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# IN

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**AT  
ISSUE**

**Nation and Ethnicity  
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Cover by Kevin Humphrey

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SOUTHERN AFRICAN  
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The nature of Work In Progress, which is to stimulate debate and present controversial views on a wide range of subjects, ensures that views expressed do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editorial collective.

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# Editorial

During the past months, a number of new political organisations have been formed. Some aim at specific constituencies (indians, students, the youth). Others, like the United Democratic Front and the National Forum, are co-ordinating bodies comprised of member organisations.

There are differences between many of these organisations - in membership, structure, ideology and aims. Yet the context in which they have emerged is the same - one of explicitly political opposition to apartheid and its implications, based on intended mass mobilisation and organisation.

Naturally enough, the formation of a new set of institutions has not been without conflict, as old political allegiances have been carried into the present. Thus, various black consciousness tendencies seem evident in the National Forum, while the style of the provincial United Democratic Fronts has been influenced by a Congress perspective, often based on support of the Freedom Charter.

New organisations are competing for members, prominence and resources. They feel weak and vulnerable, especially to possible state action against them. It is thus understandable that they are not all equally open to scrutiny, debate and criticism. Yet if the opening up of a new democratic political era is to be real - if political democracy on the left is to have substance - then debate and assessment of what is occurring is necessary.

South Africa lacks a strong or developed democratic tradition. This has sometimes allowed leaders to act without mandate or constituency, accountability or responsibility. This has tended to weaken mass activity and organisation. Too often the absence of debate and criticism, assessment and response, has been justified on the grounds that its presence is too dangerous in a repressive society. Yet if a period of legal and open mass politics is upon us, old ways may not be the most appropriate ones.

This is the context in which WIP has published three contributions dealing with some of the questions relevant to political organisation. There is no collective position or 'line' in these articles, and they represent different tendencies in the emerging debate. Questions of class and race, ethnicity and nation are discussed, and the issue of forms of organisation appropriate to the current situation are also raised.

Debate between contending parties and interests is to be welcomed, and will hopefully continue. This can only serve to deepen political democracy. Importantly, though, it must be noted that in opening its columns to these different positions, WIP is not endorsing everything that appears in the publication. Indeed, given the differences in positions adopted, this would not be possible.

It is early days in the attempts to establish more solid foundations to open political organisation than existed in the past decade. If the experience of the independent labour movement is anything to go by, the process of consolidating organisation and edging towards political unity will be a slow and difficult one. Yet at all times during this, the right of debate and criticism, both from within and without political organisations, needs to be retained if democracy is to be more than a slogan for manipulation.

# Namibia -

## political-legal issues

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Recent legal proceedings suggest something of a change in the attitude of Namibia's supreme court. A contributor discusses.

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In 1980, Ida Jimmy, a SWAPO member in Namibia was jailed for ten years for expressing support on a public platform for SWAPO's military wing, the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN).

A couple of months ago, Angula Mwaala, a PLAN combatant, was sentenced to an effective 11 years on charges of murder and robbery with aggravating circumstances, for being an accessory to the retaliatory killing of a farmworker who had killed a SWAPO guerilla and claimed the R2 000 reward.

Justice Bethune declined to impose the death penalty, saying, 'The court will take regard of the feelings of the majority of people of this country if it does not impose the death sentence'. He found that 'Evidence in this and other cases indicates that a large percentage of terrorists entering this territory are killed by the Defence Force. If that does not have sufficient deterrent value it is unlikely that sentences imposed by this court would scare off terrorists'. Argument in mitigation had centred around these points.

Has there been a shift in judicial attitudes in Namibia? It must be remembered that 1980 was the high water mark for PLAN's activities in Namibia. Ida Jimmy's judge was from SA. Recent appointments have increased the number of Namibian judges. And since the amalgamation of local and regional courts a year ago, all cases that may carry more than five years imprisonment, or civil compensation of more than R2 000 are heard by the supreme court.

Another change is that before about 1980, political cases were often defended by imported top SA counsel, whereas now local advocates are almost

invariably briefed - and it appears that their sense of the intricacies of the Namibian situation is bearing fruit.

Perhaps the most important factor, though, is that civilians are increasingly breaking the almost total seal of silence that has held them for so long.

One of the themes emerging in the last year is the increasing number of affidavits, testimony and civil applications being brought by civilians in the 'operational area'. This includes Ovambo, Kavango, Kaokoland and the Caprivi, where the police counter-insurgency units are formally responsible for information gathering (interrogation) and follow-up of insurgents, and indeed maintain much of the basic civilian control.

These units are manned by locals and officered by whites, and are responsible for 90% of the killrate within the country. A number of charges or investigations of police and military personnel have followed affidavits by locals about violence used against themselves or their neighbours.

Further, the activities and techniques of counter-insurgency units and official interrogators, which were dark rumours two years ago, are now common knowledge, substantiated by case after case.

One of the most important of these was the Kakuva case. The wife and brother of a Kaokoland farmer brought an application to have him declared dead. He had never reappeared after having been detained by security police on suspicion of aiding PLAN along with 25 of his neighbours in August 1980.

Research by lawyers lasted for two years and the case went on for months. It included testimony by a Windhoek architect as to the design and measurements of a torture compound he had been shown in the operational area; and one of his co-detainees testified that he had heard Kakuva's screams dying away, and had had his body thrown on top

of him. Counsel's intention was to prove that beatings and torture were a routine factor of information gathering in the operational area. Justice Mouton found that Kakuva had died in security police custody as a result of assault. The respondents (the Administrator-General and the Minister of Police) are appealing. It remains to be seen what the appeal court in Bloemfontein will make of the evidence.

In the course of the case, counsel for the security police demanded that Kakuva's counsel reveal who was paying them. This was denied. But widespread speculation that the churches are supporting at least some of the cases (and certainly they have the most widespread channels of information in the operational area) has led to sporadic attacks, particularly on the Council of Churches in Namibia.

Last week two members of the SA Police's counter-insurgency unit, Koevoet, were restrained by the Windhoek supreme court from harming an Ovambo businessman who fears for his life at their hands. One of the two, Karel Hamakali, claimed, while threatening the applicant, to have killed a man at a bar belonging to another businessman, and may be charged as a result of the applicant's affidavit.

The applicant, Solomon Kanjolomba, said he brought the application because it appears to be a futile exercise to seek protection from the police from policemen.

Kanjolomba had fired Hamakali's sister from his shop after four days employment. He said that after Hamakali had been prevented from shooting him by the intervention of two police constables, he closed all his shops for the day, and kept the cuca shop (which sold liquor) closed, because 'it is known that members of Koevoet, unlike the Defence Force, carry their weapons with them when they drink, even when they are drunk'.

These are just instances of legal cases arising out of Namibia's war. There are routine charges of rape and murder, inquests on civilians shot, and many detentions. A number of lawyers agree that, as one put it, 'We have more security legislation here than in South Africa, especially for the operational area. Anybody can be accused of giving aid to PLAN and shot, even for the crudest personal gain. Most often, bodies that are left after an accidental, or spiteful, or drunken, shooting can just be quietly buried'.

Namibia's population is small, and its legal circles are tiny. News and attitudes spread fast. A judicial concern rather more complex than the simple desire to 'support law and order and punish the terrorists' is becoming a stronger theme. Apprehension about long-term consequences of the conduct of the war in the north seems to be placing the judiciary in a position of striving against legal constraints, and all the odds of war, to render some redress.



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at issue:

# Nation and Ethnicity

NEVILLE ALEXANDER was a speaker at the recent Hammanskraal meeting which launched the National Forum. Here his speech, on the relationship between ethnicity, class and nation, is reproduced.

The immediate goal of the national liberation struggle now being waged in South Africa is the destruction of the system of racial capitalism. Apartheid is simply a particular socio-political expression of this system. Our opposition to apartheid is therefore only a starting point for our struggle against the structures and interests which are the real basis of apartheid.

In South Africa, as in any other modern capitalist country, the ruling class consists of the owners of capital which is invested in mines, factories, land, wholesaling and distribution networks and banks. The different sections of the ruling class often disagree about the best methods of maintaining or developing the system of 'free enterprise', as they call the capitalist system. They are united, however, on the need to protect the system as a whole against all threats from inside and outside the country.

During the past 100 odd years, a modern industrial economy has been created in South Africa under the spur of the capitalist class. The most diverse groups of people (European settlers, immigrants, African and East Indian slaves, Indian indentured labourers, Chinese indentured labourers and indigenous African people) were brought together and compelled to labour for the profit of the different capitalist owners of the means of production.

Now, during the 18th and 19th centuries in Western and Central Europe, roughly similar processes had taken place. But there was one major difference between Europe and the colonies of Europe. For

in Europe, in the epoch of the rise of capitalism, the up and coming capitalist class had to struggle (together with and in fact on the backs of the downtrodden peasantry and the tiny class of wage workers) against the feudal aristocracy in order to be allowed to unfold their enterprise. Through unequal taxation, restrictions on freedom of trade and freedom of movement and in a thousand different ways the aristocracy exploited the bourgeoisie and the other toiling classes.

In order to gain the benefit of their labours, to free the rapidly developing forces of production from the fetters of feudal relations of production, the capitalist class had to organise the peasants and the other urban classes to overthrow the feudal system. In the course of these struggles of national unification this bourgeoisie developed a nationalist democratic ideology and its cultural values and practices became the dominant ones in the new nations. The bourgeoisie became the leading class in the nation and were able to structure it in accordance with their class interests.

In the 20th century in the colonies of Europe, however, the situation has been and is entirely different. In these colonies, European or metropolitan capitalism (ie imperialism) had become the oppressor who brutally exploited the colonial peoples. In some cases the colonial power had allowed or even encouraged a class of colonial satellite capitalists to come into being. This class, being completely dependent on London, Paris, Brussels, Berlin or New York, could not oppose imperialism in any consistent manner. If it had done so it would in effect have committed class suicide because it would have had to advocate the destruction of the imperialist-capitalist system which is the basis of colonial oppression. After World War II especially, the imperialist powers realised that this situation

(backed up by the existence and expansion of the Soviet System) would put great strain on the capitalist system as a whole. Consequently we had a period of 'decolonisation' which as we now know, merely ushered in the present epoch of neo-colonialism, which Kwame Nkrumah optimistically called the 'last stage of imperialism'!

In South Africa, a peculiar development took place. Here, the national bourgeoisie had come to consist of a class of white capitalists. Because they could only farm and mine gold and diamonds profitably if they had an unlimited supply of cheap labour, they found it necessary to create a split labour market, ie one for cheap black labour and one for skilled and semi-skilled (mainly white labour). This was made easier by the fact that in the pre-industrial colonial period white-black relationships had been essentially master-servant relations. Racialist attitudes were those prevalent in one degree or another throughout the country. In order to secure their labour supply as required, the national bourgeoisie in South Africa had to institute and perpetuate the system whereby black people were denied political rights, were restricted in their freedom of movement, tied to the land in the so-called 'native reserves', not allowed to own landed property anywhere in South Africa and their children receiving an education, if they received any at all that 'prepared them for life in a subordinate society'. Unlike their European predecessors in the 18th and 19th centuries, the colonial national bourgeoisie in South Africa could not complete the bourgeois democratic revolution. They compromised with British imperialism in 1910 in order to maintain their profitable system of super exploitation of black labour.

They did not incorporate the entire population under the new state on the basis of legal equality, they could not unite the nation. On the contrary, ever since 1910, elaborate strategies have been evolved and implemented to divide the working people into ever smaller potentially antagonistic groups. Divide and Rule, the main policy of any imperial power, has been the compass of every government of South Africa since 1910.

In order to justify these policies the ideology of racism was elaborated, systematised and universalised. People were born into a set-up where they were

categorised 'racially'. They grew up believing that they were 'Whites', 'Coloureds', 'Africans', 'Indians'. Since 1948, they have been encouraged and often forced to think of themselves in even more microscopic terms as 'Xhosa'; 'Zulu'; 'Malay'; 'Muslim'; 'Hindu'; 'Griqua'; 'Sotho'; 'Venda'; etc; etc. To put it differently: at first the ruling ideology decreed that the people of South Africa were grouped by God into four 'races'. The ideal policy of the conservative fascist-minded politicians of the capitalist class was to keep these 'races' separate. The so-called liberal element strove for 'harmonious' 'race relations in a multi-racial country'. Because of the development of the biological sciences where the very concept of 'race' was questioned and because of the catastrophic consequences of the racist herrenvolk policies of Hitler Germany socio-political theories based on the concept of 'race' fell into disrepute. The social theorists of the ruling class then resorted to the theory of 'ethnic groups', which had in the meantime become a firmly established instrument of economic and political policy in the United States of America as well as elsewhere in the world. It is to be noted that this theory of ethnicity continued to be based on the ideology of 'race' as far as South Africa was concerned. From the point of view of the ruling class, however, the theory of 'ethnic groups' was a superior instrument of policy, because, as I have pointed out, it could explain and justify even greater fragmentation of the working people whose unity held within itself the message of doom for the capitalist apartheid system in this country.

The fact of the matter is that the Afrikaner National Party used ethnic theories in order to justify Bantustan strategy whereby it created bogus 'nations' and forced them to accept an illusory 'independence' so that the working class would agitate for political rights in their own so-called 'homelands'.

The idea, as we all know, was to create, revive and entrench antagonistic feelings of difference between language groups (Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho, Tswana, etc), religious groups (Muslim, Hindu, Christian, etc), 'cultural' groups (Griqua, Malay, Coloured, etc), and of course 'racial' groups (African, Coloured, Indian, White, etc). I need not show here how this theory was designed to serve the interests of the ruling class

by preserving apartheid (grand and petty) and how ruthlessly it was applied. The literature on apartheid is so large today that no single person could study all of it in the span of one lifetime. What we need to do is to take a careful, if brief, look at how the liberation movement has conceived of the differences between and the unity of the officially classified population registration groups, the different language groups and religious sects that constitute our single nation.

#### MULTIRACIALISM, NON-RACIALISM AND ANTI-RACISM

Those organisations and writers within the liberation movement who used to put forward the view that South Africa is a multi-racial country composed of four 'races' no longer do so for the same reasons as the conservative and liberal ruling class theorists. They have begun to speak more and more of building 'non-racial' South Africa. I am afraid to say that for most people who use this term 'non-racial' it means exactly the same thing as multi-racial. They continue to conceive of South Africa's population as consisting of four so-called 'races'. It has become fashionable to intone the words 'non-racial democratic South Africa' as a kind of open sesame that permits one to enter into the hallowed portals of the progressive 'democratic movement'. There is nothing wrong with the words themselves, but if we do not want to be deceived by words we have to look behind them at the concepts and the action on which they are based.

The words 'non-racial' can only be accepted by a racially oppressed people if it means that we reject the concept of 'race', that we deny the existence of 'races' and thus oppose all actions, practices, beliefs and policies based on the concept of 'race'. If in practice (and in theory) we continue to use the word non-racial as though we believe that South Africa is inhabited by four so-called 'races', we are still trapped in multi-racialism and thus in racialism. Non-racialism, meaning the denial of the existence of races, leads on to anti-racism which goes beyond it because the term not only involves the denial of 'race' but also opposition to the capitalist structures for the perpetuation of which the ideology and theory of 'race' exist. Words are like

money. They are easily counterfeited and it is often difficult to tell the real coin from the false one. We need, therefore, at all times to find out whether our 'non-racialists' are multi-racialists or anti-racists. Only the latter variety can belong in the national liberation movement.

#### ETHNIC GROUPS, NATIONAL GROUPS AND NATIONS

The theory of ethnicity and of ethnic groups has taken the place of theories of 'race' in the modern world. Very often 'racial' theories are incorporated into 'ethnic theories'. In this paper, I am not going to discuss the scientific validity of ethnic theory usually called pluralism of one kind or another. That is a job that one or more of us in the liberation movement must do and do very soon before our youth get infected incurably with these dangerous ideas at the universities. All that I need to point out here is that the way in which the ideologies of the National Party use the term 'ethnic groups' makes it almost impossible for any serious-minded person grappling with these problems to use the term as a tool of analysis.

It has been shown by a number of writers that the National Party's use of the terminology of ethnicity is contradictory, and designed simply to justify the apartheid/Bantustan policies. Thus, for example, they claim, amongst other things, that:

- a) The 'African' people consist of between eight and ten different 'ethnic groups', all of whom want to attain 'national' ie Bantustan 'independence'.
- b) The 'Coloured' people consist of at least three different 'ethnic groups' (Malay, Cape Coloureds, Griqua and possibly 'other Coloured'). On the other hand, 'Coloureds' are themselves an ethnic group, but not a 'nation'.
- c) The 'Indian' people constitute an ethnic group as do people of Chinese origin, but these are not 'nations'.
- d) The 'White' people consist of Afrikaans, English and other ethnic groups but constitute a single nation ie the white nation of South Africa.

In all this tangle of contradictions, the most important point is that every 'ethnic group' is potentially a so-called 'nation' unless it is already part of a 'nation' as in the case of the whites.

We have to admit that in the liberation movement ever since 1896, the question of



the different population registration groups has presented us with a major problem, one which was either glossed over or evaded or simply ignored. I cannot go into the history of the matter here. We shall have to content ourselves with the different positions taken up by different tendencies in the liberation movement today. These can be summarised briefly as falling into three categories: 1) For some, the population registration groups are 'national groups or racial groups, or sometimes ethnic groups'. The position of these people is that it is a 'self-evident and undeniable reality that there are Indians, Coloureds, Africans and Whites (national groups) in our Country. It is a reality precisely because each of these national groups has its own heritage, culture, language, customs and traditions' (Zak Yacoob, Speech presented at the first general meeting of the Transvaal Indian Congress ... on 1 May 1983).

Without debating the point any further, let me say that this is the classical position of ethnic theory. I shall show presently that the use of the word 'national group' is fraught with dangers not because it is a word but because it gives expression to and thereby reinforces separatist and disruptive tendencies in the body politic of South Africa. The advocates of this theory outside the liberation movement, such as Inkatha and the PFP, draw the conclusion that a federal constitutional solution is on the order of the day. Those inside the liberation movement believe contradictorily that even though the national groups with their different cultures will continue to exist they can somehow do so in a unitary state as part of a single nation.

We have to state clearly that if things really are as they appear to be we would not need any science. If the sun really quite self-evidently moved around the earth we would not require astronomy and space research to explain to us that the opposite is true, that the 'self-evidently real' is only apparent. Of course there are historically evolved differences of language, religion, customs, job specialisation etc among the different groups in this country. But we have to view these differences historically, not statically. They have been enhanced and artificially engendered by the deliberate ruling-class policy of keeping the different population registration groups in separate

compartments, making them lead their lives in group isolation except in the market place. This is a historical reality. It is not an unchanging situation that stands above or outside history. I shall show just how this historical reality has to be reconciled through class struggle with the reality of a single nation.

The danger inherent in this kind of talk is quite simply that it makes room both in theory and in practice for the preaching of ethnic separatism. It is claimed that a theory of 'national groups' advocated in the context of a movement for national liberation merely seeks 'to heighten the positive features of each national group and to weld these together so that there arises out of this process of organisation a single national consciousness' (Yacoob), whereas the ruling class 'relying upon the negative features' (of each national group) 'emphasises ethnicity' or 'uses culture in order to reinforce separation and division'. We can repeat this kind of intellectualist solace until we fall asleep, the fact remains that 'ethnic' or 'national group' approaches are the thin end of the wedge for separatist movements and civil wars are fanned by great-power interests and suppliers of arms of opportunist 'ethnic leaders'. Does not Inkatha in some ways represent a warning to all of us? Who decides what are the 'positive features' of a national group? What are the boundaries or limits of a national group? Are these determined by the population register? Is a national group a stunted nation, one that, given the appropriate soil, will fight for national self-determination in its own nation-state? Or does the word 'national' have some other more sophisticated meaning?

These are relevant questions to ask because the advocates of the four-nation or national-group approach maintain that a liberated South Africa will guarantee group rights such as 'the right of National Groups to their culture' and that we have to accept that if the existence of national groups is a reality and if each national group has its own culture, traditions, and problems, the movement for change is best facilitated by enabling organisation around issues which concern people in their daily lives, issues such as low wages, high transport costs and poor housing. Or as other representatives of this tendency have bluntly said we need separate

organisations for each of the national groups, which organisations can and should be brought together in an alliance.

These are weighty conclusions on which history itself (since 1960 and especially since 1976) has pronounced a negative judgement. To fan the fires of ethnic politics today is to go backwards, forward. It plays into the hands of the reactionary middle-class leadership. It is a reactionar, not a progressive policy from the point of view of the liberation movement taken as a whole. Imagine us advocating 'Indian', 'Coloured', and 'African' trade unions or student unions today!

