WORK IN PROGRESS

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THE ALLIANCE

MOVING CLOSER TO DEMOCRACY

ALSO INSIDE

★ SACP: Can it alter course? ★ Civics: Beyond protest politics ★ Debating socialism

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2nd Floor
Auckland House
corner Smit and Biccard Streets
Braamfontein
Johannesburg

Phone: (011) 403-1912
Fax: (011) 403-2534

Editor
DEVAN PILLAY
Writer
GLENDA DANIELS
Research Assistant
MBULELO SOMPETHA

General Manager and Advertising
PAUL MASEKO
Office Manager
KHOSE MVABAZA
Administrative Assistant
SIBONGILE THOMBENI
Distribution Co-ordinator
LAWRENCE NTSAMAI

PHOTOGRAPHS:
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EDITORIAL

The 'Inkathagate' scandal has come at a time when the African National Congress, and its ally the Congress of South African Trade Unions, has shown its capacity to renew itself, and surge forward as the bearer of democratic principles and social justice second to none in this country.

While the apartheid government and its proxies, in particular Inkatha, wallowed in the dirt they created, they tried to project themselves as the true custodians of democracy.

Coming from a government which cruelly stripped black people of basic rights; which tortured, maimed and killed opponents of tyrannical rule; which forcibly removed families, often in icy winter conditions, from their homes; which indoctrinated its (white) youth to believe in race superiority – such hypocrisy galled and angered the democratic movement.

But there was a time when, because it was so skilful in perpetrating acts of horrendous violence against innocent commuters and township residents, and then *blaming the ANC*, this destroyer of democracy almost succeeded in convincing large sections of the population that *it*, and not the ANC-led alliance, represented democratic values and civilised principles.

The government, of course, was all the more succesful because it monopolised the country's television and radio stations, and often enjoyed the sympathetic pen of the commercial press.

But now, thanks to the courageous efforts of the *Weekly Mail* and *New Nation*, their cover is blown. Their dirty deeds, from secret funding to train massacres, have been exposed.

This government, and its allies, have never stood for democracy. They were fundamentally anti-democratic. Despite protestations to the contrary, they remain anti-democratic. And it is only with the wildest stretch of the imagination that they can be conceived of ever becoming democratic.

The ANC and Cosatu, as their recent congresses confirmed, represent this country's hopes for democracy. This is not denying their faults and weaknesses (which this magazine is not known to be shy of criticising).

But compared to the rotting carcus this government and its allies represent, the ANC-led alliance is a bright and healthy animal capable of further strengthening and renewing itself.

Renewal is on the agenda. To move into the future, to be part of the challenge to build a new democracy – a democracy which combines liberal freedoms with social justice – is within our reach.

But we have to grasp the nettle. We have to face squarely the inadequacies of past thinking and attachments, and be prepared to boldy embrace new ideas and ways of doing things.

This challenge faces, more than any other, the South African Communist Party. In July it celebrated its seventieth birthday - seventy years of much of the best, and some of the worst, in liberation politics. The party now has the opportunity, as it approaches its 8th congress, to completely discard the worst, and build on the best.

The struggle for democracy depends on it. •

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Cosatu and the ANC, after their highly successful July congresses, and the Inkathagate scandal, have accelerated the struggle for democracy — both within their organisations, and in the country as a whole

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70th anniversary of the SACP

While the South African Communist Party has, for seventy years, played a central role in furthering the democratic struggle, it now faces crucial choices. Should it assert a more independent profile to that of the ANC, or should it dissolve and form a socialist 'platform' within the ANC?

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Exclusive interview

Boris Kagarlitsky, leader of the newly-formed Socialist Party in the Soviet Union, speaks to *WIP* about leftwing alternatives to Gorbachev and the Communist Party

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Democratise the chieftainship

Dear editor

There is an urgent need to reach out to the chiefs. The ANC, however, needs to make a sober analysis of the manner in which we approach them, their position in the communities and the possibilities of chiefs accepting our most noble ideals.

The ANC is seen in our communities as 'founders' of democracy. We should therefore do everything in our power to make democracy palatable, and its practice comfortable.

