphasizing western investments in relations with South Africa and the region and dismissing the viability of liberation movements. In contrast, SADCC's prospects for success lie in drawing from and sustaining the experiences of liberation movements.

However, SADCC hopes that Western support would facilitate the development of industries and infrastructure which would reduce external dependence. Consistent with this confrontation of contradictory realities in the region, SADCC's developmental strategy is pragmatic. Each SADCC member state has been assigned a specific responsibility to undertake within its existing administrative and development structures in cooperation with appropriate institutions in other states and in line with the SADCC goals. These assignments are: Angola for energy development and conservation; Botswana to develop crop research and animal disease research; Malawi to oversee the best possible utilization of fisheries, forests and wildlife; Mozambique to coordinate transportation and communications; Swaziland to monitor manpower resources; Tanzania to formulate industrial development strategy; and Zambia to set a mining policy and SADCC development fund.

These efforts face South Africa's persistent refinement of its policies aimed at consolidating its domination of the region and securing the compliance of African ruled states over apartheid. In the 1960s, South Africa offered economic aid, and sought dialogue with selected African states and the OAU. It also reinforced a buffer corridor of then minority ruled racist states-Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The general boom in its economy in the aftermath, and despite the Sharpeville massacre of 1960 and increased imperialist support, made its initiatives formidable. The seeming political success of these efforts between 1960 and 1972 drew general British, French, and American support for Portugal, South Africa and Smith's Rhodesia. It was on these fragile structures that Kissinger founded his plan. The eventual collapse of Portuguese colonialism and the advances of
Liberation movements forced South Africa to retreat into its lion's den.

The Soweto and Rhodesian crises between 1974 and 1978 increased pressure on South Africa. The setback to the South African expansionism in the late 1970s was part of the contradictory process leading to the alliance of military and local South African capital in influencing South African politics. From 1978, and especially after Mugabe's victory in February 1980, to the present, South Africa has intensified economic sabotage, military destabilization, and savage attacks on the African National Congress's host states in the region. South Africa violently resisted popular demands for democratic change within its borders and in Namibia, and destabilized sovereign states. Thus, SADCC is both coordinating and leading a process of popular change which is directed against South Africa and aimed at consolidating the basis for a self-reliant regional development. SADCC's primary and immediate goal is to advance the conceptual and strategic formulation of self-reliance as illustrated in the experiences of liberation movements.

The fitful growth in the strength of white power within a truncated capitalist production in South Africa, Angola, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe generated a radical orientation among the oppressed African masses. African reaction took the form of armed struggle. But, it was only when the political consciousness of the peasants and workers had been raised as an initial critical phase and integrated into armed struggle, as it possible to make serious inroads into the bastion of racist and capitalist oppression. Basil Davidson noted that unlike others more favourably placed by history, they have to carry out their struggle for liberation through the agonies of war; in their case, only the most heroic effort can reverse the tide. Yet the scale and nature of their effort has given them a clarity of understanding from which others may perhaps have much to learn. Liberation movements were more than conventional nationalist organizations seeking to capture the colonial state. Their struggle was an opportunity to transform basic social, economic, and political relations. It is in the wake of this process that SADCC emerged. SADCC cannot, therefore, hope to succeed as an inter-state arrangement of political leaders; it can only succeed if and when it sustains the involvement of the peasants and workers through participation in the emerging institutions for regional development.

The recent historical foundation of this assertion needs little more elucidation. In Zimbabwe, the search for a negotiated solution to white oppression and economic domination proved elusive between the late 1950s and 1971. In South Africa, workers' strikes between 1972 and 1975 and
their subsequent culmination into the Soweto crisis in 1976 transformed the nature of earlier African political activity in that country. Limited restructuring of socio-economic and political relations was achieved. Events in South Africa and Zimbabwe until the early 1970s showed a missed opportunity of situations where mass political consciousness was not firmly integrated into armed liberation. The Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) in collaboration with and at the invitation of Frelimo, began a systematic politicization on which a sustained warfare became grounded after 1972. In general, Frelimo, MPLA, SWAPO and ZANU were the only liberation movements that articulated the grievances of peasants and workers as part of the armed liberation and developed a following which transcended nationality identity.