2) There is a diametrically opposite view within the liberation movement even though it is held by a very small minority of people. According to this view, our struggle is not a struggle for national liberation. It is a class struggle pure and simple, one in which the 'working class' will wrest power from the 'capitalist class'.

For this reason, the workers should be organised regardless of what so-called group they belong to. This tendency seems to say (in theory) that the historically evolved differences are irrelevant or at best of secondary importance.

I find it difficult to take this position seriously. I suspect that in practice the activists who hold this view are compelled to make the most acrobatic compromises with the reality of racial prejudice among 'workers'. To deny the reality of racial prejudice and perceived differences, whatever their origin, is to disarm oneself strategically and tactically. It becomes impossible to organise a mass movement outside the ranks of a few thousand students perhaps.

Again the historical experience of the liberation movement in South Africa does not permit us to entertain this kind of conclusion. All the little organisations and groups that have at one time or another operated on the basis have vanished after telling their simple story which, though 'full of sound and fury', signified nothing.

3) The third position is one that has been proved to be correct by the history of all successful liberation struggles in Africa and elsewhere. I have found no better description of this position than that outlined by President Samora Machel in a speech held in August 1982 in reply to General Malan's accusations that South Africa was being 'destabilised'

by hostile elements in the Subcontinent.

In that speech Machel said among other things that:

'Our nation is historically new. The awareness of being Mozambicans arose with the common oppression suffered by all of us under the colonialism from Rovuma to the Maputo.

'FRELIMO, in its 20 years of existence and in this path of struggle, turned us progressively into Mozambicans, no longer Makonde and Shangaan, Nyanja and Ronga, Nyungwe and Bitonga, Chuabo and Ndaou, Macua and Xitsua.

'FRELIMO turned us into equal sons of the Mozambican nation, whether our skin was black, brown or white.

'Our nation was not moulded and forged by feudal or bourgeois gentlemen. It arose from our armed struggle. It was carved out by our hard-working calloused hands.

'Thus during the national liberation war, the ideas of country and freedom were closely associated with victory of the working people. We fought to free the land and the people. This is the reason that those, who at the time wanted the land and the people in order to exploit them, left us to go and fight in the ranks of colonialism, their partner.

'The unity of the Mozambican nation and Mozambican patriotism is found in the essential components of, and we emphasise, anti-racism, socialism, freedom and unity' (WIP 26).

This statement is especially significant when one realises that for many years FRELIMO accepted that 'there is no antagonism between the existence of a number of ethnic groups and National Unity'. This sentence comes from a FRELIMO document entitled 'Mozambican Tribes and Ethnic Groups: their significance in the struggle for national liberation' written at a time 'when the movement actually was under strong pressure from politicians who were consciously manipulating ethnicity in their own interest' (J Saul: The dialectic of class and tribe).

Even earlier in 1962 a FRELIMO document had stressed that 'it is true that there are differences among us Mozambicans. Some of us are Macondes, others are Nianjas, others Macuas, etc. Some of us come from the mountains, others from the plains. Each of our tribes has its own language, its specific uses and habitudes and different cultures. There are differences among us. This is normal ... In all big

countries there are differences among people.

'All of us Mozambicans - Macuas, Macondes, Nianjas, Changanas, Ajuas, etc - we want to be free. To be free we have to fight united.

'ALL MOZAMBICANS OF ALL TRIBES ARE BROTHERS IN THE STRUGGLE. ALL THE TRIBES OF MOZAMBIQUE MUST UNITE IN THE COMMON STRUGGLE FOR THE INDEPENDENCE OF OUR COUNTRY'. (Quoted by J Saul.)

The development of the Mozambican national liberation ideology through the lessons learnt in struggle is shown clearly by President Machel's August 1982 statement that

'Ours is not a society in which races and colours, tribes and regions coexist and live harmoniously side by side. We went beyond these ideas during a struggle in which we sometimes had to force people's consciousness in order for them to free themselves from complexes and prejudices so as to become simply, we repeat, simply people'.

Every situation is unique. The experience of FRELIMO, while it may have many lessons for us, cannot be duplicated in South Africa. Certainly, the population registration groups of South Africa are neither 'tribes' nor 'ethnic groups' nor 'national groups'. In sociological theory, they can be described as colour castes or more simply as colour groups. So to describe them is not unimportant since the word captures the nature or the direction of development of these groups. But this question of words is not really the issue. What is important is to clarify the relationship between class, colour, culture and nation.

The economic, material, language, religious and other differences between colour groups are real. They influence and determine the way in which people live and experience their lives. Reactionary ethnic organisation would not have been so successful in the history of this country had these differences not been of a certain order of reality. However, these differences are neither permanent nor necessarily divisive if they are restructured and redirected for the purposes of national liberation and thus in order to build the nation. The ruling class has used language, religion and sex differences among the working people in order to divide them and to disorganise them. Any organisation of the people that does not set out to counteract these divisive tendencies set up by the ruling-class strategies merely ends up by reinforcing

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these strategies. The case of Gandhi or Abdurrahma are good examples. Middle-class and aspiring bourgeois elements quickly seize control of such colour-based 'ethnic' organisations and use them as power bases from which they try to bargain for a larger share of the economic cake. This is essentially the kind of thing that the Bantustan leaders and the Bantustan middle-classes are doing today.

Because they are oppressed, all black people who have not accepted the rulers' Bantustan strategy desire to be free and to participate fully in the economic, political and socio life of Azania. We have seen that the national bourgeoisie have failed to complete the democratic revolution. The middle-classes cannot be consistent since their interests are, generally speaking and in their own consciousness tied to the capitalist system. Hence only the black working class can take the task of completing the democratisation of the country on its shoulders. It alone can unite all the oppressed and exploited classes. It has become the leading class in the building of the nation. It has to redefine the nation and abolish the reactionary definitions of the bourgeoisie and of the reactionary petty bourgeoisie. The nation has to be structured by and in the interests of the black working class. But it can only do so by changing the entire system. A non-racial capitalism is impossible in South Africa. The class struggle against racial oppression became one struggle under the general command of the black working class and its organisations. Class, colour and nation converge in the national liberation movement.

Politically - in the short term - and culturally (in the long term) the ways in which these insights are translated

into practice are of the greatest moment. Although no hard and fast rules are available and few of them are absolute, the following are crucial points in regards to the practical ways in which we should build the nation of Azania and destroy the separatist tendencies amongst us.

1) Political and economic organisations of the working people should as far as possible be open to all oppressed and exploited people regardless of colour.

While it is true that the Group Areas Act and other laws continue to concentrate people in their organisations - geographically speaking - largely along lines of colour, it is imperative and possible that the organisations themselves should not be structured along these lines. The same political organisations should and can function in all the ghettos and group areas, people must and do identify with the same organisations and not with 'ethnic' organisations.

2) All struggles (local, regional and national) should be linked up. No struggle should be fought by one colour group alone. The President's Council proposals, for example, should not be analysed and acted upon as of interest to 'Coloured' and 'Indians' only. The Koornhof Bills should be clearly seen and fought as affecting all the oppressed and exploited people.

3) Cultural organisations that are not locally or geographically limited for valid community reasons should be open to all oppressed and exploited people.

The songs, stories, poems, dances, music of one group should become the common property of all even if their content has to be conveyed by means of different language media. In this way, and in many other ways, by means of class struggle on the political and on the cultural front, the cultural achievements of the people will be woven together into one Azanian fabric. In this way we shall eliminate divisive ethnic consciousness and separatist lines of division without eliminating our cultural achievements and cultural variety. But it will be experienced by all as different aspects of one national culture accessible to all. So that, for example, every Azanian child will know - roughly speaking - the same fairy tales or children's stories, whether these be of 'Indian', 'Xhosa', 'Tswana', 'German' or 'Khoikhoi' origin.

4) The liberation movement has to evolve and implement a democratic language policy

not for tomorrow but for today. We need to discuss seriously how we can implement - with the resources at our disposal - the following model which, to my mind, represents the best possible solution to the problem of communication in Azania.

a) All Azanians must have sound knowledge of English whether as home language or as second language.

b) All Azanians must have a conversational knowledge of the other regionally important languages. For example: In the Eastern Province, every person will know English. Afrikaans-speaking persons have a conversational knowledge of Xhosa and Xhosa-speaking persons will have a conversational knowledge of Afrikaans. In an area like Natal, a knowledge of English and Zulu would in all probability suffice.

These are sketchy ideas that have to be filled in through democratic and urgent discussion in all organisations of the people and implemented as soon as we have established the necessary structures and methods.

#### THE HISTORIC ROLE OF THE BLACK WORKING CLASS

The black working class is the driving force of the liberation struggle in South Africa. It has to ensure that the leadership of this struggle remains with it if our efforts are not to be deflected into channels of disaster. The black working class has to act as a magnet that draws all the other oppressed layers of our society, organises them for liberation struggle and infuses them with the consistent democratic socialist ideas which alone spell death to the system of racial capitalism as we know it today.

In this struggle the idea of a single nation is vital because it represents the real interests of the working class and therefore of the future socialist Azania. 'Ethnic', national group or racial group ideas of the nationhood in the final analysis strengthen the position of the middle-class or even the capitalist oppressors themselves. I repeat, they pave the way for the catastrophic separatist struggles that we have witnessed in other parts of Africa. Let us never forget that more than a million people were massacred in the Biafran war, let not forget the danger represented by the 'race riots' of 1949. Today, we can choose a different path. We have to create ideological, political

and cultural climate in which this solution becomes possible.

I believe that if we view this question of the nation and ethnicity in this framework we will understand how vital it is that our slogans are heard throughout the length and breadth of our country.

One People, One Azania!  
One Azania, One Nation!



# THE 1922 WHITE MINEWORKER'S STRIKE



# WORKERS AT WAR

CNETU AND THE 1946 AFRICAN MINEWORKERS' STRIKE



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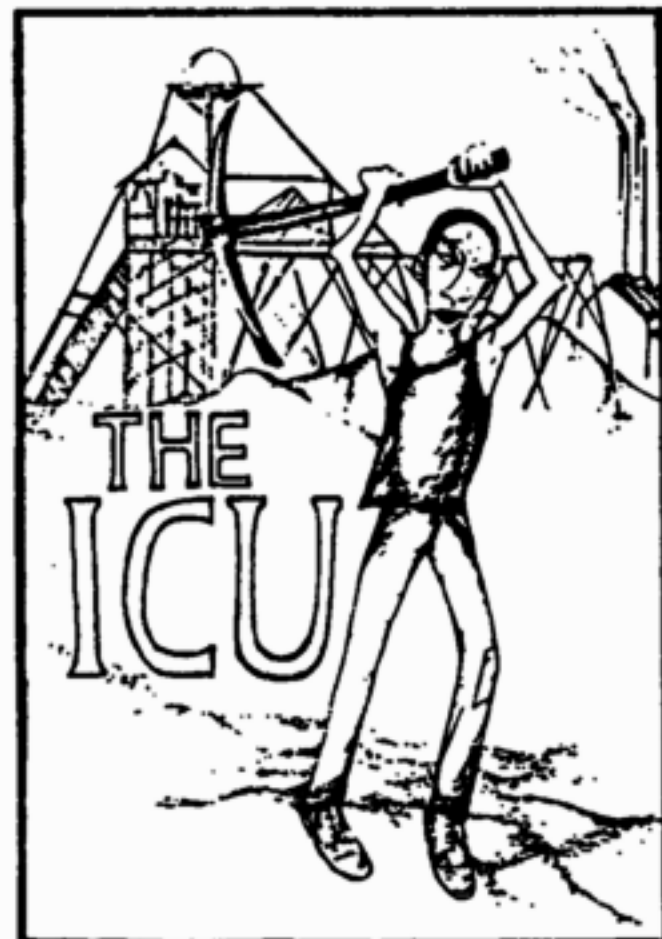
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at issue:

# The Transvaal Indian Congress

The reformation of the Transvaal Indian Congress in May this year has been severely criticised in some quarters. A TIC supporter assesses these criticisms.

The revival of the TIC has been both welcomed and condemned. Those who see themselves as part of the progressive forces are bound to consider very carefully whether there is any substance to the criticisms of the TIC.

In order to deal with the many and varied criticisms of the TIC's revival, it is important to go beyond the level of rhetoric, and assess the fundamental analytical and strategic framework(s) that underlie these criticisms.

Let us turn to the criticisms of the TIC published in Work In Progress 26 ('TIC - the case against'). Unfortunately - due to the very brief nature of the article - the methodology advocated is very hard to follow. This writer was fortunate to have access to an unedited version of the article - but even this was not much better. One is thus forced to adopt the following approach: starting with some of the statements made in the article, an attempt will be made to tease out what the bases of these statements could be - and then examine them. In order to avoid becoming entangled in a complicated process of speculation and guesswork, I will concentrate on the TIC's position with regard to these kinds of criticisms - rather than focusing on the criticisms themselves. Although a detailed examination of the criticisms themselves would obviously be preferable, this cannot occur until such time as they are expressed more fully.

Before proceeding with this, it is important to note that criticisms of the TIC's formation come mainly from one of two positions. The first attacks TIC from the perspective of a 'class analysis' that ends up denying any importance to

issues of national oppression. The second also stresses its socialist commitments, but emphasises the importance of taking into account national oppression; this perspective attacks the formation of TIC on the grounds that separate ethnic organisations undermine unified national oppression to racial capitalism. This second position is most clearly articulated by Neville Alexander (in a paper presented to the National Forum, and published above - eds). The discussion in this article will focus on the criticisms articulated in the WIP 26 article which seem to derive from the first position described above. An in depth discussion of the critique expressed by Neville Alexander will not be attempted here, although the foundations for such a discussion will be laid in this article.

The main thrust of the position adopted in the WIP article seems to be the following:

- Our struggle is to establish '... a one nation democracy with a working class ideology';
- During the 1950s, populist organisations like the ANC and the PAC organised on an ethnic basis;
- The development of monopoly capitalism has resulted in important changes in the division of labour - eg a greater impetus towards the creation of a black middle class;
- This change in '... conditions within the social formation ...' has led to united struggles across ethnic boundaries, eg the student boycotts in 1980;
- The decision to revive TIC is a reversion '... to old tactics ...' that are inappropriate due to the changed '... conditions within the social formation'.

As the original version of the WIP article says: 'The preceding analysis, presented in this article indicates that conditions within the social formation have drastically changed since the

1940s-1950s and the 1960s - and it thus becomes an urgent task of the oppressed masses to periodically change their tactics in keeping with new developments. It is on this basis then that the few decades old idea of TIC can be rejected today.'

There follow a few specific comments about TIC and its position, the main points being:

- (i) Recent history shows that 'ethnically-oriented' struggles are a thing of the past.
- (ii) It is inappropriate to speak of an 'ethnically' separate political organisation as, firstly, there are no such things as indian aspirations and, secondly, there are antagonistic classes within the indian community which have different interests or aspirations.
- (iii) The use of ethnic symbols can entrench divisions that are difficult to overcome in the future.
- (iv) The aim of political organisation is a unitary, non-racial democratic society - the struggle to get there must take on these forms.
- (v) The proponents of TIC are petty bourgeois. Their petty bourgeois interests are reflected in their 'collaborationist position on the 1980 SAIC elections (they advocated participating for tactical reasons)'.  
(vi) There is no class analysis in their public stance, and this is the only way they can be judged.

The first point to be dealt with is the claim that the struggle in the 1950s was led by 'populist' organisations like the ANC and that the TIC, by reverting to an 'ethnically divided' and 'populist' form, is reverting to old tactics that have been surpassed with the advent of monopoly capitalism. The writers of the WIP 26 article have not specified precisely what they mean by 'populist'; nor have they clarified the reasons why monopoly capitalism has led to surpassing of these 'old tactics'. As such, it is difficult to assess their claims. Nonetheless, this claim can be dealt with by concentrating on (a) explaining why the Congress Alliance historically adopted the form it did; (b) arguing that the revival of TIC was justified due to the concrete conditions of capitalist exploitation in South Africa; and (c) showing that the changing conditions due to monopoly capitalism do not undermine the considerations upon which this decision was based.

## THE CONGRESS ALLIANCE

Criticisms of TIC, based on the charge that its 'populist' and 'ethnically divided' form are incorrect, are not new. The same charges were made against the entire Congress Alliance in the 1950s. It is for this reason that we turn to an examination of the Congress Alliance before going on to assess the validity of these attacks on TIC today.

The main questions that arise when examining the strategy of the Congress Alliance in the 1950s seems to be the following:

- (a) Why work within an alliance led by the ANC - an avowedly nationalist (multi-class) movement? Why not a mass working class party?
- (b) Why work within an alliance composed of separate national or ethnic organisations? Why not one national organisation?

An adequate answer to these questions would require an in depth explanation of the historical context. What follows is necessarily a summary description.

The time period under examination was characterised by the early years of Nationalist rule. They were years when the experience of racial oppression was generally heightened for all the different groups classified as 'non-whites'. Although racial discrimination had long been a part of the every day experience of all black people in South Africa, the implementation of apartheid meant a frontal attack on the few rights and freedoms still retained. It also meant a general tightening up of the measures that were meant to control the black population (greater police involvement; tightening up of influx control; etc).

The subjective experience of increased oppression that this resulted in is very hard to capture 30 years later. It is nonetheless essential to do so, if one is to adequately understand the political climate of that time. It meant nothing to state that actually this was just another form of the same old thing - capitalist oppression. This kind of abstract theorising (while obviously in one sense being true) leads to a misunderstanding of the nature of oppression and thus to the adoption of inadequate political strategies.

The different 'national' groupings amongst the black people experienced this increased oppression differently. The coloured people (especially in the Cape) experienced the harsher realities

of racial oppression for the first time. Many activists of that period point to the fact that the general political climate amongst coloured people was certainly not conducive to uniting in a common struggle with the african majority. If anything, most coloured people would have identified politically, if at all, with white parties like the United Party. The reality of racial oppression was that it had created hierarchies amongst the different 'national' groupings. These hierarchies resulted, on the whole, in people aspiring to the position of those 'races' above them and dreading any contamination from those races 'below' them. They also resulted in mutual fear and suspicion.

Although the indian community was different in the history of its struggles for indian rights, the fear and suspicion of the other national groups (especially africans) was undoubtedly there. The difficulties experienced by the leaders when trying to mobilise united action around campaigns like the 'Defiance of Unjust Laws' is adequate testimony to this. If any more evidence is required, one need only examine the history of clashes between indian and african people in areas like Natal. Born of separation, misunderstanding and fear, these incidents are a reflection of the divisions that had been sown amongst different sectors of the racially oppressed black peoples of South Africa.

But what of class? So far we have only spoken of the racial experience of oppression. Surely it is necessary to stress the underlying class nature of that oppression? Surely race must be shown to be but the tool of capitalism - serving to disguise and deflect the basic class struggles within the South African capitalist system?

These questions raise a number of very important strategic issues (as well as a number of theoretical issues which will be dealt with below). When the reality of everyday experience cannot be divorced from an overwhelming experience of racial discrimination, humiliation and exploitation, should political organisations go out amongst the masses preaching the gospel of class struggle? Must they attempt to wean the masses away from the 'false consciousness' of racial oppression in favour of the underlying class basis - get them to realise that the 'real' enemy is the colour-blind capitalist system not the 'boers'? Militants within the Congress

movement very quickly realised: that abstract formulæ were not much use in mobilising the masses, and mobilisation into the realms of active political struggle was an essential moment in the politicisation of the masses; that the exploitation of labour by capital was experienced by labour in a racial form; that the struggle to overcome the abstract 'capitalist state' was the struggle to overcome the racial capitalist state - the apartheid state of Malan and Verwoerd. But what of the workers? Surely it is possible to uncover the stark realities of class struggle based on their experience on the shop floor? Surely they will be able to understand that the real struggle is against the capitalist bosses and not against the apartheid system?

Unfortunately abstract intellectualisms were never much use in the heat of struggle, for it is precisely the workers who experience the reality of racial oppression at its harshest; it is precisely the workers who suffer the most due to the realities of racial discrimination; it is precisely the workers whose position worsened most drastically with the winning of power by the Nationalists.

This does not mean that socialist militants within Congress decided to abandon the class struggle in favour of the more immediate, more urgent struggle against racial oppression. It meant that they realised the struggle of the workers, the struggle against capitalism, was at the same time the struggle against racial oppression. It was necessary for them to enter the national struggle - to mobilise the workers into this struggle - to attempt to ensure that workers became the spearhead of the Congress struggle against national oppression - against RACIAL capitalism.

#### POPULISM AND THE 'PEOPLE'

To reassure those who fear that this analysis has finally gone off the rails and demonstrated its 'populist' leanings - thus abandoning all pretense at class analysis - one must now look at the same issue from a more abstract analytical perspective. How one can analytically capture the nature of capitalist oppression in South Africa, and thus point to the types of strategies appropriate to overcoming it, will be briefly examined.