Chiefs occupy a special place in our communities, and this has been so long before apartheid colonialism invaded our people. It is imperative that we restore this order with the necessary respect that it deserves.

The argument that chiefs should be sidelined in the liberation movement is mistaken. Chiefs in rural areas enjoy great support from their people, not only because they are conservative, but also because they are moralists who fear innovation as a threat to old 'time-tested' theories.

Most people in rural communities are illiterate, under- or unemployed and poverty-stricken. Their survival lies in keeping close touch with traditional morals, and in good terms with the 'dead world' of the ancestors.

Chiefs also serve as 'social encyclopedias of traditional wisdom', and as such function as an 'alarm system' in the event of a 'foreign invasion' of their values.. Besides being administrators in rural communities, chiefs also serve as social shock-absorbers when social disaster befalls the community.

Apartheid has forced chiefs to maintain good relations with Pretoria in order to retain their positions. Those who refused were deposed. This gradually alienated chiefs from their own people.

Some liberation movements in other countries fell into the trap of regarding chiefs as 'enemy agents'. This brought political humiliation for those movements, which the ANC cannot afford. We must make sure that our approach to the chiefs does not harden their attitude against us, otherwise democracy, peace and prosperity for our people will be 'eaten up by crocodiles' before it even reaches them. Chiefs must be re-oriented, so that they can take their rightful place.

Most rural structures of the movement are led by educated, school-going or unionised youth. Chiefs tend to suspect these youths, and fear that they want to destroy respect and upset time-tested values.

The ANC's consultative conference resolved that the NEC must give special attention to rural areas.

It would make a big difference if comrade Jacob Zuma or any elderly person were, for example, assigned to speak to Chief Mkhwanazi of the Dlangezwa community, rather than any youth from Nseleni or Ngwelezane.

Age is very important to chiefs. It is viewed as ill-discipline, and an offence that cannot be forgiven, if a youth were to stand up and tell the 'old guards' what their mistakes were.

The larger part of the rural people and their chiefs are illiterate, and unexposed to progressive media.

Most ANC publications are unfortunately written in English, which makes it difficult for our ideas to reach them. If no alternative, simple and traditional-oriented media is provided, the reliance on the SABC will continue to cause damage to our organisational activities.

It is important that we look at ways of renovating the whole machinery in the rural areas. One way is to co-opt chiefs into our structures, and try and involve them in our branch debates. This will help in reorienting them.

The ANC could also review its old policy of providing a special house in the movement for chiefs, so that they can feel important and fulfilled. Of course, the powers and functions of this house will have to be defined.

The argument that rural civics should not see themselves as alternatives and therefore above chiefs holds much water. Any attempt to do this will further divide the community *(see page 16 for an opposing view)*.

The organising department of the ANC will have to be familiar with the language of the chiefs. If an organiser uses English, he will be seen to be 'smuggling in' a culture of unknown people.

An organiser also has to understand the particular language (proverbs, local references etc) of a community. In addition, to talk about Bills and other 'intangible' things to chiefs should be avoided.

We have to win chiefs to our side, and democratise their office.

As the ANC, we cannot afford to further widen the rift that already exists within our communities, because of apartheid. - *ABC NGUBANE, secretary, ANC-Inkomazi, Eastern Transvaal*

LETTERS

Write to: The Editor
Work In Progress
PO Box 32716
Braamfontein 2017

Misleading statistics

Dear editor

Cde Bernie Fanaroff (*WIP* 74) gives us a graph of capital investment in machinery and equipment, and one of all manufacturing investment. Each graph has a numbered axis, but it is not clear if these represent megadollars or micropeks. A bar graph says our GDP grew by 5,2% in 1988. A table in the text says it grew by 3,8%.

This is sheer sloppiness which is confusing, and leads to distrust of the writer's arguments. - *MF BLATCHFORD, Cape Town.*

• *As far as the graphs are concerned, we accidentally left out that the vertical axes refer to billions of rand at 1985 prices. See also page 40 in this edition. - editor.*

Apology

• In *WIP* 75, the Shell advertisement was carried in 'ANC colours'. This was done by the printers, without the authority of the editor, manager or any of the staff of *WIP*. The printer has since apologised to Shell for this mistake.

