

and no great worries for the year ahead. What kept them going? No one mentioned the land distribution schemes. By all accounts, anyway, they have mostly benefited the regime.

The best explanation I could find was that international agencies (NGOs and the UN) were supplying such large quantities of emergency food aid, and distributing it so well, that disaster had been averted. To put it another way, the very

international statesman who have been so busily denouncing Mugabe have financed the measures that keep his people alive. You could call it hypocrisy, perhaps even a necessary display of double standards. Indeed in the short term, there is no other alternative to foreign aid, other than mass starvation. This situation should remind us, though, that many of Africa's problems can still be found outside her borders. ■

THE VALLEY AWAKES

Yousuf (Joe) Rassool provides a synopsis of his novel *The Valley Awakes*. The book can be ordered from Joe for £12 (inc. p&p). Phone 0118 375 1786. Email: y.rassool@ntlworld.com

THE YEAR is 1978. The Apartheid regime is again experiencing rebellion: first the students in 1976, and now in the Eastern Cape. This is the background when Hennie Van As, newly qualified teacher, decides to return to the farm school where he'd begun his schooling. Shortly afterward a black farm worker is killed in the vineyards by a "coloured" convict labourer. Hennie is asked to speak at the funeral. His speech inflames the mourners, who stone the police. They return with reinforcements to punish those whom they suspect. Some of the young blacks decline to hide in the dongas of the Hex River Mountains and decide to ambush the police. Three are killed and three wounded. The Head of Security suspects the incident is related to the unrest in the Eastern Cape. He arranges for an undercover black agent to investigate. He also suspects that the "coloured" school teacher is involved.

The spy is uncovered and is severely beaten. He dies in the cabin where Hennie stays. The police return to take all the black workers to Brandvlei prison on the outskirts of Worcester. They flatten the black workers' camp. This outrages the "coloured" workers, who with the help of the farmer's son and daughter rebuild the camp. There is a new spirit of solidarity among the workers. It is the height of the harvest season and there is now a labour shortage, for which the "coloured" workers refuse to cover. The school children also go and hide in the foothills so as not to be dragooned. Such a situation cannot be tolerated and the army is sent in. The workers in the valley refuse to scab and congregate in the rebuilt sheds. Hennie's brother leads a group to try to escape across the mountains. They are trapped in a cave. One of the young men clambers on to the hilltop and dislodges a boulder that destroys an army helicopter. He is machine gunned. All this is recorded by the press.

In the meantime, Hennie is taken in for questioning as is his friend, who teaches in Worcester,

Victor Walther. The third person wanted is Solomon Kunwayo; he attended Hewat as Solomon Conway. This convinces the Special Branch of the Eastern Cape connection. Walther's father is a priest at Mamre. He calls on the churches to protest. The Anglican Archbishop calls upon the church leaders in England and soon it is an international incident. A mass meeting is held in the Market Square in Worcester attended by the Archbishop and all the local churches including the African Methodist Episcopal. The international press is in full attendance. Annette, the farmer's daughter, also attends, and feels emotionally drawn to the call for freeing the Hennie and Samuel.

Solomon Conway evades the police and escapes across the border. Without him there are no grounds to detain Hennie and Victor. However, the Coloured Affairs Department decides to transfer Hennie to teach in Upington. Reluctantly Hennie decides to go. There is a mass turn out at the station. Annette tearfully declares her love, and promise to keep in touch. The train departs taking Hennie away from the Valley.

The synopsis cannot fully express what it was like to teach under the Coloured Affairs Dept. It can only be told by one who actually taught in the "coloured" schools. A synopsis cannot convey how Hennie begins to hold house meetings to help the workers to understand how the system of apartheid works. The role of the spy is significant. He pretends to be with them, and talks of "land for the tillers of the land". It cannot show how events begin to affect the farmer's son, Theuns, and changes him from a dyed-in-the-wool supporter of Apartheid to one questioning the morality of the system. The growing bond of friendship between Annette, the farmer's daughter and Hennie is a sub-theme. The development of empathy and the importance of reconciliation are two major themes that run through the story. Through their experiences everyone begins to learn to see one another as human beings.