The South African capitalist system takes the form of a racially discriminatory capitalism. This means that capitalist exploitation has been made possible via the system of racial oppression. Racial oppression has thus made possible the extensive control of black (especially african) workers. This enhanced control has led to the possibility of far lower wages and a more controlled work force than would have been possible without it.

The political form of the South African capitalist system is that of the apartheid state and all the institutions and struggles surrounding it. The dominant ideology of the South African capitalist system is that of racism - the ideas and institutions that embody this racism. This ideology is not an illusion - a false consciousness that will somehow be overcome if the workers are 'educated'. This ideology is a lived reality - embodied in the institutions and practices that create the 'racial subject' in South Africa.

The political form of the capitalist system - ie apartheid - is not an illusion - a pure capitalist state 'dressed up' as apartheid. To deny the political realm of 'apartheid' any efficacy or reality, to speak of the struggle against apartheid as being an illusion whereas the actual struggle is against the capitalist state, is to fall prey to economism. This conception of the political makes it a reflection of the economic. It is entirely determined by the economic in such a way that any attempt to capture the 'relative autonomy' of the political from the economic is an absolute farce. This constant reference to the capitalist state rather than the apartheid state is a refusal to move from abstract theory to concrete or lived reality. This is where the contradictions and class struggles of capitalism are played out - in the concrete historical circumstances of the particular society under discussion.

What does this imply about the strategies required to overcome this form of capitalist oppression? Firstly it points to the fact that the interests of the working class and those of other oppressed black people will substantially overlap. This creates the possibility for a united national struggle against apartheid.

Does this imply a class alliance between different classes amongst the oppressed black masses? Does this therefore imply a compromise program that takes into

account the interests of other classes and thus dilutes the interests of the working class? The answer to these questions is both yes and no. Before trying to clarify this, let us briefly examine the concept of popular-democratic struggles. Ideas on working class struggle for ideological dominance or hegemony over other classes have been developed in the understanding of popular-democratic struggles.

Ernesto Laclau, for example, pointed out the following:

(a) that ideological elements like 'Nationalism' have no necessary class belonging, ie, it makes no sense to say that (eg) nationalist ideology is inherently bourgeois; because nationalism can be 'taken into' the ideological framework of either the bourgeoisie or the working class.

(b) He then goes on to argue that not all contradictions in a capitalist society are necessarily class contradictions. He introduces the notion of a series of contradictions between the 'power bloc' (those in power) and the 'people' (those who aren't). These contradictions give rise to the 'popular-democratic' ideologies.

Laclau then shows how, for the working class to win power, it must engage in a process of ideological class struggle as well as political class struggle. This ideological class struggle includes the attempt to become representative of the 'people'. This means that the working class has to struggle to 'take over' the 'popular-democratic ideologies' and weld them to the working class struggle for socialism. In this way the working class becomes the leader of the 'people' in the struggle to overcome capitalism. This is different from the notion of class alliance where one class is dominant and its interests dominate those of other classes by virtue of its greater strength. The creation of working class hegemony or dominance does not mean that working class ideology is imposed on other classes. It means that the popular-democratic ideologies are incorporated into the framework of working class ideology in such a way as to create a new ideology - that of the 'people'.

Let us now return to the question surrounding the nature of the Congress Alliance. It is clear that our theoretical discussion (using theoretical tools that were not available in the 1950s) has brought us to the same point reached by socialists within the Congress Alliance:

the need to enter the national democratic struggle, to mobilise workers to become the spearhead of struggle against national oppression - against RACIAL capitalism.

This rather schematic discussion obviously leaves a lot of questions unanswered - but nevertheless points out the direction in which those answers must be sought.

### THE TIC REFORMATION

What then of today and the decision to reform TIC? This leads to the question of monopoly capitalism. What changes does this imply to our analysis of the reasons for the form of struggle adopted in the 1950s?

Monopoly capitalism has certainly resulted in changed conditions of capitalist accumulation which have resulted in a number of structural problems arising - a shortage of skilled labour; structural unemployment; etc. At the same time the popular-democratic or national-democratic struggle has led to a political crisis thus creating a general situation of organic crisis in South Africa. This crisis has meant that the state has been forced to rearrange the form of exploitation in such a way as to alleviate the crisis. What has changed as a result of this reorganisation? Only those aspects that may affect our previous analysis of the 1950s will be looked at. This is not to imply that the current reforms have not changed the situation at all, only that they do not affect the analysis of certain specific areas.

One of the most important changes is the attempt to draw indians and coloured people into the parliamentary process. This is supposed to be the beginnings of a deracialisation of South African society. It is, however, accompanied by the concluding strains of the apartheid opera - the attempt to eliminate the majority of african black people from South Africa, placing them in 'independent states'. This supposed deracialisation has not eliminated or even fundamentally changed the racial nature of capitalist oppression in South Africa. It has not alleviated the everyday experience of racial exploitation suffered by every black (african) person - in fact it has made some areas worse. Monopoly capitalism has not led to any change in the situation where the different

'national' groups are separated off from one another - fear and mistrust one another and exhibit racial prejudice towards one another. This is not to deny that many activists have overcome these barriers - nor that struggles have, to some extent, changed the general climate in these communities. It is only to stress that (a) we have a long way to go, and that (b) monopoly capitalism makes very little difference to this situation.

The one area where monopoly capitalism has made a big difference is with regard to the size and composition of the working class. This, combined with the increased unionisation of the working class, has opened up possibilities for a greater working class influence on opposition activity. This does not, however, fundamentally change the political position of the 1950s. It only means that the role of the workers as the spearhead of national-democratic struggle can be more easily assured. It only means that the possibilities for working class ideological hegemony are increased.

What then of the TIC? How does the decision to revive the Transvaal Indian Congress relate to the above analysis? The discussion was based, firstly, on the recognition of the continued problems of separation, prejudice, and suspicion spoken of above. This meant that a common national struggle with other oppressed groups could not be assumed but had to be worked for. Methods had to be adopted that would successfully mobilise the people within the indian community and thus facilitate the possibility of then uniting in a common national struggle. This points to the second problem on which the decision was based. The indian community (especially in the Transvaal) had not been politically active in any significant way since the 1950s. Practically the only political activity was that of the reactionary leaders of the South African Indian Council (SAIC) who were attempting to incorporate the community into the government's 'reform' schemas. The problem was thus two-fold - to break the hold of reactionaries on the political arena in this community and to mobilise the people into active political activity once again. Only once this had begun to occur, could the attempt to once again unite the struggles of the oppressed peoples in political practice take place.

## ETHNICITY AND SEPARATION

The question then arises - 'why mobilise the people on the basis of being indians? - why not on the basis of a non-racial national movement?' The basis of an answer has already been pointed to above. The reality of political struggle is such that one cannot mobilise people politically on the basis of some abstract notion of politics. Organisation begins from where the people themselves are - from their perceptions of the burning issues of the movement, and proceeds from there. Organisations can only successfully mobilise the broad masses of people if they take these realities into account. The reality of South African racism is that it has succeeded in dividing the oppressed people 'racially' - by imposing separation and a hierarchy of racial oppression. This form of oppression has introduced a dynamic that pushes 'racial groupings' into seeking alliances with those above them on the 'racial ladder' in defense against the threat from below them on that ladder.

The next question that arises is 'why bother with mobilising these people anyway - shouldn't one be concentrating only on the workers within these groupings?' The answer has, once again, been partially dealt with already. Firstly, workers are by no means exempt from the realities of racial oppression - and thereby reflect the very same starting point (level of consciousness) spoken of above. Secondly, the theoretical and strategic discussion in earlier sections pointed to (a) the overlap in interests between all oppressed people and (b) the necessity for the working class to mobilise the broadest possible grouping of oppressed people into a popular-democratic or national-democratic struggle under its hegemonic control.

What practical implications does this have for the debate on the TIC? It means that progressives in the indian community need to mobilise the broadest possible grouping of people in that community under a progressive leadership and within a progressive direction. It means that the TIC needs to unite in struggle with all other organisations of the oppressed peoples. It means that this united democratic front must ensure that the workers are the spearhead of the struggle and that working class ideological hegemony is fought for within this alliance. There are obviously many other questions that could be dealt

with but they would take us beyond the scope of this article. Let us now turn back to some of the more specific points made in the WIP article.

Criticisms regarding a 'reversion to old tactics' that have been outdated by monopoly capitalism have now been dealt with. The first of the more specific criticisms is that recent history has shown that 'ethnically oriented' struggles are a thing of the past. The full (unedited) version of the WIP 26 article bases this statement partly on claims that the student boycotts of the 1980s are one demonstration of this point.

The TIC has no interests in promoting the use of 'ethnically-based' organisations as a permanent feature. It does, however, insist that this approach is used up to that stage when political realities determine that it is no longer necessary. This means that the TIC has no interest in denying those areas where it has been possible to work in a united fashion under the auspices of one organisation. The student boycotts, however, are not a good example of this. If anything, they demonstrate that unity across racial barriers can be built - but only with the adoption of very carefully considered strategies that take the realities of separation into account. The beginnings of these boycotts were in 1976 - where the african students led the way, and called on other students to boycott. The response was slow in coming and very uneven. The boycotts in 1980 - led by coloured pupils in the Cape - again called for support from other scholars. Again the response was very uneven. The famous Committee of 81 in the Cape was hailed as a model of organisation and discipline in the conduct of a student boycott and yet even there the problems emerged. The african students seem to have never been totally integrated into this committee - as demonstrated by the fact that they continued their boycott after the other students called theirs off. In closing this point it can again be stressed that the TIC has no interest in denying the possibility or desirability of united student organisations - quite the contrary. However, this unity must be created - not just assumed; strategies adopted must take into account the realities of racial divisions and base their plans on this starting point; students (and others) should not fall into the trap of assuming unity and later

finding that their plans collapse as a result.

The next criticism states that there are no such things as 'indian' aspirations and that our community consists of antagonistic classes. It has been demonstrated above that the fact of class divisions has not been ignored. Neither is TIC based on some kind of ethnic triumphalism. There is, therefore, no need to go into these points in any more detail. This point leads into the next criticism which warns that the use of ethnic symbols can entrench divisions difficult to overcome in the future.

Certainly the use or promotion of ethnic separatism is reactionary and must be deplored. By ethnic separatism is meant the kind of tendency that promotes ethnic differences as the basis of organisation - using this to build barriers within which an exclusive ethnicity becomes the foundation of a power base within that community.

Equally one must condemn the stupidity of an ostrich stance (ie, 'If we ignore the manifestations of "ethnicity" perhaps they'll just go away'.)

TIC advocates a strategy, based on these realities of separation, that can build up a truly united struggle against oppression and injustice. It must again be stressed that a simple assertion of the desirability of united national struggle means nothing - that unity has to be built.

### PRINCIPLES AND ANALYSIS

The last point concerns an issue that underlies the last three criticisms of the WIP 26 article (as summarised above). It is suggested that (i) one is aiming for a unitary non-racial, democratic society and that the struggle to get there must therefore take on these forms; (ii) the implication that any discussion about tactically participating in elections for bodies like SAIC is 'collaborationist' and 'petty bourgeois'; (iii) the implication that unless organisations publically proclaim their adherence to a 'class analysis' they must be trying to 'pander to' the petty bourgeoisie.

The issue that underlies all three of these criticisms (and some of the others) is that of the place of 'principles' in the process of struggle. There have been many cases where organisations claiming to use a class analysis as a guide to

their strategy have also relied on the guidance of a number of absolute 'principles'. These 'principles' are 'absolutes' in that, regardless of the circumstances at the time, they are the framework within which strategy is planned. Any transgression of these principles is taken to be inherently (ie regardless of the situation) reactionary. The movement/organisation best known for this kind of approach is the NEUM, often called the 'Unity Movement'.

The use of a critical analytical framework seems to imply the following: (a) That this analysis clarifies the forces at play in a particular situation; and (b) therefore points to certain actions that are necessary in order to, most effectively, intervene in that situation.

In other words, the analysis is a guide to action, and enables one to assess a particular historical situation in order to clarify what is at stake in that situation. This point is important because often analysis is used in an 'abstract way' that has very little applicability to any particular historical situation. This leads to the use of concepts like class as if one existed in some kind of ideal or 'pure' capitalist society without any of the nasty complexities of real life situations or societies. This is the first point to draw attention to. The second is that the imposition of any previously decided absolutes which are to act as guides to action in conjunction with an analysis can only 'limit our understanding, or render any analysis totally superfluous. Why is this?

For the following reasons:

- (i) An analysis involves a set of conceptual tools that help to make sense of a concrete situation in order to decide how to act.
- (ii) If we have taken prior decisions as to what kind of actions are permissible, then the analysis can only operate as long as it doesn't contradict these obstacles.
- (iii) This means that an analysis - which claims to take all the relevant issues into account in trying to understand a situation and then decide how to act on it - is reduced to taking into account only those factors that won't lead to contradicting the absolutes. This operates in the same way as prejudices.

As one can see from the above discussion, the use of absolute

principles in conjunction with a concrete analysis makes no sense at all. It involves a set of concepts that are used only as labels. It can no longer function as an analytical tool.

Having said all this, what relevance does it have to the criticisms of TIC? It seems that these are all variations of the problematic approach discussed above. To assert that TIC's aim is a unitary non-racial society and therefore it must take on these forms is to assert a principle. It denies the possibility of reacting to a specific historical context that may call for a response contradictory to the one advocated above. To imply that any discussion about the possibility of tactically participating in elections for bodies like SAIC is 'collaborationist' or 'petty bourgeois' is to assert a principle. It denies any possibility of examining that context in order to make a decision. The decision has already been

made - regardless of the context. This is not analysis - this is a new 'morality of action' embodied in a set of principles. To then go on and claim that this decision is taken from within a class analysis is a direct contradiction.

This article began by claiming that the contribution in WIP 26 is very brief and thus difficult to respond to. I then went on to respond at great length. The WIP 26 article was used as a way of discussing a lot of misunderstandings about the TIC position that have been expressed - but have not appeared in print. The major critical position that has yet to be dealt with is the one developed by Neville Alexander. The explanation of the TIC's position contained within this article goes a long way towards demonstrating why his attacks on TIC are baseless. While a more direct discussion of his position is important, it must wait for another occasion.



at issue:

# Forms of Organisation

Non-racialism is the policy of a number of groups describing themselves as progressive. The form of organisation most appropriate to a non-racial position is, however, the subject of intense disagreement. A contributor explores some of the issues.

## INTRODUCTION

Most progressive organisations today subscribe in principle to a policy of non-racialism. A sharp tendency towards ethnic thinking has been evident, however, in the last few years amongst a broad group of organisations and individuals, and noticeably among white progressives.

Ethnic thinking in this context is that view which sees the need, either for ideological or strategic/practical reasons, to organise the race groups as separate bases, albeit linked 'at the top'.

The article examines some recent events in order to try and identify ethnic thinking where it emerges. Some examples are looked at and an attempt is made to analyse the consequences and implications of this type of thought.

The article focuses mainly on events affecting the white progressive groupings, since the concept of a 'white left' or 'white democrats' as a distinct grouping has been a particularly prominent one in the resurgence of ethnic thinking. This does not imply that other groupings do not also display ethnic thinking, nor that the class implications of ethnic thinking among blacks is unimportant. Indeed, one of the possible causes of ethnic thinking among whites is the strong historical and current presence of ethnic thinking among blacks. There has also been strong support in some black quarters for ethnic practices in the white grouping.

## THE PAST - THE 1950s AND 1960s

At the beginning of 1983 the Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC) was re-established after a period of decades of inactivity. Many views have been expressed about this event, few of them positive. An interview with a United Democratic Front (UDF) leader in the Transvaal, questioning him about the TIC, was published in a recent issue of SASPU National. The SASPU interviewer tried to get responses to the view that TIC was an ethnic organisation and a step backwards in popular organisation. The replies all referred to the past (1950s and 1960s), and did not answer the question of the current relevance of ethnically separate organisations.

↓ The organisational model of this past (1950s and 1960s) took the form of distinct organisations for africans, coloureds, indians and whites, with a further separate organisational form for workers. These organisations were linked at the top by a set of alliances between the leadership organising the respective ethnic bases (the Congress Alliance).

The linking of present organisational strategy to the past is part of a new phenomenon. Old organisational models have been rediscovered and put forward energetically with very little open debate about their appropriateness to the 1980s.

## THE RECENT PAST - THE 1970s AND 1980s

The 1970s and the 1980s have been characterised by a different type of organisational activity. This has been focused more on the grassroots, or the bottom - that is the mass potential membership of civics, student organisations, trade unions and women's organisations. These have constituency-based membership and operate in different 'sites of struggle', such as for example,

place of residence, the workplace, women's oppression and education.

Most of these organisations have been non-racial in principle. Some have been non-racial in practice as well, in that they have members from all race groups.

### THE CURRENT SITUATION

The immediate past has seen a new emphasis on ethnic organisational models in a context (that of organising within different sites of a supposedly non-racial struggle) that is rather different from the 1950s and 1960s.

Firstly, there have been attempts to set up ethnic political groupings. In the late-1970s there was an attempt to re-establish the Coloured People's Congress (CPC). This was not generally accepted in the Cape and never came to fruition. The re-establishment of the TIC has already been mentioned.

Secondly, local constituency organisations have in some cases been set up on ethnic lines. It is argued that this is because legislation like the Group Areas Act (affecting civics) and the Separate Universities Act (affecting students) makes it difficult to organise across the races. This is certainly a practical problem that needs to be addressed. However, where such problems are not an issue, ethnic models still persist.

Popular community organisation in the Western Cape, for instance, is separated not only on an area basis, but also along ethnic lines. There are three federated umbrella bodies for civic organisations, one for africans, and two for coloureds. Another example is the case of the campuses, where the so-called 'white' universities now have a number of black students who at present still organise themselves separately, either in black student societies, or as part of AZASO, the grouping based at the 'tribal' or black campuses.

### NON-RACIAL BODIES AND ETHNIC THINKING - AN EXAMPLE

The tendency to ethnic thought and action is not confined only to the setting up of separate organisations. Within a non-racially constituted body like the United Women's Organisation (UWO) one can observe tendencies to organise along racial lines.

The UWO organises members from all race groups. Partly because of the Group Areas Act and residential segregation and partly because of the way areas for branches were defined, a number of branches became mainly, but not exclusively, white in composition.

A line of thinking that emerged within these branches, among other lines of thought, argued that whites were a special case in the organisation and should participate differently from other race groups in inter-branch situations. On the other hand, proponents of this position also argued that the 'white branches' should conduct their own branch activity in the same way as the other branches, ie by organising among white residents in their areas.

This ethnic thinking manifested itself in different ways. It was felt that whites should not occupy positions that were prominent in the organisation. They should be careful not to 'dominate' at inter-branch meetings where members of other race groups are present. They should not occupy organisational positions that would bring them into contact with the black grassroots on a regular basis.

With the advent of the President's Council (PC) constitutional proposals and the Koornhof Bills, this line of thought argued that the 'white' branches had to think of ways in which they could contribute as 'white' branches to the struggle against the Bills, and how the campaign could be taken up in the broader white community. A workshop was organised to discuss joint strategy for the 'white' branches. One of the initiatives is to seek alliances of some sort between the 'white' branches and mainly white liberal organisations.

To test the feasibility of organising whites in their area around 'community issues', one of the 'white' branches conducted a residents' survey in their area. This confirmed the well-known racism of the white lower petty bourgeois community members living there.

Another initiative in the same area sought to mobilise community response and opposition to a potential community facility (a disused building) being allocated for paramilitary civil defence training purposes by the City Council. It could be argued that the majority of residents in this area would regard civil defence as a welcome community service!

Constituencies in the UWO are in the first instance defined along Group Areas

lines. Since this is the case, the presence of an ethnic line, which encourages the members of the 'white' branches to see the constituency of whites as their area of activity, and which restricts non-racial contact, subtly erodes the non-racial potential of the UWO.

#### THE MILITARY CONSCRIPTION ISSUE AND ETHNIC THINKING

The military conscription issue has been seen by some as one around which whites can organise whites. The issue has not been very openly debated even at an abstract level. Those arguments that have been put forward, however, are a further example of ethnic thinking.

Progressive white potential conscriptees have attempted to seek alliances with liberal white organisations, like the Progressive Federal Party (PFP) and the churches. The military issue is seen as one capable of drawing sympathy from within these white liberal groupings; it is assumed that a large section of white liberals will support the view that South Africa is fighting an unjust war, and lend their weight to those resisting conscription.

One of the goals is, therefore, to extend the base of broad white organisation among these groups, as well as among the families and friends of potential conscriptees. The ethnic categories of thought used here are in this case reinforced by the attitudes of some members of the black community who are demanding that whites 'show where they stand'.

A strong argument for conscientious objection has been made, and it is felt that this stand could be supported by these potential alliances. It is also anticipated that organisational gains for the white left will ensue. Apart from leaving the country, alternative strategies are not really allowed for.