• **We also wish to correct a mistake made in our report on Wosa in the last edition**. Carl Brecher is quoted as saying: 'We believe in a socialist democracy and there is only one version of this in Wosa'. It should have read: '... there is **no one** version...'.

SPECIAL REPORT

Orania: The Israel of Africa?

Maria Cuffaro, an Italian journalist, visited South Africa to attend the ANC's consultative conference. She also visited South Africa's first all-white town, Orania, and found a surprising link with Israel...

'They are animals'. The pink face of the young afrikaner goes red. Stubbornly he repeats: 'Blacks are animals. You don't know anything in Europe. I have fought for them in South West Africa (that is what he calls Namibia). Just see how they treated us...' Now, even his hands are red with rage.

Johan Moolman, a proud stomach and a blond moustache, engineer, first resident of Orania, puts an arm over the young man's shoulder and stops another flow of words.

Now it is his turn. He starts with religion: 'I want my children to have the picture of God, myself and my wife in mind, not that of this New South Africa. In March I left Cape Town, my job and came here. Here we have peace.' But even Johann Moolman's face grows red with rage when he starts talking about black people.

'Apartheid is the only acceptable way of life. They don't have any culture. You give them money and they'll drink it. They can't govern themselves.'

Orania - 180 houses in the middle of the yellow savanna, 40 kilometres from Hopetown (near the south-western OFS border). In March 1991 Professor Carel Boshoff - theologist, former member of the Broederbond, chairman in 1972 of the Bureau of Racial Affairs, and minister in the Dutch Reformed Church - formed a trust to buy Orania and it's 483 hectares of land. Now 25 families live in those light blue and pink houses, that once were the lodgings for the technicians who built the dam on the Orange River, 10 km away.

'They were white', Boshoff points out, surprised at being asked. Every week the 'people' from Orania meet in what they call the 'city hall' - a gloomy redbrick building overlooking the 180 houses and the silent Orange River. There they decide on future actions, on how to cultivate the land. A well-organised community based on moralism, the bible and hatred.

Professor Boshoff, a tall man in his late sixties, dresses with extreme care, and talks with a smile about his project: a state only for whites. Since he is an intellectual he also found an argument for his ideas: 'Every nation should govern itself. We afrikaners didn't accept the British, we won't accept the blacks.'

Boshoff talks about self-determination and peace. But his smile disappears when he has to confront the political implications of his words. 'They (De Klerk's Nationalist Party) will have to come to terms with us. We demand land in exchange for peace.'

But how will 25 stubborn white families force the present or future government to grant them independence? Boshoff smiles elusively: 'They will have to...'

The smiling professor doesn't want to explain further: 'We have our secrets.' His voice now has a metallic ring.

Terrorism

Moolman is less tight with information: 'We have 200 armed men. If they won't grant us independence we will resort to terroristic attacks. The first target will be the headquarters of the South African Broadcasting Cooperation. Don't forget we may be just 25 families here, but we sold all 180 houses, and every one of us has connections, friends.' Moolman's watery-blue eyes have the gleam of folly.

'Soon we will have industries here', explains Boshoff. 'An engineer is coming from Port Elizabeth. He was working for the Spanish army, assembling and producing parts of armaments. We can do it here now.' Boshoff refuses to reveal the name of the engineer or the firm that produces arms for the Spanish government. 'It's a secret,' he repeats sardonically.

The only shop in Orania is romantically called Oasis. Moolman sells canned food, soap, tea, coffee and a book on Israel, the Palestinian question and Orania titled "N Volkstaat vir Boere afrikaners' by C J Jooste.

The afrikaners are the Israelis of Africa? Boshoff and Moolman refuse to answer. But Boshoff admits having visited Israel (not the occupied territories) and having lived in a kibbuz.'We don't want to copy anything', he points out. 'We afrikaner (Boshoff usually starts his sentences with 'we afrikaner') are individualistic, we believe in private property.'