This trend reflected an understanding of the historical reality that Africans suffered economic exploitation and political domination primarily in terms of their positions as peasants and workers. Furthermore, it is the structural peasant-worker incorporation into the liberation process which was crucial to the victories of guerrilla warfare. This peasant-worker duality was historically derived from the uneven capitalist development in the region and it corresponded to white political domination. A fundamental transformation of the system required the incorporation of the peasant-worker experiences through politicization, to be followed by recruitment, training and active involvement in the war. This development eventually confounded South African expansionism and destroyed economic and military collaboration among minority and racist regimes in the region. The liberation movements in Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe had suffered initial setbacks because of the low level of political awareness among the masses regarding the need for coordinated and political violence against colonial domination and its basis. Final success had meant no reversing the struggle once peasant-worker participation and accountability to them had become established.

The peasant-worker context accepted the cadres in the liberation movements as providing the necessary leadership and organizational dynamism to eliminate various forms of oppression and exploitation. The general population also accepted that armed struggle was the necessary strategy because many neighbouring countries in the region and elsewhere in Africa had attained political independence through negotiations with minimal violence, while their own colonial regimes showed no willingness to provide a democratic franchise. A further and most decisive advance in sustaining popular involvement in armed liberation was the setting up of economic systems on principles that negated the colonial
Frelimo controlled about 25 percent of Mozambique between the beginning of the war in 1964 and 1968. Agricultural production in these liberated areas was reorganized through the collectivization of labour and ownership. This developed along with the establishment of democratic involvement in production. The peasants actively participated and were consulted in planning and implementing development strategies. These strategies differed radically from those of the Portuguese colonial economy. The Portuguese forced men, women and children into labour migration and to grow cash crops for the metropolitan economy. In the liberated areas, the people used simple tools such as axes and hoes but these were made more productive because of the democratic approach to production and the organization or deployment of labour.

The radical economic transformation of Mozambique during the course of the armed struggle included attacks on both colonial and indigenous institutions. Women were included in the military command and fighting units. This was a radical negation of the position assigned to women under colonialism in the contradictory process of attacking traditional structures while preserving those aspects that were functional in imperialist exploitation. Traditional institutions such as that of the chief and village heads also became changed in liberated areas, a process that has continued in independent Mozambique. They can no longer exact labour like feudal lords and as encouraged by the Portuguese colonial regime in its search for cheap labour and collaborating institutions. The tradition of inheritance is recognized, but not the associated authoritarian use of power. Frelimo attacked Portuguese cultural arrogance which was the ideological rationalization of labour policies and assimilation to induce collaboration. These were consistent with the backward capitalist economy, and with its more advanced variants in South Africa and Zimbabwe.

The most significant feature of post colonial Mozambique is the effort to build on the integration of peasants and workers in institutionalizing mass participation and popular democracy that had evolved in the liberated area. Political mobilization to promote peoples' consciousness stressed the role of popular culture in the armed struggle and how culture in turn became affected by the liberation struggle. Militant groups heighten political awareness in emphasizing the central role of the peasants' and workers' participation in political and socio-economic development. The progressive petty bourgeoisie is oriented to lead and educate the masses.
whose involvement is a powerful instrument of a broad based economic transformation. The political party has the function of asserting control over the state so that it reflects the interests and actions of the masses. The importance of the Mozambican experiences is that in countries which achieved political independence in the 1960s, such as Tanzania and Zambia, ambitious development strategies seemed to fail because the nationalist movements lost the populist culture. A return to this tradition is now evident and accords with the experiences and legacies of armed liberation such that it provides an important foundation of SADCC's development strategies. Liberation movements have shown the dynamics of a multifaceted transformation process grounded in popular involvement and accountability.

Postcolonial developments in Mozambique bear a remarkable contrast to those in Zimbabwe; and more so with countries that negotiated political independence in the 1960s. The Zimbabwean revolution is asserted to have "lost its way." Andre Astrow assesses the position of workers in Zimbabwe before and after April 1980 as that of a labour aristocracy as originally formulated for the African experience by Arrighi and Saul. He shows how the radical actions of the rank and file in the trade unions were compromised first by the co-option of leaders into the settler dominated economy and politics before 1980, and into the development ideology of the Mugabe government after independence. Second, Astrow argues that the petty bourgeois leadership of the liberation movement was unsuited to the problems of the peasants and workers.