Recent events constitute a defeat for this strategy. Alliances with the PFP, in particular, have failed, and the state has imposed a prohibitive prison term for conscientious objectors. Pressure among white left conscriptees and supporters of the strategy outlined above has made conscientious objection and exile the only options, and is closing off other options and tactics for dealing with the difficult conscription problem. As a result; the population of white

progressive males may be severely reduced in the near future, and a substantial part of the progressive white grouping may disappear.

#### THE RACIAL CONTRADICTION

The above examples outline some of the manifestations of ethnic thinking, which, whether conscious or not, gives rise to an ethnic strategy adopted by many different groupings. Although most of these groupings claim to be on the left, there has been little evidence of class analysis in the theoretical development of this strategy.

Most would agree that the different experiences of oppression of the different race groups (the racial contradiction) are an extremely important factor in understanding struggle in South Africa. The categories imposed by the South African state do have real effect. But how is this racial contradiction to be dealt with?

One strategy is to develop ethnically distinct organisational forms, which take into account these racial differences, as the most effective way of organising. Contact between the races is built in at the top (leadership level) by means of alliances between the ethnically defined bodies, whether they are characterised as white/black, or white/coloured/african.

An alternative strategy would be to organise in such a way that the racial contradiction is confronted at as many levels as possible; starting at the bottom. The struggle to overcome the racial problem is thus open to mass participation. People at all levels learn to cope with it, and become clearer about the methods required to build a non-racial society.

#### HOW DOES CLASS ANALYSIS FIT IN - THE CASE OF PROGRESSIVE WHITES

It is useful to look at the possibilities for extending organisation among white progressives. These individuals in South Africa have always been and will continue to be a peculiar collection of intellectuals. They are mainly defectors from the bourgeoisie and the upper petty bourgeoisie which is closely linked to the bourgeoisie.

Their situation is rather similar to that of left intellectuals in other



countries where the racial contradiction is absent. In these countries they are a minority of members of the bourgeoisie and upper petty bourgeoisie. Their small numbers illustrate the limitations of trying to extend a left base among members of these classes. Left intellectuals may ally themselves very productively and progressively with the oppressed classes - the working class and classes such as the lower petty bourgeoisie which are closely linked to the working class.

The racial contradiction in South Africa makes it difficult to see the white left for what they are, and to understand their limitations as an independent grouping able to extend its own base.

The ethnic approach to the problems of organising white progressives further obscures class considerations.

On the one hand, the boundary between the white left intelligentsia and the liberal bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie is confused. This gives rise to the danger of unprincipled alliances.

On the other hand, the limitations of the white left grouping are not adequately recognised. This gives rise to strategies that have little chance of succeeding, or that do not contribute to the democratic experiences of progressives in general.

Two outcomes are likely:

1. Alliances between white leftists and white liberals which are bound to be dominated by the interests of the bourgeoisie and upper petty bourgeoisie because of their political strength and numbers. In such alliances, where the right has the best chance of dominating (right opportunist alliances), the interests of white progressives will not gain the upper hand. This will not aid the development of a popular democracy.
2. White left organisations which are forced to be undemocratic in order to exclude and suppress white liberal elements which would outnumber them (since liberalism is more representative of the white grouping than leftism because of the class composition of whites). These organisations tend to be small and rather ineffective and may generate bad experiences for building a future democratic and non-racial society.

## DISORGANISING THE RULING CLASS? - THE QUESTION OF ORGANISATIONAL GAINS

It is frequently argued that the white left, through an alliance with the liberal bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, may disorganise the 'ruling class'. The question this raises is: what are the potential splits in this 'ruling class'?

If a class analysis of the white 'ruling class' is made, what evidence is there for a possible disorganising effect that could be brought about by white left elements? Is there a sizeable fraction that could be split off from the block of ruling classes?

The bourgeoisie in South Africa generally take a reactionary position. The upper petty bourgeoisie is very closely bound up with the bourgeoisie, and their positions on the whole reflect this close linkage. By a strange paradox, in South Africa, only a small fraction of the bourgeoisie, the monopolist bourgeoisie, takes a relatively liberal position. In this, it takes along with it a small section of the upper petty bourgeoisie.

The question must still be asked: even if there is a 'liberal' fraction of the 'ruling class' that may be split off from the block of ruling classes, whose ideology would dominate in an alliance with white progressives? That of the white progressives or that of the liberal bourgeoisie?

A small group of representatives of the line of monopoly capital is unlikely to be dominated by a numerically and politically much smaller and weaker group of white progressives.

The middle and lower petty bourgeoisie and what remains of the white working class will not even be seriously considered since they are even more strongly bound up in South Africa with clearly reactionary elements of the ruling classes.

What is left then is a smallish fraction of the upper petty bourgeoisie as a field in which to create a disorganizational effect. This constituency is mainly students at the universities - those who do not automatically take up the more reactionary positions of the upper petty bourgeoisie as a whole. The problem remains that very few people, even within this fraction of a fraction, become progressive.

The method by which some do become progressive is an idiosyncratic one rather than a natural development.

At the universities an area of struggle

goes on at an ideological level. Ideas from the left are discussed and debated, which does not happen in any other 'ruling class' institution. This struggle influences students in an ad hoc and unpredictable manner. Some may undergo an ideological conversion, via the changing of ideas through study, exposure to intellectual works and debate. This method takes a long time. It takes even more time for individuals to come to a thorough understanding of the nature of their society that carries over into action for the rest of their lives.

The process by which whites become progressive then, severely limits their numbers. It also places a serious limit on the 'organisational gains' that can be made among the 'white base' - whether white progressive or broad white.

The vast majority of this fraction of the upper petty bourgeoisie proceed straight to bourgeois ideological positions as a natural development, and become formidable proponents of their class interests, whether liberal or not. The material base on which they do so is their entry into the class places of the bourgeoisie and upper petty bourgeoisie.

#### ALTERNATIVES TO ETHNIC THINKING IN THE STRUGGLE FOR NON-RACIAL DEMOCRACY

The only hope for future democracy is to ensure that those popular elements that have a class interest in democratic structures and practices play the dominant role in progressive organisations. There can, of course, be no guarantees of democracy, but the participation of mainly popular elements in these organisations offers the best chance for democracy. In this respect the working class participation is particularly important. Only strong participation by the working class and allied classes can prevent domination by the bourgeoisie and its allied classes, and ensure democratic practices in broad organisations which include representatives of all progressive forces of the nation.

In South Africa this would mean going for thorough alliances from the bottom to the top between all progressive groupings. It would mean non-racial organisation, not only at the top, but also at the base among the grassroot membership. Instead of organising along ethnic lines where this is inappropriate, intellectuals

could work progressively with organisations in ways that concretely break down and overcome racial contradiction in day to day activity.

#### THE DEMOCRATIC FRONT MOVEMENT

The democratic front that is currently appearing in South Africa might offer a good possibility for an alternative to ethnic organisation. It is being set up to combat the ethnic lines of the state. If this were to become an open internal political movement of the oppressed, which combined organisational and individual membership, it could provide an important forum for working out the contradictions between the popular elements in South Africa.

At a regional level areas could be specifically designed to facilitate non-racial organisation rather than accepting Group Areas definitions. Groupings that do not have a political home at present, like white progressives for instance, would no longer be isolated. This could in the long run lay the foundation for a real non-racial democratic future South Africa.

# SADF and Civic Action:

## blacks in the Defence Force

Recruitment of blacks by the SADF has increased enormously over the past few years. GAVIN EVANS traces this process and relates it to the SADF's expanding Civic Action Programme. The article is taken from his recently completed dissertation, 'The Role of the Military in Education in South Africa'.

'The onslaught against the Republic of South Africa is a total one, as is the case with South West Africa...Enemy actions are directed against the RSA in the political, economic, psychological and security fields. On its part, the RSA has to act or counteract in all these fields. It speaks for itself that all these actions are to be orchestrated towards the achievement of common objectives'.

-Major General Charles Lloyd.

The role of the SADF in black education is integral to (and probably the most important part of) its Civic Action Programme (CAP). Rather than trying to isolate the educational aspect of the programme, this article considers the CAP in its entirety. Because the emphasis on civic action is closely linked to the SADF's needs for blacks to play a greater role in its structures, part one of this contribution considers the question of black participation in the military in some detail. Part two goes on to look at the CAP and its relationship to black education.

An essential ingredient of the notion of a 'total and co-ordinated strategy' is the emphasis on winning the 'hearts and minds' of the people. Increasingly, war has been described by military leaders as being '80 percent socio-economic and only 20 percent military'. As Major General Boshoff put it,

'If we lose the socio-economic struggle then we need not even bother to fight the military one'.

This realisation and the restructuring of the state of which it is a reflection has led to significant changes in the 'ethnic' composition of the SADF. The military itself has tried to play a leading role in the '80 percent' of the struggle by attempting to alter its relation to the dominated classes, primarily through the Civic Action Programme.

In Namibia, the SADF was faced with a situation where their enemy, SWAPO, had the support of much of the population. As Willem Steenkamp, Cape Times defence reporter and SADF captain, put it, 'The motivation is to win hearts and minds. They want to try and convince the populace that they are better off under the present dispensation than they would be under, for example, SWAPO. (Mao) speaks of the fish and water theory - the insurgent is the fish and the local population is the water. If the water is friendly the fish will survive...Ultimately a Hearts and Minds strategy can't win a campaign, it can only contribute. Its better to get in on the early stages before insurgency starts and before the politicisation process begins, otherwise you start with a credibility gap. In Ovambo it didn't work that way. You should start with the hearts and minds campaign before the political action begins'.

Within South Africa the enemy has increasingly been identified as the ANC and those forces sympathetic to it. Since the 1976 uprisings there has been a revival of ANC activity both in terms of popular support as an emerging mass movement, and an organised political and military force. A central priority of the SADF is therefore to remove the political and

military basis for this support. As Defence Minister Magnus Malan puts it, 'Bullets kill bodies, not beliefs. I would like to remind you that the Portuguese did not lose the military battle in Mozambique and Angola, but they lost the faith and trust of the inhabitants of those countries. The insurgent forces have no hope of success without the aid of the local population'.

To attempt to secure these ends, a significant aspect of the SADF objective is, in their terms, to win the support of the local population and to eliminate friction points and grievances through good administration and civic action.

#### THE RECRUITMENT OF BLACKS INTO THE SADF

Both in terms of its policy, history and traditions, and in terms of its practices in its role as an emerging mass movement, non-racialism is central to the ANC's political programme. For the SADF it is important that ANC activities generally, and guerilla activity specifically, are not perceived internally or internationally as being directed against white domination. Instead, it is important that the struggle is seen as black and white versus black and white, of free enterprise against the forces of international communism. Black participation in the SADF serves to support this idea. In SADF propaganda, particularly that directed at international audiences - for example through Paratus - great play is made of the role of blacks in the SADF.

In the 1982 Defence White Paper, Magnus Malan set out the policy of the SADF towards the recruitment of blacks: 'It is the policy that all Population groups be involved in defending the RSA. This means the representation of all population groups in the SADF, in other words, a Defence Force of the people for the people'.

What is clear is that at least at the level of the rhetoric of the Top Brass, a multi-racial Defence Force is a priority. Until 1968 no blacks had been trained for warfare by the SADF, and in 1970 then-Defence Minister Botha stated that his department would only employ africans as labourers: 'If the Bantu wants to

build up a defence force, he should do it in his own, eventually independent homeland'.

However, since the mid-1970s, the image presented through the English press and Paratus has been one of a Defence Force which allows equality of opportunity - of black and white together against a common enemy in a racially integrated army, navy and airforce. Reflecting this image, Cape Times defence correspondent Willem Steenkamp said: 'Integration is carried out in a non-tokenistic way. You have Coloured officers commanding Whites, and you don't get petty discrimination. So the Black or Coloured man in the Army has self-respect. They know that no post is closed to them on the grounds of race. As a result, that all important principle of upward mobility is unfettered'.

However, despite the fact that the military has taken the lead in the reformist moves within the state, the reality of racial integration has tended to lag behind the rhetoric. The recruitment of coloureds, indians and africans has been ethnic in form. Cynthia Enloe has noted that 'For the three non-white ethnic groups which have now been specifically targetted for wider participation it is a question of balancing the chances for leverage and legitimacy versus the risks of further cooperation and exploitation. The Nationalist-headed Ministry of Defence has deliberately structured the recruitment of these three groups in a manner that underscores its ethnic character. Indians, Coloureds and Africans each have their separate military corps. Each has a specific sort of military function'.

Although there have been gradual moves away from this form of organisation, the SADF continues to strive for separate training facilities for the different 'race groups'. Where separate facilities are not possible because of operational or other requirements, other 'groups' are required to train with whites, but only in exceptional circumstances.

One reason why the SADF has reviewed its position over the recruitment of blacks during the last decade has been its role in pushing a multi-racial ideology with the emphasis on 'separate but equal' - in line with the ethnic basis of recruitment - often through the assistance of

'traditional' leaders.

Together with the increased black recruitment, on an ethnic basis, has come an appeal to whites to abandon racism. According to Major General Boshoff (in 1977) one sickness amongst whites was their fear of losing their identity. He said that bad race relations had already been identified by South Africa's enemies as a major chink in the armour.

Thus the propagation of a multi-racial ideology, as well as being used to improve the SADF's image internationally and amongst blacks internally, has also played a significant role in softening up whites within the SADF for the increased participation of blacks, and has tended to precede policy changes in this regard. Changes in the racial division of labour in the military (as elsewhere) tend to take place after a process of suitable ideological preparation.

A second reason for the increasing recruitment of blacks is that as the internal conflict intensifies and the military dimension grows, whites will become too thinly spread to effectively counter guerilla activity.

Thirdly, the turnover of SADF personnel has been high, partly because of competition with the private sector. As a cheaper, and relatively secure source of manpower, blacks have been recruited to counteract this tendency. Despite recent moves to equalise salaries at an officer level, black wages remain below those of whites. In 1977 black salaries averaged between 54% and 63% of white salaries at comparable ranks, and in 1982 there was only parity between coloureds, indians and whites in the officer ranks; between whites and africans parity existed only for chaplains.

In some respects the form of recruitment of blacks into the SADF has parallels with the situation in Zimbabwe before independence, although an important difference is that in Zimbabwe the war had reached a higher stage by the time a systematic policy of black recruitment was under way. Already in 1977 black South Africans (as well as black Namibians) were being employed in the operational area and by 1982 forty percent of the forces there were black, and doing most of the fighting.

## RECRUITMENT OF AFRICANS INTO THE SADF

Since 1974 the SADF appears to have adopted a two-pronged strategy for the recruitment of africans. Firstly, recruitment directly into the SADF, and secondly, into the bantustan units. In 1974 the first black Namibian unit was set up, in 1975 the first african Permanent Force (PF) unit was formed, and by 1979 units had been set up by the SADF in the Transkei, Bophutha-Tswana, Venda, northern Natal and the eastern Transvaal. These Battallions - 111, 112, 113 and 121 - are strictly ethnically based.

Initially all africans were trained at 21 Battallion (affiliated to Natal Command) at Lenz. 21 Battallion (which consists mainly of South Sotho and Tswana and is meant to be non-ethnic) is an elite formation. It has been doing operational duty on the Natal and Namibian borders for the past six years. The regional units usually do not do operational duty outside of their regions, where they do all their recruiting, applying lower entrance qualifications than 21 Battallion.

In official SADF propaganda great stress has been laid on the participation of blacks in the SADF and on 21 Battallion in particular. Between June 1967 and June 1974, ten articles appeared in Paratus on this topic. From 1976 to July 1982, 48 articles appeared, and since 1978 a regular column entitled 'Black Man's View' has appeared, stressing that 'the SA Defence Force has taken the lead in fostering public relations among the different ethnic groups. Nobody can feel more at home than inside the services of the Defence Forces'.

November 1973, as Uniform put it, 'heralded a new era in the history of the South African army', when Magnus Malan gave approval to the establishment of an Army training sector for african soldiers. On 21 January 1974, 21 Battallion was created. After concerted advertising in the press, 16 africans were recruited for basic training, followed in August by a further intake of 38. In April 1975 authority was received to recruit africans into the PF. In December 1975, 21 Battallion moved to Lenz and by 1979 it had 362 african PF members.

After an orientation course of 17 weeks and 10 weeks of basic training, the troops are required to do 16 weeks of operational training and are then deployed on operational duty usually involving 12 week stints on the Namibian border. After this, they are joined by selected recruits from the 'homeland' and regional units. They are then transferred to various units and commandos in South Africa and Namibia.

By the beginning of 1980, 21 Battalion was recruiting over 500 africans a year which, according to the SADF, is about one-fifth the number who apply. In 1980 salaries ranged from R95 to R240 a month, with the highest rank being that of a Staff Sergeant; according to Commandant Swanepoel, the previous Commanding Officer, the chances of promotion are slim. Paratus claims that blacks volunteer for 21 Battalion mainly because they want to defend their country: 'The enthusiasm among the 21 Battalion recruits was almost unbelievable. Some of them had a comprehensive understanding of what communism and terrorism involves, whereas others only desired to fight for their country...All the men were aware of the threat facing South Africa'. Paratus admitted that there were other possible reasons for volunteering such as job security, career possibilities and education.

The SADF recruits africans it believes will tend to be supportive of the status quo. Most are of non-urban origin, often with already existing family ties to the state apparatuses. Most africans in the PF do not have section 10 rights in the urban areas, and this provides an incentive for joining the army; it also serves as a form of control as they are sent home if they 'misbehave'.

The SADF appears to have taken stringent precautions to ensure the 'loyalty' of african recruits. African volunteers are screened by psychologists, ethnologists and senior SADF personnel to check their records and 'personalities' before being recruited, and training programmes devote a large portion of time to indoctrination. The positive incentives for remaining loyal are considerable and include housing, pensions and education. Africans can qualify for

21 Battalion with standard Six, while for the regional units the qualifications are considerably lower. With the present unemployment figure being well over three million, opportunities for employment elsewhere may be minimal.

The next step in the process of integrating africans into the SADF appears to be officer training and the creation of urban african battalions. In 1979 the SADF authorised commandos throughout South Africa to recruit blacks as part of a support service corps, with volunteers being trained to serve in combat units and being required to do border duty, as well as being involved in area defence. A spokesperson for the Johannesburg East Commando announced that a plan was being established to 'help and protect the people of Soweto'. Magnus Malan recommended that urban commandos such as SASOL Command should include africans in their ranks. The establishment of fully fledged urban african battalions does not seem to be far off. As Willem Steenkamp put it, 'The government has learned the lesson from Rhodesia and its only a matter of time before (urban black battalions) are established'.

There also appear to be plans to set up rural commandos specifically for africans in certain areas. In 1979 Major General Lloyd said that the SADF intended to establish organisations in the Natal and KwaZulu border areas which could perform certain counter-insurgency actions. He went on to say that 'It is vitally important that the local population regardless of colour, participate in countering insurgency within their own areas. One should bear in mind, however, that terrorists normally return to the area where they were recruited and, consequently, the local population is expected to turn against and fight their own people'.

For africans, pressure against joining the PF appears to be considerable, especially in the urban areas such as Soweto where the military has been experienced directly as a repressive force. In this respect, Grundy refers to the 1976 Soweto uprising when families of 21 Battalion members were moved out of Soweto and into the Lenz Camp for their own protection. He also

refers to numerous polls which indicate complete opposition to the SADF. He argues that although the SADF may be feared and grudgingly respected, it is necessarily tainted by the structures which it exists to defend, and concludes that 'until White South Africans and their leaders appreciate this their efforts to include Blacks in the defence of South Africa are bound to be frustrated'. It is this contradiction which the SADF is attempting to resolve through the Civic Action Programme.

#### RECRUITMENT OF COLOUREDS INTO THE SADF

In 1963 the Cape Corps was established. Coloured enlistees were not armed, and were not accepted as part of the PF. Their role was to fill auxilliary, non-combatant functions, particularly in the navy. By 1967, 490 men had been trained, most of them filling posts such as storekeepers, stewards, chiefs, waiters and engineer mechanics.

The main reason for the formation of the Cape Corps was its ideological advantage to the SADF, combined with pressure from sections of the coloured petty bourgeoisie. By 1972 it had advanced to being an integral part of the PF, and by 1974 had been granted the freedom of Cape Town and was described by PW Botha as 'a feather in the cap of the Defence Force and the Coloured population as a whole'. In 1975 the Defence Act was amended, giving members of the Cape Corps the same status as their white counterparts. This meant, among other things, that whites were authorised to salute blacks. Seven coloured soldiers were given the rank of lieutenant.

In August 1976 the first company of coloured infantrymen left South Africa for operational duty in Namibia. By 1977 one quarter of the Cape Corps intake had joined the PF. In that year there were 4 000 coloureds and 750 indians in the SADF, together making up 10% of the PF.

