

**STRUGGLES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA FOR SURVIVAL  
AND EQUALITY**

*Also by H. J. Simons*

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SLUMS OR SELF-RELIANCE? Urban Growth in Zambia

# **Struggles in Southern Africa for Survival and Equality**

H. J. Simons





First published in Great Britain 1997 by  
**MACMILLAN PRESS LTD**  
 Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS  
 and London  
 Companies and representatives  
 throughout the world

A catalogue record for this book is available  
 from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-349-39739-6      ISBN 978-0-230-37304-4 (eBook)  
 DOI 10.1057/9780230373044



First published in the United States of America 1997 by  
**ST. MARTIN'S PRESS, INC.**,  
 Scholarly and Reference Division,  
 175 Fifth Avenue,  
 New York, N.Y. 10010

ISBN 978-0-312-16260-3

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
 Simons, H. J. (Harold Jack)

Struggles in Southern Africa for survival and equality / H. J. Simons.  
 p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-312-16260-3 (cloth)

1. South Africa—Race relations. 2. Ethnology—South Africa.  
 3. Women—South Africa—Social conditions. 4. South Africa—Social  
 conditions. 5. Zambia—Race relations I. Title.

DT1756.S53 1996

305.8'00968—dc20

96-2812  
 CIP

© Ray Alexander Simons 1997

Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 1997 978-0-333-65664-8

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10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1  
 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97

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# Foreword

On Monday, 17 July 1995 my father signed the contract with the publishers for this book. I discussed the Foreword with him on the Wednesday, and he arranged to start writing on the Saturday. Saturday, 22 July he died.

He was very happy that this book was to be published. Arrangements to collect together some of his other pieces which had been published in various journals had also been made. All that remained was this Foreword.

There are two common threads which unite the chapters. The one is the interaction between indigenous peoples, anthropologists/sociologists and colonial or imperial governments. The second is the struggle for liberation; the struggle that takes place either against the colonialist government or within indigenous society against the patriarchy.

'Early Cape Societies' deals with the indigenous peoples at the Cape (and further afield) at the time of the Dutch colonisers' arrival. It goes on to discuss the different involvements and perspectives of anthropologists and sociologists as they took sides in the conflict between the colonial powers and the indigenous peoples, and the way in which knowledge was often subverted to the cause of the colonisers.

'The Colonial Conquest of Zambia' explores this latter theme further and in more detail, and expands too upon the role played by venture capital and the demands of manufacturing capitalism in the colonisation of large parts of Africa. As suggested by the title, it concentrates on the situation in Zambia, leading the reader from the pre-colonial era through to the present, and examining how the colonial mechanisms for dealing with revolt have persisted in the post-colonial present. It thus introduces the theme of the struggle for liberation, primarily against the colonial rulers, but also within indigenous society against patriarchal rule.

The next essay, 'Patriarchal Rule', extends the arguments begun in the previous essay. It deals with the colonial powers and their relations with the colonised indigenes, which were patriarchal in nature, as well as the place of women in both colonial

settler society and indigenous society. The place of women was a subject of abiding interest to my father, and one about which he had written for a great deal of his career.

'The Struggle for Equality' details the rise of African nationalism and the liberation movements against the backdrop of the demands of capitalism for workers, the development of white domination and the evolution of apartheid policies. It picks up again the theme of the role of sociologists and anthropologists in the determination of apartheid policies. This theme is one which my father had first become interested in when doing postgraduate work under Edgar Brookes, one of the intellectual founders of apartheid, in the 1930s.

'The Apartheid Years' explores the gritty details of jackboot heels, detentions and trials, torture and exile. It is a compendium of nastiness detailed fairly drily, but one cannot remain unmoved. Many (but not all) of the individual stories have been told elsewhere, but it is important to have these stories told again. The reader must remain aware that the consequences of social engineering are real, and felt by flesh and bones. Social engineers cannot simply claim (as has been done) that apartheid was 'simply' an 'unfortunate (and failed) experiment'.

Through all the essays runs the thread of the lives of common people, and how their interactions are circumscribed by social conditions. This awareness starts in the first essay, and continues throughout; it serves to underline my father's humanity and common touch, which are two of the attributes that made him a great teacher and a wonderful person.

Johan Simons

# Acknowledgements

I am indebted to my daughters Mary Simons and Tanya Barben for information about statutes, and to my niece Mrs Twinkle T.E. Brugge for her highly skilled secretarial work, which she carried out with unflagging energy. My wife Ray Alexander Simons has as always been a great standby and, because of my inability to type, wrote and prepared many references. I thank the University of Cape Town African Studies librarians for their assistance. I thank my son Johan who edited and prepared the book for publication to my satisfaction.

H.J. Simons  
18 July 1995



# Harold Jack Simons:

## A Biographical Note

Professor Harold Jack Simons was born on 1 February 1907 and educated in Riversdale, Cape Province. His mother, Gertrude Morkel, was a teacher; his father, Hyman Simons, born in Birmingham, came to South Africa with Cecil Rhodes. He disapproved of the treatment by the De Beers Company of the African workers in Kimberley, and of the lifestyle of the colonials, and so left Kimberley for Johannesburg. But there he found the lifestyle equally unappealing, and departed for Riversdale. There he joined Gertrude's father's legal office. Over his lifetime he was Town Clerk, Librarian, and Editor of the *Western Echo* and of the *Mossel Bay Advertiser*.