Other writers dealing with the issue of land in Zimbabwe have argued that the new government failed to restructure land ownership, agricultural, and labour policies. The failure is partly traced to the constitutional protection of white interests and the concern for maintaining a level of production that will avoid suffering as before 1980 and to use the buoyancy of the economy as collateral for international support. Rush and Cliffe appraise this as a wrong approach because it ignores the historical experience of Zimbabwe and the problems that arise from it for the present. The approach of "what to do with the land and who to put on it" treats land as a fetish instead of an expression of the social relations and production. The key issue, they argue, is "how to provide for people, not how to use land; not what to do with the land." To them, land policy should be formulated so as to change social relations of production which led to armed liberation. I argue that SADCC should adopt such an approach.

Rush and Cliffe explore the historical process where rural areas in Zimbabwe, and Southern Africa generally, provided for the reproduction of labour power which was used in capitalist production as cheap labour. This split rural
households into worker-peasant, a structure which they see as preserved by policies of independent Zimbabwe. The government has not promoted peasant participation in the allocation of land, formulating farming policy or in planning. These were critical practices during the course of armed struggle and it may be surmised that it was the target of the constitutional guarantees in protecting white landed interests. This thrust of analysis focusing on popular participation was crucial to the victories of armed liberation and economic reorganization in the liberated zones. This, too, is the general spirit of SADCC, but it is in need of concrete existence.

It would be a constraint on SADCC's envisaged transformation of Southern Africa to take the events noted for Mozambique as a rolling success. Three scholarly approaches have emerged in assessing these developments, and contrasting countries that achieved independence from the barrel of the gun with those that experienced limited violence. There are those overly committed and sympathetic writers such as Isaacman and Isaacman on Mozambique. They create an impression of resounding and generally sustained development. Then writers such as Joseph Hanlon on Mozambique, and Rush and Whittie on Zimbabwe, who take a cautious and advisedly balanced analysis of the problems of reconstruction, and mass mobilization and the potential for a fundamental transformation. These two approaches taken together realistically appraise the nature of peasant-worker exploitation by capital, imperialism and racist state structure as justification of armed liberation. They remind us that the peasant-worker structural contradiction is inadequately appreciated in formulating development policy in the region. This is a critical basis for a SADCC development strategy. The collective will of SADCC was born out of coordinating decolonization in which peasants and workers played a pivotal role. Their participation should be kept in current policies for change. The last group of writers is represented by Philip Raikes and Andre Astrow. They are pessimistic in their focus on political and economic problems and do not specify the way ahead. To them, the opportunities are lost forever. In general, these studies show the significance of the tradition of popular involvement set in the course of armed liberation as a useful approach to the economic and political transformation which is on the SADCC agenda.

Thus, since SADCC is concerned with a self-sustaining and self-reliant development strategy, it is to the liberation movements that we should turn for structural strength in Southern Africa. SADCC should be viewed as providing a regional leadership that will promote broad-based consciousness and participation in all development policies. In assessing the strategies and prospects of SADCC, I have
argued for the need to examine the extent to which it aspires to advance the causes, goals, and experiences of armed liberation in Southern Africa. This is an echo of Seretse Khama and Basil Davidson's opening quotations. In Mozambique and Zimbabwe, flaws in mass involvement, and technocratic style of implementing development policies have begun to alienate the masses. This process is most advanced in countries that became independent in the 1960s.

Liberation movements in Southern Africa were concerned with more than a conventional transition to majority rule. Their struggle was about a vision of a new and just society; an opportunity to change colonial social, economic, and political relations based on uneven capitalist development associated with noncapitalist forms of generating surplus. In general, the lesson offered to SADCC from the tradition of armed struggle is that successful development requires raising social and political institutions capable of promoting overall participation and accountability. Whatever validity there is in celebrating SADCC as a transformation in the coordination of the FLS in liberating Angola, Mozambique, and especially Zimbabwe, the coordination was consequent to and subsequent from radical political and economic visions of liberation movements. SADCC is a tribute to and a coordinated leadership of the masses based on the experiences of armed liberation in Southern Africa. Armed struggle there shows that the people are the instruments of liberation, and SADCC is a strategy in search of development for the masses.

NOTES


16. Isaacman and Isaacman, From Colonialism to Revolution. p.100.


22 Calculated from Isaacman and Isaacman, From Colonialism to Revolution, p. 105.


28 Davidson, Angola's People, p. 347.


32 See Martin and Johnson, Struggle; Isaacman and Isaacman, From Colonialism to Revolution, chap. 5; Davidson, Angola's People pp. 189-358. This explanation does not apply to South Africa.


34 Isaacman and Isaacman, From Colonialism to Revolution, p. 105. pp. 109-44; Hanlon, Revolution, chaps. 12, 14, 17,