In 1980 the SADF announced that 2 612 applications for joining the PF had been received during 1979 - 977 coloureds, 101 indians and 1 534 africans. All the indians applied to the navy, 453 coloureds applied to the army, 18 to the airforce

and 406 to the navy, while all the africans applied to the army. This led Paratus to comment that 'Our manpower recruiting campaign is therefore directed at all young South Africans in a society not plagued by class or caste distinctions and in which merit is the sole criterion of excellence'.

During 1980 the Cape Corps ceased to exist as a separate unit, with existing coloured members being incorporated into the PF after two years of voluntary national service. The Cape Corps now recruits nearly 2 000 national servicemen annually (out of over 4 000 applicants - an increase of over 400% in four years), meaning that national recruitment drives are no longer as necessary as before.

Coloureds have been in the navy as PF members for over 14 years (and before that as members of the auxilliary forces). Initially they were employed mainly in administrative, catering and other non-combatant roles, but they are now active in most facets of navy activity including the commissioned officer echelons, and they have served on all the major classes of warship.

The response of the 'coloured community' to the SADF is discussed in more detail below. However, it seems that at least partly because of opposition or antagonism to the military in the urban areas, the majority of recruits (up to 95%) come from the rural areas, with most of them being from working class backgrounds. Many join because they cannot find jobs elsewhere. Others join, according to one Cape Corps member, because 'they just like the guns, they just like to be a soldier and they get cheap brandy and beer'. Thus job security, pay, perks and the attraction of militarism seem to be the main motivating factors. These factors are strengthened by the rise in unemployment which has sent a record number of applicants to the Cape Corps, including a higher number of urban applicants.

A Grassroots survey in the Cape Flats on the effects of unemployment suggested that although the majority of those questioned expressed opposition to people joining the army because they were out of work (for example, James Abrahams of Elsie's River: 'People who go to the army are

stupid. We should regard them as sellouts. They betray their own people'), others, like Fanie Hendricks had the attitude that 'Dit sal alright wees on army toe to gaan. Hulle sal 'n man 'n living daar gee'.

In the Cape Corps the officers and many of the PF members appear to be drawn mainly from the petty bourgeoisie, and as well as being motivated by job security, important factors include their political backgrounds, promotion possibilities and the desire for status and respectability. For both officers and men the perception of the army as providing equal opportunities for promotion and relatively high pay are important factors. According to Steenkamp, things are very different with the police: 'A few years ago the police got very pissed off because many of the Coloured police were leaving to join the Cape Corps because pay and conditions were better'.

Despite this, and despite the growing number of applicants for the Cape Corps, opposition continues to be widespread. As Commandant John Cupido, officer commanding the Cape Corps, put it, '...quite a large part of the Coloured community saw the establishment of the Corps as part of the system, part of the system being the internal policy of the country, and to a very large extent that hasn't changed yet. Quite a number of people still see it that way, and we must be quite honest about this,... there is still a big amount of non-involvement at this stage in this Corps from the Coloured communities, and certainly I think the franchise has got something to do with it.... This attitude is still very prevalent... You see the problem is...that people see...the involvement of Coloureds in defence, as part of the political system, which we as soldiers don't agree with...The simple fact is that we as soldiers have divorced defence of the country totally from politics... It is our job to make this country safe and to keep this country safe, so that the politicians can operate here. That's our simple philosophy'.

#### RECRUITMENT OF INDIANS INTO THE SADF

A separate indian unit in the SADF

was formed in 1974 at the Salisbury Island naval training base (now known as SAS Jalsena) after discussions between the South African Indian Council (SAIC) and the SADF. The Indian Corps initially found difficulty in enlisting volunteers and, despite recruiting visits to cinemas in the Transvaal and Natal, and the distribution of brochures showing aspects of navy life to indian high schools, the white commanding officer of the new Indian Corps admitted that at the start of 1975 only 34 men had come forward to fill the 200 places for indian volunteers. He attributed this to low pay. At this stage, as with Cape Corps members, indian volunteers were only given weapons to be used in cases of self-defence in wartime, but they did not perform combat roles and were confined to auxilliary duties.

By 1977, however, this had changed and recruitment was becoming more successful with 750 being in the SADF at that time, having been recruited at a rate of 150 a year. By 1982, according to Commandant Johan Beyers of SADF liaison, only one-fifth of the number of indian applicants were elected for each intake.

All indians serving in the SADF are in the navy, which has proportionately more blacks serving in its ranks than either the army or airforce. Coloured and indian membership of the navy's PF increased from 17,4% in 1977 to 20% in 1979. Blacks are now also employed in an operational capacity. By September 1980, coloureds and indians made up one-third of the entire naval force and 80% of the enlisted personnel on some ships.

In 1980 Pertals Habial Singh, 31, became the first indian officer in the SADF. However, in December of that year, lieutenant Singh resigned his post, saying that he was being used for propaganda purposes, was being humiliated by his white superiors and was having less qualified whites promoted over him, and that he was being discriminated against in pay, benefits and accommodation. This incident caused the Indian Reform Party to issue a statement saying that indians would be urged to stop joining the Defence Force if these allegations proved to be true.

Clearly the rhetoric about equality of opportunity in the SADF for blacks



has not been completely in line with the facts. The process of the integration of blacks into the PF has been a gradual one, fraught with contradictions such as those faced by lieutenant Singh.

#### INDIAN AND COLOURED CONSCRIPTION

The possibility of conscription being extended to coloured and indian men (as well as white women) was put very firmly on the agenda in March 1982, after leaks about the contents of the 1982 Defence Amendment Act were released to the press. This had been preceded by announcements from General Viljoen and others that the SADF intended introducing conscription for coloureds as the government was preparing to counter the threats of insurgency and conventional warfare. After immediate and widespread negative reaction, the idea was temporarily shelved, but not dropped. Magnus Malan said that the idea had certainly been considered and would be re-examined within the next five years. He went on to say that the extension of the military service of white males was a temporary measure.

As early as 1977, PW Botha stated at the Cape NP congress that the conscription of indians and coloureds had already been accepted in principle. It now seems that government is waiting for the right political moment to take this step.

There were two reasons given for shelving the plans to conscript coloureds and indians: firstly, the SADF had insufficient finances, facilities and manpower to incorporate them immediately, and it is clear that the SADF would have major difficulties if suddenly confronted with over 30 000 new recruits; and secondly, as Transvaal NP leader FW de Klerk put it, 'You can't ask a man to fight for his country if he cannot vote'. The introduction of conscription for coloureds and indians now seems to be hinged on government's constitutional proposals.

According to the Evening Post, all SADF generals were in favour of extending the call-up to coloureds and indians, and for this reason they are believed to have put considerable pressure on the NP leadership to

extend the franchise. Steenkamp said the incentive for the current constitutional proposals came from SADF planning over five years ago. However, as the SADF has recognised, the major factor preventing the move at present is the likelihood of widespread opposition from coloured and indian people.

In February 1982, when the possibility of extending the call-up to coloureds and indians was announced, it was opposed by the Labour Party whose standpoint was 'How can I defend my country if I don't have a vote and I'm not recognised in Parliament?'. Similarly, the Democratic Party in the SAIC warned that there would be tremendous opposition to the move, and said that 'if the Government expects the Indian community to protect our borders as loyal citizens then we must first be given first class citizenship rights'.

Other responses were more vociferous. Hassan Howa said that 'to have conscription based on the apartheid system and racial discrimination is immoral and to be rejected'. The Natal Indian Congress stated that 'We object strenuously to such a measure. Our opposition to military training is not out of disloyalty to our country but out of rejection of the Government's apartheid policy'.

It thus became clear that, for the extension of conscription to become a political possibility, it had to be preceded by the extension of the franchise. For this reason, the issue of possible conscription has come up frequently in the campaign against the Labour Party's decision to participate in the new constitutional dispensation, with opponents claiming that by accepting the constitutional proposals Labour Party is tacitly clearing the ground for the conscription of coloureds and indians. The Labour Party has responded by reiterating that it would continue to oppose this move until further political rights were granted.

Although the likelihood of widespread resistance and opposition to conscription and the problems of integrating thousands of new recruits, have led to the shelving of the extended call-up for the time being, there continue to be strong reasons for the reintroduction of the idea in the near future.

Firstly, the converse of government's holding back conscription for coloureds and indians until they have a vote, is that once the new constitutional dispensation is in operation pressure for conscription, particularly from conservative whites, will increase. In fact, the issue of coloured and indian conscription was used to sell the constitutional package to sections of the white electorate. For example, at an NP information meeting, PW Botha asked: 'Do you want Coloured people fighting on the border or not?'. When the 1 100 people in the audience responded affirmatively, Botha said: 'We must then treat them decently. They must not go behind the backs of our sons to fight for the enemy'.

In other circles the constitutional proposals have been used to sell the idea that government is committed to genuine power sharing and if power is to be genuinely shared, then it is important for coloureds and indians to be seen to be defending their share of political power. This was expressed by FW de Klerk: 'Among the terms of the new dispensation is the guarantee that Coloureds and Indians will get full voting rights. It follows that their responsibilities will increase accordingly, which means they will have obligations to defend these rights'.

Government and military leaders have therefore made it very clear that the extension of conscription will follow the implementation of the constitutional proposals. As Major Gert Britz said, 'We believe we should give the Coloureds the opportunity to protect themselves...My feeling is that once the Coloureds go on the Voters Roll then they would have given someone the right to act for them and they must return the responsibility. We all have to protect what we have'.

Secondly, the nature of the war in South Africa needs to be considered. During 1982 it became apparent that the ANC was preparing to a transition to a more advanced stage of insurgency. After a series of visits to frontline states between March and June 1982, the ANC said it was moving from sabotage acts to attacking the enemy face to face; it said it was preparing for a sustained guerilla war in which increasing importance would be given to the military aspect of the struggle; guerilla activities would complement

and give impetus to a campaign of intensified internal political activity.

It is in this context that the call-up for whites was extended in 1982. With white males facing over four years military service, this source of manpower has now been fully tapped, especially with the new Act's emphasis on area protection through Commandos and the Civil Defence system. Although the SADF would find difficulty in absorbing over 30 000 coloured and indian recruits immediately, this is not likely to remain the case for very long. According to one report, military strategists believe that coloured and indian conscription would bring considerable relief to the white population, and provide a strategically vital boost to South African troops in Namibia, increasing the level of preparedness along South Africa's northern and eastern borders.

The 1982 Defence Amendment Act was a response to the likelihood of rapidly intensifying internal guerilla activity and preparation for more conventional military activity such as further attempts at destabilisation, as well as for the continuing SADF presence in Namibia. In this respect, white resources have been stretched to their maximum, with the increased call-up being a further drain on white skills. Coloured and indian conscription would reduce the unemployment rate without draining skills and resources from the private sector to the same extent.

Thirdly, as discussed above, the importance of the guerilla war being seen as black and white against communism, not blacks against the apartheid system, is a further imperative for coloured and indian conscription. Militarily, politically and economically, it has become a necessity. However, given the political and logistical obstacles, it is likely that government will move gradually. A scenario predicted by Major Britz is a possibility: 'I'm sure they will be called up soon. They won't call them up all at once - the way it's likely to happen is that first they will ensure the registration of everyone. Then, maybe move ahead with the ballot system. But that's just my feeling'.

The possibility of conscription

for coloureds and indians is strengthened by the fact that the Naudé Commission looking into conscientious objection consulted people with expert knowledge of the Koran and Hindu Scriptures. This indicates that the SADF is anticipating future conscientious objectors who are either coloured or indian.

The question of black participation in the SADF is central to the Civic Action Programme generally, and to the role of the military in black education specifically (with the idea being one of 'win their hearts and minds and their bodies will follow'). It is partly in this context that these questions are considered below.

#### THE 'HEARTS AND MINDS' CAMPAIGN

'The Defence strategy of the RSA is a national counter-insurgency strategy involving

- a) Government and Government departments on central, provincial and local authority level, in respect of all ethnic groups in the RSA;
- b) all Security Forces;
- c) the organised private sector;
- d) the news media; and
- e) the general public.

It calls for action in the political, economic, social, psychological and security fields. Approximately 80% of these actions are non-military although the military forces have a keen interest in it and may, in its secondary role, participate in such action'.

It is the military's direct role in the '80%' which will be considered in more detail here. According to Major General Lloyd, the SADF's objectives through the Civic Action Programme (CAP) are to secure through administrative and socio-economic action the goodwill, support and co-operation of the local population by alleviating friction points, grievances and dissatisfaction; by improving their standards of living and by giving them something worthwhile to defend in a revolutionary war.

Lloyd goes on to explain that 'the SADF involved itself in these social upliftment programmes because of the vitally important role the local population has to play in

countering insurgency in the RSA and SWA. The loyalty, goodwill and co-operation of the local population have to be secured and the insurgents have to be denied every opportunity of exploiting friction points, grievances or dissatisfaction. At the same time the SADF utilises the opportunity to demonstrate to the local population that they are there to help and to protect them and not to harm them'.

Lloyd also warns that when their goodwill and loyalty cannot be won then 'we will have to move them out of the critical areas and settle them elsewhere'.

The broad and general political objectives of the CAP as Lloyd explains them have parallels in counter-insurgency situations elsewhere. What needs to be defined more clearly is the particular class, ethnic and geographical identities of various 'local populations' as the SADF's aims will vary considerably according to these. This was discussed by Major Britz. Outlining the differences in the CAP's process of political assessment in the western Cape from that in Namibia, he said: 'With our target groups our process of appreciating is the same - but the population is different - its far more complex - you've got Whites, Coloureds and Blacks and you get big differences within these groups'.

The SADF's Civic Action aims for rural africans include the development of organisation and support for countering guerilla insurgency. For urban africans, indians and coloureds, they are far more complex relating to political objectives such as building a basis for multi-racialism, military objectives such as preparing the ground for a future coloured and indian call-up, breaking down negative responses to the military, and driving a wedge into the process of the development of opposition to the SADF. It must also be taken into account that, as Lloyd points out, the military's role in the '80%' is a secondary although growing and particularly deliberate one.

In South Africa the relation between 'the people' and 'power' is often perceived of as being between the oppressed and the apartheid state. Particularly in the urban areas, one of the CAP's main roles is to mystify this relation and to obscure the connection drawn between the military

and the apartheid state. In this respect, there are important differences in the way the apartheid state is experienced by urban africans who have to face the reality of pass laws, influx control, administration boards and so on every day, and urban coloureds who do not face the same level of repression, and also experience some aspects of the 'differential incorporation' into the state apparatuses.

Furthermore, the repressive nature of the state is not experienced monolithically. For example, as Steenkamp pointed out, 'People (in the western Cape) don't bristle at the sight of an Army uniform in the same way as they might at a Police uniform'.

A recent study of the effects of military ideology on youth in a coloured community in Cape Town throws some light on these points. It involves interviews with youth group members, Cape Corps members and community organisers in the Hout Bay area. While not being extensive enough to draw any general conclusions from, it does provide some insights into the

contradictory way in which military ideology is received in a coloured working class community. The following points emerged:

1. People generally did not approve of the SADF, but were non-committal about those who participated in it.
2. People involved with youth, civic and trade union organisations had a better understanding of the SADF.
3. People generally saw 'communism' and 'terrorism' as enemies and were receptive to the propaganda on TV and to picture stories such as 'Grensvegter'.
4. They generally opposed the idea of conscription.
5. Anti-military propaganda had not reached many people.

The study argues that the dominant ideology, as perpetuated through TV, radio, schools and so on, is not accepted and reproduced in its entirety with respect to the military.

In the case of the SADF, on the one hand it is often not experienced directly but shown as neutral, fighting against an external enemy, while on the other hand the police are seen as part of a repressive government. But

those who join the army and wear uniforms may be seen in the same light.

In the light of these issues, part two of this article will discuss the Civic Action Programme in detail, and its relationship to education.

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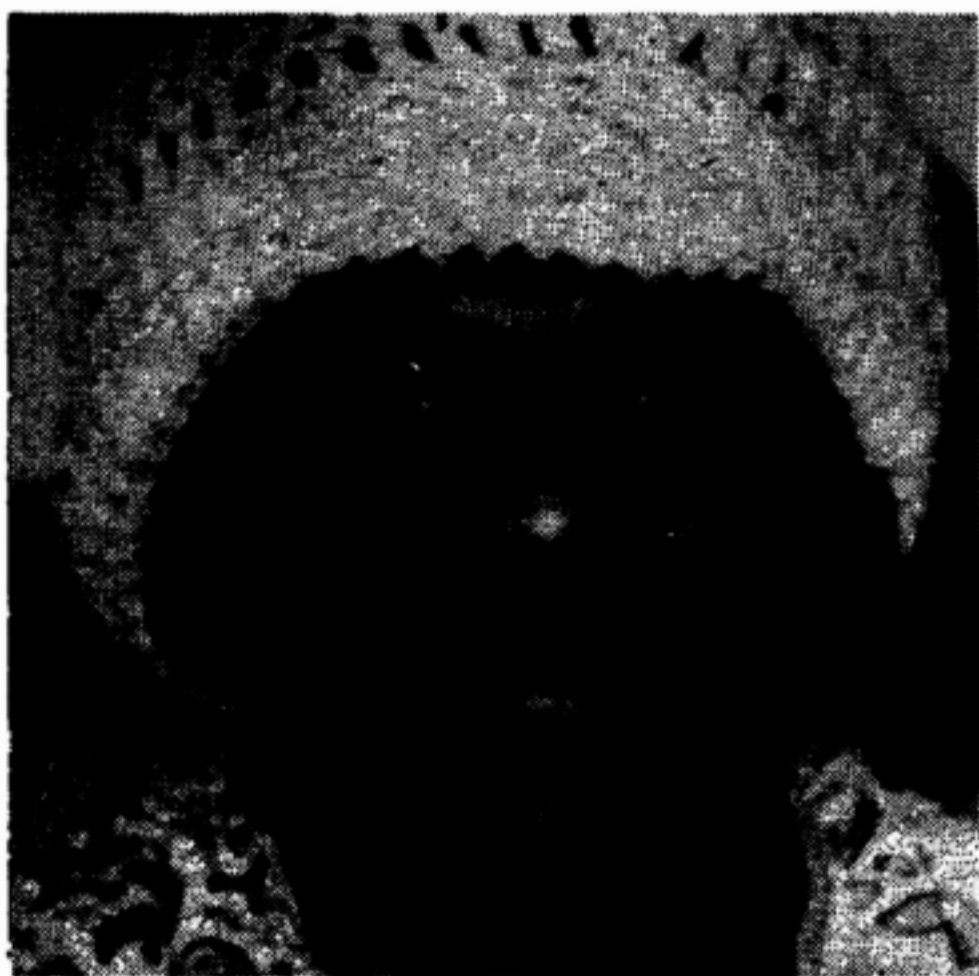
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# Njikelana on SAAWU

Shortly before his most recent detention by the Ciskeian authorities, SAAWU national vice-president SISA NJIKELANA spoke to Glenn Moss about the union.



The South African Allied Workers' Union - SAAWU - is worried about its distorted media image. In particular, its description as a 'community oriented' trade union is causing the organisation concern, and national vice-president Sisa Njikelana says that he does not understand what the term means when applied to SAAWU. If it implies that the union has neglected shop floor structures and organisation for community or political activity, Njikelana rejects this.

'SAAWU', he argues, 'has only been able to survive state repression because of its well-established shop floor structures. Our aim is to establish shop floor structures

inside the factories, which have been able to maintain the existence of SAAWU and through which we have been able to organically develop leadership'.

This does not mean that SAAWU is uninvolved in community and broader political issues: for example, the union participated in the 1981 anti-Republic Day campaign, and was involved in a Durban bus boycott. SAAWU has responded to Ciskei 'independence' and harassment of unions and, more recently, participated in the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF).

Njikelana says this 'is not a matter of involving the organisation because we would like a name for it'. Such involvement is based on the union's carefully worked out Declaration of Principles which states that 'Only the working class, in alliance with other progressive-minded sections of the community, can build a happy life for all South Africans'.

According to Njikelana, 'the least politically minded worker in the organisation knows that as a worker, he is affected by community issues. There is a relation between the rent he has to pay and the wages he receives; a relation between the bus fare hike, educational and medical costs, and the wage he gets. Obviously, we see the community organisations as being the viable structures which workers can vent these aspirations through. But where it is necessary for SAAWU to be part and parcel of certain community activities, it is policy to do so. A very good example would be the response to Ciskei repression which has nothing to do with the factory floor, and the Durban bus boycott. These issues affect SAAWU members. Bus fare hikes are something people expect to be taken up by community organisations but who goes to the industrial areas by bus? It's the workers'.