After matriculation in 1924, Jack joined a local firm of attorneys as an articled clerk. After completing Part 1 of the Law Certificate, he resigned to join the public service in Pretoria in 1926, where he worked for the next six years in the Auditor General's Department. During this period he obtained a BA (Law) degree as an external student of the University of South Africa (now UNISA), and was awarded a scholarship for post-graduate study. He used it to complete an MA in political science at the Transvaal University College (TUC) in Pretoria, which he obtained in 1931. He was awarded the Porter Scholarship and enrolled at the London School of Economics (LSE) in 1932 in the Department of Social Anthropology and obtained his PhD in 1935. His experience as a civil servant in the Auditor General and Justice Departments formed the basis of his PhD thesis: 'Crime and Punishment in South Africa with Comparative Studies'. He spent the next two years on the editorial staff of Lord Hailey's *An African Survey*, for which he wrote several chapters. He also signed a contract with Gollancz to publish his thesis as a book, but he wanted to revise parts on his return to South Africa, and this he did not do. Instead, he used it to write a chapter on 'The Law and its Administration', in the *Handbook on Race Relations in South Africa*, published by Oxford University Press for the South African Institute of Race Relations in 1949.

In 1933 he joined the British Communist Party and so fell foul of the university authorities. It was only his prowess as a rugby player which saved him from rustication.

In November 1937, equipped with a PhD and a Communist Party card, Jack moved to Cape Town to take up a lectureship in Native Law and Administration at the University of Cape Town (UCT). He did not approve of the term 'Native' and soon changed the Department's name to Department of Comparative African Government and Law.

His political activities paralleled and complicated his academic pursuits. The starting-point of his shift to political radicalism was the period he spent at UCT studying political science under Professor Edgar Brookes, author of *South Africa's Native Policy*. Brookes was a firm Christian and liberal of the J.S. Mill school, who managed to reconcile these values with whole-hearted approval of General Herzog's segregation programme for Africans. Jack rejected racism, segregation and eventually liberalism of the classical type and gravitated towards Marxism as being more consistent with social realities and his concepts of social justice and equality between race and national groups.

This process of change towards radicalism was accelerated by his experience at the LSE, then the centre of Marxist studies and revolutionary thought among British students. He became chairman of the Cosmopolitan Club, specialising in bringing foreign students together, organising hikes and debates at the weekends, and promoting a radical outlook. At the same time, he organised Marxist study classes. This was during the Great Depression – the Hungry Thirties – when the rise of Italian Fascism, German Nazism and the Spanish Civil War appeared to provide convincing evidence of the Marxist-Leninist thesis that the world was moving into a 'new round of wars and revolution'.

On his return to South Africa he took an active part in reviving the South African Communist Party (SACP) which had fallen into the doldrums and was barely limping along. He wrote editorials for the leftwing newspaper *The Guardian*, where he used the term 'African' consistently.

In 1941 he married Ray Alexander, a leading communist trade union organiser. Ray introduced him to the practical problems of trade unionism, which left him even less time for serious writing other than for the radical press, and he wrote pseudonymously for *Freedom*, *Fighting Talk* and *Africa South*.

In 1946, together with other members of the SACP Central Committee, he was put on trial on the charge of sedition for assisting the 1946 African miners strike. He defended himself and the Party successfully.

In 1950 the Nationalist Party government introduced the Suppression of Communism Act.

In 1960 after the Sharpeville massacre he was detained with over 2000 South Africans of all colours. The UCT staff and students demanded his release, and he was the first detainee to regain his liberty. As a result of his continual opposition to the government's racist policies, he was banned in 1961, and only allowed to lecture to his students, but not to publish.

In December 1964 his banning order was expanded, preventing him from entering any educational establishment. It was thus impossible for him to continue his academic career. After family discussions, he left South Africa in May 1965, having lectured at UCT for 27 years. He took up a Lord Simon Fellowship at the University of Manchester, and together with his wife, completed *Class and Colour in South Africa 1850-1950*, which was published in 1969.

In December 1967 Jack and Ray settled in Lusaka, Zambia, the closest independent state to South Africa. In 1968, he took up the post of Reader (later Professor) in Political Science and Sociology at the University of Zambia. He gave series of lectures to selected cadres of the United National Independence Party (UNIP): governors, military and intelligence officials and Kenneth Kaunda's cabinet, among others.

He retired in April 1975, but remained on the editorial board of *African Social Research*, the journal of the Institute for African Studies. At the request of the African National Congress (ANC) he spent two stints in the Umkhonto We Sizwe camps at Nova Catengue in Angola: six months in 1977-8 and three months in 1978-9, teaching political sociology. He also lectured at the Solomon Mahlangu College in Tanzania.

In the ANC he worked with its president, Oliver Tambo, on the constitutional committee, and drafted the guideline constitution for a free South Africa. He also worked in the ANC Education Department.

His interest in the position of African women produced *African Women: Their Legal Status in South Africa*, published in 1968.

Jack and Ray returned to South Africa in March 1990, after

the unbanning of the ANC, PAC and other organisations. He was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Law by the University of Cape Town in 1994. He continued writing and attending Communist Party meetings right up to his peaceful death in July 1995.