Some labour commentators have

suggested that SAAWU's 'non-industrial structure' will not allow the union to fit comfortably into current moves to forge trade union unity within a new federation. While Njikelana admits that SAAWU currently acts as a general union, he points out that constitutionally SAAWU is a federation committed to the formation of industrial unions. However, SAAWU believes that industrial unions are best formed on the base of already established factory floor structures. 'While workers in South Africa might have been unionised to an extent previously, it wouldn't be feasible to allocate them into industrial unions from the very onset. We see industrial unions as bodies or sub-structures of a federation which would have their own leaders. We reason that the kind of leadership that would assume positions in these industrial unions must be capable not just of electing people into positions for the sake of establishing structures. One needs organic development of leaders from the factory floor to assume leadership in the industrial unions, and to be capable of running their own offices, administration, finances and all that'.

SAAWU is unwilling to predict when they will establish their first industrial union. Njikelana points to the relative youth of the organisation, which has existed for only four years. Its origins lie in the March 1979 conference of the Black Allied Workers' Union (BAWU) where, according to Njikelana, those BAWU branches present voted to dissolve BAWU and form the non-racial SAAWU. (Njikelana insists that SAAWU was not a splinter or break-away from BAWU, as is often claimed. He says that branches not present at the 1979 BAWU conference did not accept the decision to disband, and have maintained themselves under the name of BAWU).

Njikelana believes that state action against SAAWU has slowed down plans for the formation of industrial unions. 'Much as we would like to give a time period, state repression has played its role in interrupting our programme. But we are close to the establishment of a chemical union due to the level of organisation we have in chemical factories'. Repression has not just focused on leadership 'but on membership as well. That's why SAAWU stresses that branches must

try and develop themselves in order to survive, which has happened'.

SAAWU has signed a number of recognition agreements in East London, the Transvaal and Natal. For example, the Kempton Park branch, 'young as it is has signed five recognition agreements, and there are still quite a number in the pipeline, at all branches. But there are a number of difficulties: shortage of manpower, victimisation and harassment in each factory. We don't believe in signing a recognition agreement whilst the workers are relatively weak, even though we have a factory floor structure. For us, a factory floor structure goes hand in hand with the organised strength of workers in that particular factory. So we have, in some areas, more de facto recognitions than official recognition agreements'.

Some reports have suggested that SAAWU is an unwilling participant in the current feasibility committee looking at trade union unity. Njikelana says that 'SAAWU is aware, especially in commercial press reports, of their allegedly reluctant participation in the unity feasibility meetings. We are very concerned about such distorted and propagandistic labellings. They serve to tarnish the image of the organisation'. Njikelana points out that, while SAAWU would not go for unity at all costs, it is 'one of the trade unions which needs unity more than ever, in view of the repression and harassment that we have experienced. SAAWU, at the fourth trade union summit, agreed to be part and parcel of the feasibility committee. It is one of the organisations which agreed in principle to the foundation of a federation'.

In much the same way, SAAWU is sensitive about the suggestion that they have non-negotiable preconditions for unity. A recent article on trade union unity argued that SAAWU's 'conditions for unity, political and organisational approach, and non-industrial structure all appear unlikely to fit comfortably alongside those other organisations (seeking unity)' (WIP 27:4). Njikelana disagrees: 'This would indicate that we are dogmatic and uncompromising, that we are not prepared to establish unity with other organisations. The way it is put is as if our conditions

are in conflict with the conditions of the other unions who have already reached a consensus'.

Njikelana points out that no-one has specified what SAAWU's supposed preconditions for unity are, and how they conflict with positions held by the other unions involved. He sees this as another instance of the distorted labelling which SAAWU has been a victim of.

He accepts that there are differences between some of the unions seeking unity - but the consultations, exchange of ideas, arguments and disagreements are part of the process of working out mechanisms of unity by groups committed in principle to a new federation of trade unions.

However, he reacts strongly against the idea that consensus has been reached by most unions, and that it is only SAAWU and a few 'community oriented' unions which are not part of the consensus. There is general agreement on the formation of a new federation - and differences are over mechanisms rather than principles.

'We are different organisations with parallel and slightly different policies and structures. So there is the feasibility committee, building us all together to exchange views and ideas on exactly how we go about making progress on unity. SAAWU was there at the first summit, and it's going to be there at the October feasibility meeting. I'm not saying there aren't differences, but it is for us trade unions to iron these out, to come up with something productive, to make practical endeavours in the direction of unity'.

Late last year, SAAWU took part in informal negotiations at an unofficial meeting of the industrial council for the chemical industry. However, Njikelana insists that this does not represent a shift in SAAWU's position on industrial council participation. This instance of informal discussions with the industrial council related to very specific conditions at AECI's Umbogintwini plant, where SAAWU has a majority of members and a workers committee. The industrial council was negotiating minimum wages and working conditions at all AECI plants, and as SAAWU was organised at only the Umbogontwini plant, it was very difficult to ignore totally the industrial council proceedings.

SAAWU continues to abide by the Langa summit on industrial councils, which rejected the present industrial council system as an unacceptable means of collective bargaining. The Langa meeting 'recommended that unions that are not members of industrial councils should not enter any industrial council and requested that participating unions refer this back to their respective unions for endorsement. The unions agreed to support each other in the event of any union resisting participation on the industrial council'.

Njikelana and other SAAWU leaders are clearly worried about what they see as a false categorisation of the union. 'A lot of reference has been made to SAAWU being in the group of the community oriented unions, with loose structures and less interest in the factory floor. This would imply that we would be some kind of square peg in a round hole when it comes to a new federation. But we know we are building shop floor structures. And SAAWU will be at the October meeting of the feasibility committee, as we have been at previous unity talks'.



# Khumalo on NGWU

A new general workers' union has been formed in Pretoria. Its general secretary, **DONSIE KHUMALO** broke away from the Motor Assemblers and Component Workers' Union (MACWUSA) and the General Workers' Union of South Africa (GWUSA) to set up the National General Workers' Union. Glenn Moss interviewed Khumalo on the NGWU, and on his controversial involvement in the Athlone trade union unity summit.

The National General Workers' Union, formed after a split in the Pretoria branches of MACWUSA and GWUSA, has come out in support of current unity moves to form a new trade union federation. Indeed, general secretary Donsie Khumalo says that the NGWU already has relationships with a number of Pretoria unions, based on their demarcation policy. 'Where a union has membership in a particular industry, we won't go in there to organise', he explained. NGWU will only recruit currently unorganised workers 'except that where TUCSA is organised, we are definitely going to organise. TUCSA unions are negotiating on the industrial councils, despite the fact that they are unrepresentative. They are not representing the aspirations of the workers'.

Khumalo argues that, while the NGWU 'supports the current efforts towards unity', and 'will join a federation in the future', there is no need to join the feasibility committee looking at unity. At present, the NGWU feels it needs rather to 'consolidate our position as regards membership'.

The break away from MACWUSA/GWUSA was, according to Khumalo, based on a number of disputes between the Port Elizabeth and Pretoria branches. 'The union was not democratically controlled.

We were told from Port Elizabeth what to do. The membership in Pretoria were not happy about that. When I was arrested for inciting a strike, I informed Port Elizabeth that they should hire an additional organiser. I was alone in Pretoria at that time, and what would the position have been if I went to jail? The branch would have died. But Port Elizabeth didn't worry about this request'.

Khumalo lists a number of other factors in the NGWU break away from MACWUSA/GWUSA: 'The workers of GWUSA in Olifantsfontein wanted to open up an office there. Port Elizabeth was reluctant to allow this'. Khumalo also isolates a personal grievance as a compounding issue: it appears that he was offered a scholarship to study labour relations in Sweden by a foreign embassy, but that the Port Elizabeth union leadership vetoed this.

Apart from criticising MACWUSA/GWUSA for their lack of democratic control, Khumalo also claims that they were very inflexible. For example, 'if one has got to use the industrial court to win certain rights for workers, then one has got to make use of it, if the time is right. They (the Port Elizabeth leadership) were totally against such a thing'.

Khumalo claims that this spirit of flexibility was present in the Pretoria branch of GWUSA/MACWUSA before the split. Asked about his participation in the Wilgespruit trade union summit walk-out - where certain unions refused to discuss unity with unions participating in industrial councils - Khumalo said that the 'decision to quit (the summit) was foisted on us by Port Elizabeth... Government Zini, (organising secretary of GWUSA and MACWUSA) and I did not want to quit, but we were forced to by the others'.

According to Khumalo, the split

with GWUSA/MACWUSA was precipitated when the whole Pretoria executive decided to resign, and called a meeting of members to explain their decision. This meeting 'decided that if we are to form another union, they are going with us as we have done a lot of good for them. That's how we formed the union!'. The majority of GWUSA members - numbering about 4 000 - joined the NGWU, and while not all of these are active or fully paid up, they remain members. Since then, says Khumalo, 'MACWUSA in Pretoria employed two new people, one of whom has already left the union; according to reports we have, it's inactive at the moment. MACWUSA has in fact already died in Pretoria. Where are they going to organise since the motor industry is already organised by NAAWU and the African Motor and Allied Workers' Union? They are just maintaining an office without members'.

In the previous edition of Work In Progress (WIP 27), MACWUSA's Government Zini made a number of claims which Khumalo strongly contests. Zini alleged that Khumalo was suspended from the union's Pretoria branch after 'irregularities' had been uncovered. Khumalo rejects this as a 'deliberate lie', saying that he in fact resigned, and was never suspended.

Zini also claimed that at the April trade union unity talks, Khumalo had sat with the MACWUSA/GWUSA delegation, although he had been told that he represented neither union. After leaving the talks early, the MACWUSA/GWUSA delegation then read in the press that Khumalo had voted against the establishment of the feasibility committee, allegedly on behalf of MACWUSA/GWUSA.

Khumalo rejects Zini's version of events. He says that he went to the unity talks as a member of the Orange-Vaal General Workers' Union delegation. 'When I arrived in Cape Town, I was approached by one of the unregistered unions. The approach was that I should join the MACWUSA delegation so as not to show the registered unions that there was a division in MACWUSA'. This was agreed to by MACWUSA/GWUSA.

Khumalo also denies that he voted against the establishment of the feasibility committee. He explains that the MACWUSA delegation had to leave the summit early, as they had their own conference in Port Elizabeth

to attend. Zini told the meeting that somebody would be left behind to represent them - that person being Khumalo, who says that 'I was given firm instructions not to take any decision whatsoever'. Khumalo says he did not vote on the feasibility committee, but merely explained that a mandate on the question of unity had still to be sought from the MACWUSA/GWUSA membership.

Khumalo further says that, after the MACWUSA/GWUSA delegation left the talks, his presence there was queried by a FOSATU representative; he then explained that he had never been suspended by MACWUSA, and was representing them in the absence of the rest of the delegation.

Although the NGWU is a general union, Khumalo believes that 'an industrial union is the most viable union. What precipitated the formation of a general union was the membership that we have in different sectors of industry. We couldn't form an industrial union, so we intend to keep it as a general union until such time as we communicate with other unions in making NGWU an industrial union'. The sector which NGWU is currently most active in is the commercial and distributive trade.

The union 'rejects registration insofar as it is designed to control and interfere in the internal affairs of trade unions. While we don't see ourselves formally participating in industrial councils, if we find a situation whereby one would have to negotiate, we would be flexible - subject to the approval of membership'.

The union is committed to the establishment of participatory structures of democracy. 'Any decision must be approved by the membership', says Khumalo. 'We call members to a meeting and ask for instructions on decisions. These general meetings take place every month with all our companies which have been organised by the union'. The union has elected shop stewards at factory floor level, and has submitted a number of recognition agreements to companies. They already have de facto recognition in some areas, with shop steward representation on disciplinary committees, structures for grievance procedure, etc. The NGWU also intends establishing a broader shop stewards council in the

future, with shop stewards from all factories organised by the union.

The NGWU has some presence in the metal, and paper and pulp industries. Surprisingly, however, it has not attempted to organise in the motor industry, which is where MACWUSA's membership lay. Khumalo explains that 'We felt we should leave out the motor industry workers so that NAAWU could strengthen itself, seeing that it is the largest union in Pretoria with the biggest membership. We felt, after discussion, that we should leave those workers in the motor industry to go into NAAWU. We are not organising in opposition to NAAWU.

The NGWU places itself firmly on the side of those unions which see a role for themselves outside of the work-place. 'A union cannot divorce itself from community issues', says Khumalo, 'because the life of the worker does not end at the factory gate. It extends into his home environment. Any community affair that affects the life of the black man, the union will come into'. While Khumalo says that the union would involve itself with non-working class elements in the township, he nonetheless accepts that there is always the potential and danger of conflicts of interest between these groups.

The NGWU is a controversial union. Born in the controversy of a split, it recently signed up a white woman employee from Pick 'n Pay. Within days, she had resigned after an incident in which Khumalo arrived at the store with a pressman to interview her. She declined to be interviewed or photographed, a decision which Khumalo attributed to intimidation from the store's manager. In the midst of this, the NGWU announced that it was negotiating procedural agreements with six of Pick 'n Pay's northern Transvaal stores. It would seem wrong, therefore, to write off the NGWU as another splinter union with charismatic leadership and no shop floor base. Time will presumably show what its contribution to a rapidly changing labour movement will be.

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# Information

## labour action

### WESTERN CAPE

Company: African Spun Concrete Company  
(Blackheath)

Date: 25 July - 1 August

Workers: About 170

Union: General Workers' Union (GWU)

The GWU has been attempting to negotiate with this company for several months, without success. Workers struck, demanding that management meet with representatives of their union.

Another strike, by GWU members in this area, took place shortly before the strike by workers at this company (see below). In both cases workers demanded recognition of their union. Reports suggest that GWU membership in the area might be strong enough for workers to come out in support of their striking fellow workers if the demands are not met.

Workers returned on 1 August, on condition that negotiations for recognition would begin. Talks, lasting four hours, were held that day, but no agreement was reached.

Company: Cape Town Iron and Steel Corporation (Kuils River)

Date: 18 July

Workers: About 175

Union: GWU

GWU has been involved in recognition talks with this firm for 15 months. Workers struck, expressing dissatisfaction at the length of time being taken to conclude the agreement. The company (a subsidiary of ISCOR) said it would begin recruiting new workers if they were not back at work the next day.

No further news.

### EASTERN CAPE

Company: Checkers (Grahamstown)

Date: 30 May

Workers: ?

Union: Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union

Employees at this store stopped work at 08h00 because they had not received their May wages. CCAWUSA officials met with management, and management offered R10 as an IOU to each worker. The offer was turned down. Management then phoned the bank and promised the workers that they would have their wages at 11h00. This was accepted and the workers returned to work at 09h30.

Subsequent to the stoppage, negotiations between the union and management resulted in the latter agreeing that workers should get their salaries in time in future. If any problems were to arise management undertook to pay the workers their full salaries from petty cash.

Company: Provincial Roads Department.  
(Karoo region)

Date: 19 - 22 May

Workers: 500

Union: Farm Workers' Union (FWU) and GWU

A three-day strike was staged to protest against a white supervisor who had allegedly called workers 'kaffers' and 'baboons', and tried to reverse a heavy truck into them while they were connecting a compressor machine to the truck. One of the workers, Frans Nqono, was dismissed for allegedly laughing at the racial insults. Officials of FWU and GWU took up the issue. The matter had to be referred to the Cape Provincial Administration in Cape Town.

This is the second strike by road workers in the Karoo region since last November. Last year when the FWU and GWU approached the Cape Provincial Administration they were told not to

interfere. The strike in November last year followed the dismissal of two fellow workers. According to a spokesperson for the CPA the administration negotiated only through 'our workers' committees and our officials. The General Workers Union and Mr Essop (of the FWU) have no say in the matter and we do not negotiate with them' (EP Herald, 09.06.83).

The workers returned to work, but the situation remained tense. They would not back down on their demand for the reinstatement of Nqono, and threatened further strike action. A meeting between the workers and the CPA's Loubser took place on 16 June to discuss the reinstatement. Both the FWU and GWU officials who arrived to attend the meeting were barred from doing so.

Meanwhile, a committee elected by the workers, the National Road Workers Committee of Ten, was allowed to attend. According to their chairman, Mathayi, the meeting achieved nothing. The workers planned another mass meeting scheduled for that weekend, when they would decide what further action to take.

There has been no further news available to us.

#### NATAL

Company: Corobrik (Effingham)

Date: 21 June

Workers: About 500

Union: -

Workers went on strike when a colleague who had been ill and sent to a factory clinic died and was given a 'pauper's funeral'. They demanded an explanation as to why the worker's family had not been notified of his death. The managing director, BK Waberski, denied knowledge of the worker's death.

No further news.

Company: Nampak Products Ltd (Mobeni)

Date: 4 June

Workers: About 400

Union: SA Allied Workers' Union (SAAWU)

The strike at this firm was in support of demands for a refund of workers' pension fund contributions and for the recognition of their union (SAAWU). The workers refused to talk to management, and insisted that negotiations be through SAAWU.

By 8 June management had met with worker representatives and it was agreed that the strikers would return to work.

However, when they did not return to work management announced that they had been fired.

The following week Nampak began re-employing the workers. It was reported that about half the workers refused to accept re-employment. A union spokesperson said that this was because they were being taken on again on condition that they accepted the group's pension scheme - which meant they had to agree to be repaid their contributions only if they left their jobs.

No further news.

Company: Natal Thread (Hammarsdale)

Date: 27 June - 7 July

Workers: Over 300

Union: National Union of Textile Workers (NUTW)

A legal strike was staged in support of higher wages. The NUTW stated that it had gone through all the various steps which culminated in a legal strike. Negotiations over pay increases had reached deadlock. Management refused to increase wages by more than 6%, and negotiations over the increase had been taking place over a period of five months. The union then held a strike ballot in which 315 members voted in favour and eight voted against. The strike took the form of a ban on overtime, effectively cutting production time by 27,5 hours per week. A strike fund was also set up by the workers. Notwithstanding the legality of the strike, police reinforcements with dogs were present throughout the period.

The strike was called off when management agreed to an increase amounting to 8% over a year. It was the first legal strike in South African labour history since workers at Armourplate Safety Glass struck in 1976. Workers staging a legal strike, however, are still liable, as are illegal strikers, to be dismissed by their employers. The official dispute-settling machinery is so cumbersome and time consuming that it appears hardly advantageous for workers to make frequent use of it.

Company: Ocean Manufacturing Ltd (Pinetown)

Date: 20 July

Workers: About 235

Union: Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU)

The workers downed tools at 15h00, demanding increases of 50c an hour. Management had earlier refused to pay

this increase, offering an incentive bonus instead, for workers who exceeded their daily target. When the workers refused to return they were dismissed on the grounds that they had broken their contracts of employment.

Company: Universal Lace and Fabric Mills  
(Pinetown)

Date: 11 July

Workers: About 200

Union: NUTW

Demands for a R20 weekly increase in wages were made by striking workers. They were demanding this over their R28 weekly wages, which were described as 'starvation wages'. Negotiations between the NUTW and management began, but no agreement was reached.

No further news.

Company: WB Camerons (Pty) Ltd

Date: 29 June - 6 July

Workers: Over 300

Union: MAWU

A wage increase of 40c an hour was demanded during a strike. Workers were rejecting management's offer of 16c an hour, and were also articulating the demands of metal workers at other Natal firms who had downed tools in demand for increases above those offered by the Steel and Engineering Industries Federation of SA (SEIFSA). According to a press release by MAWU on 1 July, a number of workers at other factories had also gone on strike for this reason.

At other Natal firms negotiations took place and increases were secured without strike action. At Pillar Naco, Glacier Bearings (Pinetown) and Forbo Krommenie (Jacobs), MAWU negotiated a 15c an hour increase, a R2 minimum hourly wage, and a 30c hourly wage, respectively (SEIFSA's minimum wage increase for the lowest-paid worker is 10c an hour).

It was reported that the workers at WB Camerons returned to work on 6 July. No details of their increases were available.

The strike at WB Camerons, which is a Barlow's subsidiary, occurred at the same time as the strike at Barlow's Kew plant (see below). According to a MAWU spokesperson, workers at both plants agreed to return to work on the basis that they would try and negotiate recognition agreements.

## TRANSVAAL

Company: African Explosives and Chemical Industries (AECI) (Alrode)

Date: 4 - 6 July

Workers: About 350

Union: SA Chemical Workers' Union  
(SACWU)

Dissatisfaction with a wage increase sparked off the strike at this company. Management refused to grant workers higher increases than laid down in the wage agreement of the industrial council. On 7 July management dismissed the strikers because, they said, the workers had ignored a return-to-work deadline. Management also claimed that the workers had not adhered to the grievance procedure contained in the recognition agreement between AECI and SACWU.

Company: African Explosives and Chemical Industries (AECI) (Sasolburg)

Date: 30 June - 13 July

Workers: Over 350

Union: SAAWU

A strike by over 350 workers employed at AECI's acetylene and carbide plant in Sasolburg was sparked off by an explosion in which two workers were killed. Striking workers refused to return until management gave them acceptable assurances that the factory was safe. Union sources claimed that 'there have been four deaths in the plant since November. Predictably, workers are worried and they say they will not return to work until the factory is proven safe'.

While SAAWU is not formally recognised by AECI, there is negotiation between the two parties, and management and shop stewards were involved in talks over the factory's safety. Worker demands included the provision of first aid training on an extended basis, better protective clothing, the establishment of a health and safety shop stewards committee, and the inspection of factory repairs by furnace operators and shop stewards.

After protracted negotiations, workers returned to the plant on 13 July, although it remains unclear which of their demands were agreed to. The union is, through its legal representatives, monitoring the outcome of an inquiry into the explosion, held by a factory inspector in terms of the Factories Act. The union is also closely watching the outcome of a police investigation into the blast which killed the two workers.

In a recent development, the union has demanded that workers be paid for the duration of the strike. They argue that workers were unable to work until the factory was declared safe, but nonetheless held themselves available to return as soon as acceptable assurances had been received. While SAAWU has not received a response to this demand from AECI, the company has a policy of 'no work, no pay' regarding strike action. If they adhere to this policy it is possible that a legal dispute may be looming over this strike, one of South Africa's first over occupational safety.

Company: Asea Electric (Rosslyn)

Date: 24 June

Workers: Over 300

Union: -

A strike occurred in protest at the dismissal of a union official.

Management confirmed that the strike had taken place due to disciplinary action taken against the worker.

Company: Associated Spinners (Randfontein)

Date: 23 - 28 June

Workers: Over 500

Union: Textile Workers' Union (TWU)

Demands for a 50c across-the-board wage increase led to strike action at the Patons and Baldwins subsidiary. The workers demanded that these increases become effective from 1 July.

Management's response was that they were only prepared to make the increases effective from 1 September. They told the workers that their present wage offer was the result of the recession in the country. Workers' response was that the recession was due to no fault of their own. Management countered that wage increases from 1 July would lead to retrenchment. The workers said that they would be willing to work short hours if management agreed to their wage demands.

The Sowetan quoted a statement by management which said that, after long talks with the union leaders, 'everything was cleared up'.

Company: Barlow Manufacturing (Kew)

Date: 28 June - 6 July

Workers: About 500

Union: MAWU

At this plant workers downed tools demanding a 50c an hour increase. The company claimed that the recognition talks between themselves and the union had been broken by the union in

February, and that they (management) had unsuccessfully attempted to resume negotiations. A union source contradicted this claim, stating that it was management who had constantly rebuffed the union's attempts to settle the dispute through negotiation.

Negotiations were resumed after the strike began. MAWU demanded the conclusion of the recognition agreement, with wage negotiations to follow. According to a union spokesperson there seemed little chance of an immediate signing of a recognition agreement because the agreement that Barlow's wanted to sign was so restrictive as to grant workers few rights other than a say in basic wages.

On 6 July the workers returned reluctantly. They had not gained the wage increase, but decided to return so that the union might continue to negotiate a recognition agreement.

On 13 July 450 workers were dismissed from the plant, as a result of their refusal to meet a return-to-work deadline. They had downed tools after 12 of their colleagues had been fired for allegedly intimidating other workers during the wage strike. It was felt that they had been given neither a proper hearing, nor had the company followed the correct dismissal procedures.

The following week, after negotiations with MAWU, management agreed to reinstate the striking workers, giving them the same wages and benefits they had enjoyed before the strike. However, they refused to employ the 12. MAWU has stated that it is considering taking legal action against the firm over their dismissal.

Company: Bitcon Industries (Boksburg)

Date: 9 - 13 June

Workers: About 160

Union: SA Boilermakers' Society

The entire workforce was fired by this company when they demanded to return to a five day week instead of four days. They were also protesting against the dismissal of 36 fellow workers.

One of the workers explained how they had approached management asking to work at least 45 hours a week, once they had realised that the workload was increasing.

Management's response was that there would have to be retrenchments in order to meet this demand. When the workers returned to work the following day the company called out a list of names of those whom it would still

employ - the rest were dismissed. At this stage the workers approached their union to intervene on their behalf.

Management undertook, after negotiations with the union, to re-engage all the striking workers.

Company: Checkers (Southdale, and about 12 other outlets of this chain)

Date: 1 June; 3 June

Workers: About 400

Union: CCAWUSA

Work halted for a short while on 1 June in protest against an alleged assault on a worker by the store's manager.

A union spokesperson said the workers' demands also centred around other grievances, including claims that their workload was too heavy, and that they were forced to work overtime without proper notice. The work stoppage lasted an hour, with workers returning after they had called in the union.

On 3 June another strike was staged. This second stoppage was as a result of management's non-compliance with an agreement with the union after the first stoppage - to investigate the conduct of the manager and either move or dismiss him. When it became apparent that management had taken no action against the manager, the workers stopped work again. Workers at over ten other Checkers outlets, including Eastgate, Benoni, Krugersdorp and Potchefstroom, stopped work in a sympathy protest.

On 6 June about 400 workers gathered outside the CCAWUSA office, where general secretary, Emma Mahinini, told them that the manager would be sent on two months' leave. The workers refused to accept this. Checkers finally agreed to demote the manager, giving an undertaking that he would not be allowed to manage any of the stores, and the workers returned to work.

Company: Checkers (Killarney and 20 other outlets)

Date: 1 - 10 July

Workers: 700

Union: CCAWUSA

Seventy workers struck demanding that the manager be suspended. They had listed their grievances against him and were demanding an investigation by the company. Allegations included the manhandling of a cashier who refused to work overtime, firing pregnant women when they left to have their babies, and displaying a racially

insulting poster on his wall.

The following week the strike had spread to more than eight other branches, involving another over 400 workers expressing solidarity with the Killarney branch. Further grievances about pay and bad treatment were being taken up by the strikers. Demands included an R80 across-the-board increase and an alleged unfair labour practice.

Negotiations between management and CCAWUSA were deadlocked on 7 July. The following day the support for the Killarney workers had brought 600 workers at 20 outlets out on strike, with another 100 joining the next day.

The company issued a statement saying it was using 'casual' labour to cope with the staff shortage.

Additional demands at this stage were payment while on strike and the reinstatement of a dismissed worker at Checkers head office.

Management remained firm in its stance: refusal to take any action other than to give a verbal warning to the manager at Killarney. Lists of branch by branch grievances were ignored by management - they merely promised to look at them later. Negotiations on the R80 increases would also take place later. The workers remained adamant that they would not return to work until their demands had been met.

Agreement, however, was finally reached on 10 July, and the workers returned the following day. Their basic aim had been achieved, which was that the manager be moved to another department in the same store where he would not be responsible for any of the workers. Agreement was also reached that when Checkers managing director returned from overseas the company would consider proposals for pay talks.

According to CCAWUSA officials a date for wage talks had been arranged for 2 August.

The company refused to pay the workers for the time that they had been on strike, but promised that nobody would be victimised.

This strike was extensively reported on in the press, mainly in connection with the alleged racist poster which the manager had displayed in his office. Emma Mashinini, CCAWUSA general secretary, denied that the poster receiving the publicity was the poster that the workers had been objecting to. Most reports stressed that the poster sparked off the strike, and offered this as an instance



of worker manipulation by the union. According to union officials it was not the poster which was the central issue but the general attitude of the manager which the workers had objected to.

For CCAWUSA the ten-day strike was a major demonstration of worker unity 'and of great impact in conscientising other workers to stand and fight for your rights' (said Emma Mashinini).

Company: Coca Cola Bottling Company  
(Devland, Leagland and Denver Depots)

Date: 27 June  
Workers: Over 200  
Union: -

More than 200 sales personnel, truck drivers and delivery staff from three depots went on strike. They gathered at the main Benrose depot in an attempt to hold talks with management. Benrose workers were allowed into the depot, but the workers from the other three depots were locked out. A work stoppage at the Benrose depot also took place.

The strike was in protest against the dismissal of three workers who had stayed away from work on 16 June.

Agreement was reached on 28 June, with management agreeing to reinstate the three workers. Furthermore, the company has undertaken to treat 16 June as a holiday for all its Soweto staff. It has committed itself not to take action against any african worker who stays away from work on 16 June. The company has said, however, that this would apply only to workers living in Soweto and that in other cases they would use their discretion.

Company: Coca Cola Bottling Company  
(Vereeniging)  
Date: 13 - 15 June  
Workers: About 300  
Union: Sweet and Allied Workers' Union  
(SFAWU)

Production was brought to a halt when about 300 workers went on strike in support of higher wages. They were demanding an increase in the minimum weekly wage from R68 to R115. The workers lowered their demand to R96 after negotiations, but management was only prepared to pay R77.

The workers returned because of a statement issued by management to the effect that all negotiations had been suspended until further notice.

Workers returned, hoping that talks would then resume.

No further news.

Company: Coca Cola Bottling Company  
(Vanderbijlpark)

Date: 15 July  
Workers: 350  
Union: SFAWU

Striking workers at this plant were also demanding wage increases. They had been offered increases from R68 to R77 per week, but were demanding R103.

By the fifth day of the strike negotiations were still deadlocked. Two days' wages had been deducted from the strikers for the days they had not worked during the previous week.

No further news.

Company: Consolidated Wire Industries  
(Pretoria West)

Date: 9 July  
Workers: About 200  
Union: -

200 workers staged a work stoppage at this company. The reason for the stoppage has not been reported (Star, 09.07.83).

Company: D and DH Fraser (Heriotdale)  
Date: 30 June  
Workers: 196  
Union: CCAWUSA

Demands for higher wages led to this strike. According to the workers, their wages were amongst the lowest in the country. They were rejecting management's offer of a monthly increase of between R3 and R20, with effect from the end of July. The workers also claimed that the company spends money on computers and sponsoring sports events, while pleading poverty.

Fraser stated that it was prepared to negotiate with workers over wages, but that if they did not return to work by 5 July they would be fired. However, the union and management agreed on a wage increase and the workers returned.

An increase of R50 was given to all workers earning the minimum monthly wage of R190. Workers who, at the time of the increase, were earning R240 or more, received the following increases, over and above the R3 to R20 offered before the strike: R240, a R10 increase; R245, a R7,50 increase; R250, a R5 increase.

According to a union spokesperson, the union intended approaching management to begin recognition negotiations.

Company: Danish Confectionery (Pritchard Street, Johannesburg)

Date: 1 - 2 August

Workers: 7

Union: CCAWUSA

Seven workers, some of whom are union members, walked out of this branch of Danish Confectionery, and were then dismissed. The workers claimed that the owner's wife used abusive language in dealing with employees.

After the union had intervened in the dispute the workers were taken back, and the owner agreed to talk to his wife about her use of abusive language.

Company: Dunlop Industrial Products (Benoni)

Date: 13 - 14 June

Workers: About 400

Union: Chemical Workers' Industrial Union (CWIU)

The entire workforce downed tools after the company cut working hours from 45 to 37 hours a week. Worker representatives met with management shortly afterwards, but the talks between the parties reached deadlock. The workers returned, although the dispute had not been resolved.

Company: Dunswart Iron and Steel

Date: 24 June

Workers: 1 100

Union: MAWU

Dunswart announced that 85 workers were to be retrenched by the company. This led to a brief stoppage. The workers were demanding that management negotiate with MAWU on the retrenchments. The company agreed to hold talks with the union and the workers returned.

Company: Garankuwa Hospital

Date: End of June

Workers: 500

Union: -

Student nurses at the hospital boycotted their canteen's food. After two weeks of boycotting the facilities, the nurses agreed to go to the dining room, but splashed their food all over the canteen walls. According to the hospital superintendent the nurses were more dissatisfied with the way the food was prepared than with the type of food that was served. He said that at present the patients' and staff's food was prepared together and that the problem might be solved when the nurses moved into their new dining hall where they could serve themselves.

The nurses resolved to return to the

dining hall the following day to check if there were any improvements in the food and cleanliness, and resolved to continue their boycott if they were not satisfied.

A group of nurses who had gone to check the food reported back to the others that there had been no improvement in the quality. The boycott, then in its fourth week, gained the support of the entire nursing staff. The student nurses claim that with the support of all hospital staff they could force the authorities to hasten the building of the new dining hall, hire better cooks and improve the food and the surroundings.

No further news.

Company: Golf Steel (near Kettlehong)

Date: Early July

Workers: 200

Union: ?

Management's refusal to listen to demands for higher wages led to a strike at this company. The workers were persuaded by management to return to work on 4 July.

Company: Grand Bazaars (Rosettenville)

Date: 3 - 7 June

Workers: 90

Union: CCAWUSA

Workers struck in protest against the dismissal of a shop steward who had approached management for wage increases. Management offered the workers the option of either the reinstatement of the shop stewards, or payment for the period they were on strike. They voted in favour of the shop stewards' reinstatement.

Company: Jet Stores (Sasolburg)

Date: 8 - 11 July

Workers: 10

Union: CCAWUSA

A three-day strike in protest against the dismissal of a shop steward was staged at this store. Union shop stewards threatened to bring out all workers at Edgars, Jet and Sales House stores if the shop steward was not reinstated.

Management agreed to the reinstatement and the workers returned.

Company: Krost Brothers (Cleveland)

Date: 1 - 3 June

Workers: 1 300

Union: MAWU

The entire workforce downed tools over the retrenchment of 130 workers the previous week. They were also protesting against the fact that management had not

previously discussed the retrenchments with themselves or their union (MAWU).

MAWU claims that white workers joined in this retrenchment strike at the plant. Management has denied that this occurred. If the white workers were in fact involved, it raises the question as to whether retrenchments might prove to be the one common cause between white and black workers.

The stoppage lasted three days. Management agreed to reinstate the 130 workers. However, they said they would still be laid off for a month. During this period they would be kept on the payroll, which meant the company would continue to pay their unemployment insurance contributions. Permits of migrant workers, whose services were terminated, would be restored to enable them not to break their service.

Further talks between management and shop stewards over the issue were arranged.

Company: Lebowa Transport Company (LTC)  
Date: 28 June  
Workers: About 200  
Union: -

LTC drivers refused to work demanding that management unconditionally reinstate a dismissed colleague. The drivers claimed that management had several times ignored their requests for reasons for the dismissal before they had resorted to strike action.

The strike left commuters stranded, despite the fact that bus inspectors and workshop employees took over from the drivers on that day.

The following day some of the drivers did not return to work. Management stated that they were considered to have 'suspended themselves', and denied having fired any of them. The drivers concerned, however, consider themselves to have been fired by the company.

No further news.

Company: Liberty Life Insurance Company  
Date: 13 - 19 July  
Workers: Between 90 and 150  
Union: Insurance Workers' Union of SA

The strike occurred in support of higher wages. The personnel were also demanding that management negotiate with their union. According to reports, management refused to recognise the union which is a blacks-only union, saying that it was company policy only to recognise multi-racial unions (RDM, 16.07.83). They said they were prepared to talk

to representatives of the workers, but the representatives should be chosen from the whole company, which had a multi-racial staff.

The union claims that black workers are discriminated against at the company. National organiser, Jeff Lengane, said it was precisely for this reason that the workers went out on strike. He said, 'If our members were part of the multi-racial policy of Liberty Life they would not have had grievances' (Sowetan, 20.07.83).

On 15 July, management informed workers that they would not be paid while they were on strike and that they were risking losing their jobs by not returning to work.

The workers returned to work on 19 July, after management had met with union officials. Management sources claimed they agreed to look into the workers' grievances, but refused to recognise the union. The company also refused to pay workers for the period they had been on strike. Union sources, however, claim that despite the fact that the workers had returned, they would continue to demand recognition of the union. Workers also denied having promised to submit a list of their grievances to management, and were demanding to be paid for the period they were on strike.

On 20 July the union sent a letter to management saying they would declare a dispute if those demands were not met within seven days.

Management replied to the letter, demanding certain information about the union. The union has supplied the information and is waiting for a response. In the meantime, the union has three courses of action open to it - the matter can either be referred to a conciliation board, or to the industrial court, or they can approach an outsider to mediate between the two groups.

Company: Litemaster (Wadeville)  
Date: 7 July  
Workers: 260  
Union: MAWU

Workers downed tools because the company had allegedly not followed retrenchment procedures laid down in an agreement with the union. In negotiations with MAWU prior to the retrenchment of 44 workers, the company had failed to satisfy demands for those workers' payout benefits.

Litemaster accused MAWU of intimidating

the workers into striking. The company said some of the workers who struck would be summarily dismissed, while others would be interviewed to determine whether they would be re-employed. By 13 July MAWU had succeeded in securing the re-employment of all except 78 workers.

Company: Prima Fine Meats (Doornfontein)

Date: 1 July

Workers: 250

Union: ?

Workers downed tools in support of a demand for higher wages.

No further news.

Company: Salcast

Date: 9 June

Workers: Between 200 and 300

Union: MAWU

A stoppage lasting a few hours was staged at this firm. The striking workers were protesting against the sacking of 13 colleagues, demanding their reinstatement. Salcast undertook to hold an inquiry into the firings and the workers returned to work, according to management.

However, according to a union spokesperson management agreed to reinstate all the fired workers.

Company: Siemens (Pretoria)

Date: 4 July

Workers: 12

Union: -

Workers downed tools after disagreeing with their supervisor. They returned to work the following day after listing their grievances to management.

Company: Silicate and Chemical Industries (Germiston)

Date: 9 June

Workers: 90

Union: ?

The entire workforce walked out when talks between management and their union deadlocked over the workers' demand for the dismissal or suspension of a white foreman. Workers refused to return during further negotiations, stating that there would be no return to work until the foreman was fired.

No further news.

Company: Spar (Discovery)

Date: 2 August

Workers: 19

Union: CCAWUSA

Workers employed at the Discovery branch of the Spar supermarket walked out,

claiming the following grievances: their wages were usually paid late; rubbish bins were housed in their canteen; Sunday work was demanded of them without overtime rates being paid; a number of them were not registered with the administration board; some workers had been assaulted by management, who also used abusive language when talking to workers; employees with long-service records had not received wage increases.

After negotiations between the union and management, it was agreed that workers employed for more than a few months would receive wage increases at the end of August, and that the other grievances would be rectified.

While CCAWUSA, the union involved, has no formal recognition from the Spar chain, informal discussions were held between both parties earlier this year.

Company: Supreme Mouldings (Robertsville)

Date: 18 July

Workers: Over 50

Union: Paper, Wood and Allied Workers' Union (PWAU)

Shop stewards belonging to the PWAU presented a letter to the management, introducing the union and requesting talks between the two parties. Management responded by calling all the workers to a meeting. Seven police with dogs, summoned by management, kept a close surveillance on the meeting.

Management then told the workers to choose between 'working for the union, or working for the company'. All but two of a staff of over 50 workers chose to belong to the union. Those who chose the union were ordered to leave the premises.

The PWAU decided, on 19 July, that if the workers were not reinstated within 24 hours legal action would be taken. According to the union the dismissals amounted to victimisation and, they would argue, constituted an unfair labour practice. The union also intends to lay a formal complaint against the police involvement in the matter, if the workers are not reinstated.

No further news.

Company: TW Beckett (Isando)

Date: 27 - 28 June

Workers: About 300

Union: Sweet, Food and Allied Workers' Union (SFAWU)

A strike in solidarity with two fired fellow workers occurred at this company.

The two workers had been fired for their alleged poor performance at work. One of the workers was reinstated and the workers returned, pending further negotiations.

Company: Uniewinkels warehouse

Date: 26 - 27 July

Workers: ?

Union: CCAWUSA

Four workers were retrenched at this store, prompting fellow workers to stop work in support. The striking workers returned to work although they did not succeed in securing the reinstatement of their colleagues.

Company: United Breweries (Garankuwa)

Date: 30 June

Workers: 500

Union: -

Five hundred employees at the brewery staged a boycott of their canteen food. This occurred after three of their fellow workers were rushed to hospital for suspected food poisoning. The hospital superintendent said that they had been suffering from stomach trouble resulting from having eaten stale food. One of the workers returned to work after being away for four days.

The workers' boycott was still continuing by 14 July, with the workers adamant that they would not return to the canteen until they were satisfied with the quality of the food.

No further news.

### INDUSTRIAL COURT DECISIONS

Three recent decisions of the industrial court (IC) have dealt with some of the core issues in the labour field - recognition, dismissals and substantive employment terms and conditions - and have consolidated and extended the trend emerging in earlier cases.

In Van Zyl v O'Okiep Copper Company, the IC held that a diesel mechanic's dismissal was prima facie unfair because certain procedural requirements had not been satisfied.

The IC basically adopted the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) recommendation on termination of employment: 'Before a decision to dismiss a worker for serious misconduct becomes finally effective, the worker should be given an opportunity to state his case promptly, with the assistance where appropriate of a person representing him'.

Van Zyl had not been afforded a proper

opportunity, duly assisted, to state his case and so the court reinstated him. It is interesting to note that the Mineworkers' Union, which represented Van Zyl at the hearing, had no misgivings about expressly using the arguments first developed in a successful FOSATU case, namely that of Metal and Allied Workers' Union v Stobar Reinforcing.

In Matshoba v Fry Metals four workers had been dismissed for failing to attend a disciplinary inquiry after they had refused to work overtime on a weekend. Although contractually bound to perform overtime when required to do so, the court found that a practice had developed whereby such performance could be excused if a worker could advance proper reasons. As the workers in question had been informed of their overtime 'obligations' at very short notice and had incurred private commitments for the weekend in question, it was held that their failure to submit to the overtime instruction was not unreasonable.

Concerning the failure to attend a disciplinary inquiry, the court noted that the terms of the disciplinary procedure were not clear and implied that responsibility for this state of affairs could be placed at the company's door. The workers were reinstated.

In United African Motor Workers' Union v Fodens, and employer charged with perpetrating some 35 unfair labour practices adopted the dubious expedient of tendering certain undertakings at the outset of the court proceedings and then withdrawing from the case. The union then proceeded to lead extensive and uncontested evidence against the company, and the court found for the former on nearly all counts.

On the facts, the court decided that it was an unfair labour practice, among other things:

- 1) not to bargain with a representative union;
- 2) for managerial staff to refer to workers as 'boys' or 'kaffirs';
- 3) to terminate a migrant worker's year-long contract prematurely and without just cause; and
- 4) to retrench workers without consulting with a representative trade union and without adopting fair selection criteria.

# courts

Only two trials are reported on in this courts section. Both began in 1981, and their unusual length has not allowed space for other court reports. These will appear in the next issue of WIP.

Neville Sello Motlhabakwe (21)

Johannes Joey Kers (21)

Eugene Mokgoasi (22)

Nelco Zenzele Hlatswayo (22)

Ben Mlulami Fani (23)

On 29 July 1980, Kimberley pupils began a boycott of their schools. At first, students from the only government secondary school (Tshireleco) and the Catholic St Boniface senior secondary were involved. Their aim in boycotting was not the immediate abolition of Bantu Education, which they saw as unrealistic, but a protest against it. The boycott was also called in solidarity with detained and boycotting pupils in other centres, and to draw attention to the desperate need for more and better facilities in Galeshewe, Kimberley's african township.

Gradually the boycotters were joined by pupils from the lower secondary and primary schools until, by mid-August, every educational institution in the township lay dormant. Over 15 000 students were involved.

In all the daily meetings and marches, there was no hint of violence. Even the chief executive officer of Galeshewe commented ironically that the demonstrations were conducted in a 'healthy spirit'.

The Department of Education and Training tried every method - short of negotiating with the pupils - to get them back to school. Meetings, however, all ended in deadlock when the pupils soon realised that the object was not to discuss grievances, but to get them into class.

Other methods used in an attempt to break the boycott included: cane charging pupils with dogs for back-up; detaining students regarded as leaders; and suspension threats which proved hollow when no-one turned up for registration.

The Kimberley visit of Education and Training Minister Ferdie Hartzenburg was the catalyst that brought the conflict to a head. Pupils were furious when they heard that the Minister was to visit Kimberley

without meeting them. He was to talk with the community council, the parents, even leaders of the white community - but not with the boycotting pupils.

On the morning of 8 September, hours before the Minister was due to meet the community council, students began assembling outside the council centre, piling up their school books, and singing. They were told by security police to move on, which they did, and then regrouped at St Boniface school. There they were given 10 minutes to disperse by police, who then moved in with batons, dogs and teargas. One hundred and twelve students were arrested, and some were charged with public violence.

For the next few days violence erupted in Galeshewe as beerhalls, houses occupied by black police, and the home of the community council chairman were hit by arson attacks. A few weeks later the Minister closed all schools in Galeshewe, sacking 13 temporary teachers with 24 hours notice.

These events of 1980 set the background to a recently concluded Terrorism Act trial held in Kimberley. During January and February 1981, security police began detaining students from Galeshewe, finally holding 23 under the indefinite detention clause of the now-repealed Terrorism Act. In April, five of those detained appeared in court charged under the Terrorism Act, with alternative charges of arson, attempted arson and housebreaking.

The state alleged that the accused had committed or attempted to commit the following acts:

\* arranging or propagating a gathering which had as its aim the planning or committing of acts of arson, and attending this gathering;

\* planning arson with respect to houses of members of the SAP or property of the Northern Cape Administration Board in general; or more particularly the Seochoareng Street beerhall or the houses of Sergeant M Smith, Detective Warrant Officer O Mtsiko, Mr E Mansana, a member of the Administration Board, and Mr TW Nyati, chairman of the Galeshewe community council;

\* for the purposes of arson, obtaining or encouraging others to obtain petrol to make petrol bombs.

A second Terrorism Act charge

involved acts allegedly committed on 9 September 1980. These were:

- attending a gathering behind Thabane School, which later moved to Sol Plaatjie School, which had as its aim the planning and/or committing of acts of arson;
- planning arson with respect to the houses of members of the SAP or the property of the Administration Board in general; or particularly the houses of Detective Warrant Officer OV Mdibe, Constable S Mogorosi, Detective Sergeant M Matsheka. Also, visiting the homes of Detective Sergeant S Moeti, Mr C Makandi (a member of the Administration Board), Detective Warrant Officer B Mochesane and Warrant Officer H Djwili, with the intention of setting them alight;
- obtaining petrol and/or preparing petrol bombs.

The trial proper began in June 1981 in the Kimberley regional court. Four of the 19 detainees then held in custody testified against the accused, inter alia claiming that the accused had been at meetings where it was decided to burn down the houses of SAP members as revenge for the police attacks on boycotting students.

One of the accused, Neville Motlhabakwe, claimed in evidence that a confession he made while in security police custody was the result of unlawful assault and pressure. The other accused also testified they had been assaulted and threatened while in custody. Presiding magistrate AJ van Wyk rejected this evidence, and ruled that the confession made by Motlhabakwe was admissible as evidence against him.

The proceedings were punctuated by acrimonious exchanges between defence advocate J Poswa and the presiding magistrate. On one occasion, Poswa was convicted of contempt of court, and chose to serve a 25 day prison sentence rather than pay a R25 fine. Property of his was seized to pay the fine, and he was released from jail. On another occasion, magistrate van Wyk told the accused that they were in contempt of court after they had claimed that he was biased in favour of the state, and would not allow their defence advocate to run the trial as he saw fit.

Fifteen detainees held on order of the attorney general as potential state witnesses were surprisingly not

released at the end of the state case. They were the subject of a supreme court action in which their parents claimed that as the state case had ended, it was illegitimate to continue holding this group under an Act referring to potential state witnesses. This application was turned down when the presiding judges ruled that they could not interfere with the order made by the attorney general.

Ten of these detainees testified for the defence, giving details of their treatment in detention, and claiming that they had been subject to assault, duress and unlawful pressure during interrogation. As a result, some of them claimed to have made false statements in an attempt to please their interrogators, and lessen the pressure on themselves.

Subsequent to this testimony, four of the group were charged with perjury. After nearly 19 months in detention, they were finally released in September 1982.

In its argument at the end of the evidence, the defence claimed that the court should not accept the evidence of the four detainees who had testified against the accused. They had, according to the defence, been influenced by the effects of detention in solitary confinement, and therefore given false evidence that they would not have given unless they were in detention.

The marathon trial, probably the longest to be heard in a South African regional court, finally drew to a close in July 1983. The transcript of evidence ran to over 11 000 pages, the trial having taken up 284 court days. Defence costs alone were estimated at over R284 000.

In his judgement, presiding magistrate van Wyk found all the accused guilty of Terrorism. He said that the motive behind the schools boycott had been to obtain better school facilities, but that while this was a 'truly honourable motive', it could not be taken into account in deciding on the accused's innocence or guilt. The court agreed that the accused had no political or revolutionary aims, but said that terrorism involved acts against a 'constituted authority' endangering law and order, and need not have political goals.

The magistrate also rejected all

allegations of improper conduct made against the security police during the trial.

Sentence: All accused were found guilty on the first Terrorism Act charge, and all except Fani were also found guilty on the second Terrorism charge. The magistrate ruled that in each case, three years of the sentence on the second charge should run concurrently with the first. Mothlabakwe was sentenced to eight years on each count - an effective 13 years imprisonment; Kers received seven years on each count - an effective 11 years; Mokgoasi received seven years on count one, and eight years on count two - an effective 12 years; Hlatswayo was given eight years on the first charge and five on the second - an effective 10 year sentence; Fani was convicted on count one only, and received 10 years.

An appeal has been lodged by the defence.  
(Kimberley regional court, 13.07.83).

Oscar Mpetha (73)  
Christopher Sparanyi  
Lawrence Lerotholi (20)  
Morgan Teboga Makubala (21)  
Aaron Tshangama (30)  
Vusumzi Mbetha  
Peter Vusumzi Kube (20)  
Alton Siphwa Sabuwa (20)  
Fumanikile Booi (20)  
Vuyisile Wilson Mzaza (21)  
Makana Euclid Jabavu  
Johannes Hlapo (22)  
Joseph Nanozolo Phike  
Peter Hendricks  
Jeffrey Baardman (22)  
Vuyisile Diba (23)  
Richard Mapondo (21)  
Welile Mazotana (22)  
Philip Nongwana.

The accused in this trial faced a count of Terrorism and two counts of murder. The Terrorism Act charge concerns activities between 8 - 12 August 1980, involving the stoning and petrol bombing of 31 vehicles, assaulting of various persons, barricading of Klipfontein Road, marching in groups on a public road, effecting the closure of black schools, and congregating at the Assembly of God Church and the Roman Catholic Church.

The trial must be seen against the background of the bus boycott which

began in the Cape Peninsula on 11 June 1980, following a fare increase of 30 - 100%. In spite of concerted efforts to break the boycott by a secret cabinet committee consisting of representatives from the security police, army and Departments of Coloured Affairs, Indian Affairs and Co-operation and Development, and the reported R25 000 spent by City Tramways on anti-boycott propaganda, by mid-July the boycott was still 100% effective in certain areas.

At this point police intervened in support of City Tramways. Late in July police baton-charged workers boarding 'pirate' taxis which were being used in place of buses to travel to and from work, and used strong arm tactics to force these taxis off the road in an attempt to break the boycott. There were reports at the time of arrests and confiscation of cars and lorries.

Again on 11 August police acted against 'pirate' taxis and their passengers. At one stage police and armed officials of the Road Transportation Board stood at 'pirate' taxi ranks and prevented people from entering the taxis, and in another confrontation riot police tried to force commuters waiting for 'pirate' taxis onto empty buses.

In the community anger that followed, large scale violence resulted. Vehicles were stoned and set alight in Klipfontein Road near Crossroads, and at least six people were injured. George Beeton and Frederick Jansen died when they were stoned and severely burnt by petrol bombs thrown at their cars. All three schools in the area were closed, and a crowd set fire to a post office vehicle at the Nyanga bus terminus.

Two days after these events, police began detaining students and community leaders from the Crossroads-Nyanga area. One of the first to be picked up was Oscar Mpetha, chairperson of the Nyanga Residents' Association and an organiser for the African Food and Canning Workers' Union. He was detained the day after he released a statement blaming the police for the unrest. 'It was the action of the police which caused the riot situation. Why are they protecting City Tramways? It seems as if they want the people



to use their money against their will', the statement read.

Oscar Mpetha, arrested at the age of 71, is a former member of SACTU and in 1958 was president of the Cape Town branch of the ANC. Twice banned, he was lauded in a pamphlet released shortly after his arrest as a man whose 'life has been one of unbending commitment to both nonracialism and democracy. His tireless efforts in both community and trade union work have established him as a leader'.

In its opening address the state claimed that Mpetha was the 'brains behind the bus boycott' and set out to attempt to prove that he planned the stonings and killing of two white motorists.

The trial was noticeable for the amount of public support shown for the accused. There have been large attendances at court and a number of demonstrations and marches through central Cape Town. During one such public protest six people were arrested.

The marathon trial, which began on 3 March 1981 and stretched over more than two years involving 130 witnesses, was also marked by frequent interruptions. On one occasion an assessor had a fall in his bath and was not available for a few days. On another, the court interpreter died in a train accident and difficulties were experienced in replacing him.

The trial was also delayed due to illness. Three of the accused were treated for stress, possible tuberculosis and pneumonia. Oscar Mpetha, who suffers from diabetes, was excused from large parts of the trial. He has been hospitalised twice - once for a prostate gland operation and a second time to have a toe amputated. Several appeals to have Mpetha released on bail during the trial were turned down by the attorney general.

The trial was also punctuated by a series of dramatic events, including an in loco inspection where officials were stoned, and perjury proceedings in which a witness was convicted and sentenced to 15 months jail.

The trial began with two months of procedural applications made by both state and defence. Defence counsel applied for the state to provide more detailed particulars to the charge sheet, and this was granted by the

judge. The state then applied for the whole trial to be held in camera as there were a number of minors amongst the accused. This was opposed by the accused who, through their lawyers, expressed the desire for the trial to be held in open court. The judge ruled against the state's application, saying 'it would be wrong for me in this situation to force a sort of semi-private trial on all 19 accused when not one of them wants it'.

The state's first witness was a 15 year old girl who gave her evidence in camera and cannot be named. She claimed that a number of the accused had taken part in various meetings, a march, the building of a barricade in Klipfontein Road, stone throwing and the overturning of a car. She attended a meeting at the Assembly of God Church on 10 August, where a speaker told those present to join others waiting near Crossroads. The crowd met a man driving a van whom she claimed was Mpetha. He raised his fist in a salute and urged the crowd to sing 'There are guns in Angola'.

The witness claimed that the accused Kube told people to pick up stones. Another accused stood in the road and stopped traffic. Stones were thrown and a white man injured. Kube pulled him out of the car, and a group including six accused, overturned the car. Another accused threw a match into the petrol tank.

The witness was cross-examined for eight days by the defence. During cross-examination the accused implicated by the witness denied their involvement.

The state's second witness was a 16 year old youth who had been in detention since August 1980. He was alleged to have played a leading role in the events, according to the first witness, and was regarded by the state as a key witness. He told the court that at various meetings at Mpetha's house in August 1980, Mpetha had told people to take scholars out of their classrooms, burn schools, kill whites and destroy their cars. Mpetha had produced a map and pointed out the place where people were to start rioting and which routes people were to follow. The first key point was the Nyanga bus terminus where cars and buses were to be destroyed. The group was then to go to Lansdowne Road and

any vehicles on the way belonging to whites were to be destroyed and the drivers killed.

People were told to arm themselves with petrol bombs, barricade the road and throw the petrol bombs at cars. According to the witness Mpetha then instructed the group to organise a meeting at the Assembly of God Church the next Monday. Twelve accused were at the meeting, and the accused Nhlapo said young people would have to be violent.

The witness claimed that after the meeting the crowd went to the Nyanga East bus terminus and attacked a GPO vehicle. On the way to Crossroads the crowd met Mpetha who asked them to sing 'There are guns in Angola'.

The witness claimed that after these events he and three others had fled to the Transkei with the idea of contacting the ANC, but then returned to Cape Town. His evidence, however, was rejected by the presiding judge, who found that he had lied in court.

Later in the trial a witness broke down while giving evidence and said she could not remember seeing any of the accused in the vicinity of the burning vehicles. Another witness - described by the state as a key witness - said in court that she knew nothing of certain information in her statement taken in detention by police about a year before. She recognised only her signature and some contents concerning events between 10 - 12 August.

In its evidence the state tried to prove that various of the accused incited others at meetings to participate in acts of violence, and that various accused participated in the march and attacked cars driven by whites.

Members of the riot squad who gave general evidence on township events conceded under cross-examination that tensions in the townships lessened when they removed themselves from sight.

A lengthy trial within a trial followed, involving 38 witnesses, where the admissibility of statements made by 15 of the accused while in police custody was contested. The judge finally ruled 12 statements admissible as evidence, and six inadmissible. He rejected all claims of assault made against the police by the accused, but accepted that in some cases other forms of pressure were used: pressures caused

by the extreme youth of some of the accused, their fear of detention and solitary confinement, and suggestions made to them that they would be released if they made statements.

In his evidence, Mpetha denied all the allegations against him. He said that the first he heard of the events of 11 August was when he was detained. On that day, he said, he and his son had been stopped from entering the township at a police roadblock and had driven to his home taking a longer route. He denied undertaking a campaign to incite people to violence and holding meetings at his house, and said claims that he had called on people to destroy whites was 'cheap politics' as it was not his belief to judge people on their skin colour.

In evidence of the other accused, Diba admitted that he went to the Assembly of God service, but denied that he had gone to Klipfontein Road. Mzaza and another accused testified that they had attended a service at the Roman Catholic Church but also denied going to Klipfontein Road.

The state argued that during 1980 it was inevitable that black people had become incensed given the 'general turmoil boiling in the boycotting students' hearts' and the 'emotional issue of the 1976 dead'. It was argued that the two memorial services were not normal services 'like a church one attends on Sunday'. 'Provocative' posters on the church wall depicting police brutality and the singing of freedom songs had served to inflame the crowd.

The state submitted that when the crowd left the churches on 11 August, it had planned to attack the cars of 'boere' at Crossroads. This plan could have arisen at previous meetings at Mpetha's house or in the church. The crowd had met Mpetha when he stopped his car and told them to sing 'There are guns in Angola', and indicated solidarity with them by giving a salute.

The state claimed that Mpetha must be seen as a co-conspirator in the murders because he had obtained the church for a meeting and, according to a state witness, had said that whites would be destroyed on 11 and 12 August. The state also argued that Mpetha was guilty of participating in terroristic activities - whether he had planned the events or incited the crowd.

The defence called for the acquittal of Mpetha, inter alia because the allegations made against him were 'totally contradictory to his character and the professed opinions of a lifetime'. There were, it was argued, two possible explanations for the events of 11 - 12 August 1980: they could either be considered the result of a cold-blooded plot master-minded by Mpetha, or they could be seen as the result of a spontaneous reaction to unwise and inappropriate police interference with 'pirate' taxis and passengers during the boycott of buses. Defence counsel suggested that the second explanation was the more probable one.

It was also contended that the only two eye witnesses that implicated Mpetha in the events of August 1980 were youths who had been detained in solitary confinement. Their evidence should be approached with greater care than usual, argued the defence, because of the dangers that flowed from their awareness of what was required of them by the police.

According to the defence argument, the accused could only be found guilty of Terrorism if the state proved that there was an intention to endanger the maintenance of law and order. Their acts had to be directed against either a constituted authority or the general body of law-abiding members of society. The defence contended that, at best for the state, 'the accused threw stones out of a spirit of perversity... That there may be underlying objective motives or explanations such as frustration or anger bubbling near the surface does not prove that the accused consciously directed their will against the general body of law-abiding society'.

The defence also argued that the state had failed to prove that the accused had committed the acts alleged, and that even if they had, the state had not shown that the accused acted with a common purpose. The actions were described by the defence as 'irresponsible and childish acts of revenge without revolutionary intent'.  
Verdict: On 6 June, verdict was passed. Five of the accused were acquitted on all charges, a sixth having earlier been found not guilty. Mpetha was convicted of Terrorism, but acquitted on the murder charges. Makubala, Kube, Hlapo, Mapondo and

Nongwana were convicted on both the Terrorism and murder charges. Sparanyi was found guilty of Terrorism and one charge of murder, as were Beardman and Diba. Tshangama was found guilty on both murder charges, but acquitted on the Terrorism count.  
Sentence: Mpetha - five years;  
Makubala - 15 years;  
Kube - 18 years;  
Hlapo - 20 years;  
Mapondo - 20 years;  
Nongwana - 10 years;  
Sparanyi - seven years;  
Beardman - 10 years;  
Diba - 15 years;  
Tshangama - 15 years.

In a surprise move at the end of July, the judge granted Mpetha and nine others leave to appeal against their five year Terrorism Act sentences. This followed a technical argument in which the defence claimed that the court was entitled to use its discretion in sentencing as the Internal Security Act, which has replaced the Terrorism Act, was introduced during the course of the trial. The significance of this is that the Internal Security Act has no minimum sentence, whereas the Terrorism Act prescribed a minimum sentence of five years.

The judge stated that although he would prefer to pass a wholly suspended sentence on Mpetha, he ruled that he was bound by the Terrorism Act to pass the minimum five year sentence. However, the judge refused to grant leave to appeal against conviction, saying that no other court would come to a different conclusion.

Defence attorneys have decided to petition the Chief Justice in a bid to gain leave to appeal against Mpetha's conviction. In the meantime, pending appeal, Mpetha has been released on a nominal bail amount of R10