The professor quickly changes the subject of the conversation to the Orania school and education programme. In July the school has been inaugurated: 40 children from six to eighteen attend classes in front of modern computers. They come from Hopetown, Luckoff and Orania.

Orania, 25 families, a professor once influential in white South African politics, links to Israel, 200 armed men, lots of money (nobody in Orania works, but they were able to buy the land), grand projects for the future (in Boshoff's plans Orania is just the starting point for Orandia, the white state that will reach out till the Atlantic Ocean).

'Don't smile lady.' Moolman's voice is harsh and menacing, probably copied from a cheap movie, but he believes in it. 'We are serious. Just wait.'

Dirty links

The book on Israel reminds one of the links between South Africa and Tel Aviv - dirty links that recall those between Mossad and the Cartello de Medellin in Colombia, where forces of the Israeli secret service trained cocaine smugglers.

Boshoff and his supporters don't seem worried about a future ANC government, or by De Klerk's present reforms. Last month the *Weekly Mail* proved the links between Inkatha and the government. After having ruled through direct repression, De Klerk now resorts to covert destabilisation in order to maintain power. Orania, Boshoff and the 200 terrorists could be just another way of destabilising, another card to play in the future.

'We are not alone', Professor Boshoff repeats,

and adds with a fading smile: 'Two other towns want to join Orania and our plan, Olifantshoek and Philipstown. At the moment we are working at a constitution for our state.' Proudly he points at the Orandia flag: a bad copy of the old Hugenot flag.

Symbols, romanticism are also part of Orania. Every Saturday the redbrick city hall opens it's doors to the young (of course white) people of the Transvaal. They dance to the sound of 'real' afrikaner music. They have a chance to meet, they might also make love, feel proud and right.

'Here people care for each other, for nature. There is no stress.' The same words that the kibuzzim (inhabitants of the kibbuz) use when describing their life in Israel, forgetting that a few kilometers away their soldiers shoot Palestinian children that throw stones and wave the green, red, white and black flag.

The territory of Orania is surrounded by fences and barbed wire (but this seems normal in De Klerk's South Africa). Opposite the fence live three black families. Marta is waiting for her husband to come back from the white farm where he works, for R180 a month. She couldn't find a job, and her five children don't go to school anymore. Boshoff deported the schoolmaster and the black families that lived on Orania's land 300 kilometers up north:

'It was perfectly legal. This is private property, it is our land.' The boer professor cuts short the interview.

Soldiers for peace

A watchdog organisation was launched in Johannesburg recently to expose the government's misuse of state resources for secret political activities.

Soldiers For Peace, which is politically non-aligned, is headed by Nico Basson, a former major in the SADF, who recently revealed the government's clandestine operations in different southern African states. He revealed that operations during the 1989 Namibian elections were a dress rehearsal of what is currently happening in South Africa.

'It is specifically the use of ethnic violence to build the Inkatha Freedom Party, and to discredit the ANC/PAC groupings, that is threatening to establish permanent political imbalance in southern Africa', Basson said.

As a military communications strategist, he came to realise that the use of military power and strategies failed to establish true peace in this region. A growing number of soldiers share his opinion, and from this corps a focus group has evolved.

For the immediate future, Soldiers For Peace will focus on four main areas:

- The misuse of state resources by the government to run covert operations with the aim of establishing a political agenda in southern Africa, under the auspices of the Protection of Information Act.
- Hidden agendas against the majority of people.
- The real role of the SADF, SAP, National Intelligence, Foreign Affairs and other state departments as destabilisers on the continent.
- Building a peace process for all southern Africans.

The group intends to address these issues with the following objectives in mind:

- to expose irregularities and hidden agendas in the different state departments;
- to get individuals who occupy key positions in the process of disinformation, destabilisation and negative covert activities, to distance themselves in public from these activities;
- to act as a reconciliator between the two power bases in the country, and specifically work for the unification of MK and the SADF.

According to Basson, 'It is wrong to kill people and use violence for political ends. It is wrong to use taxpayers money for the National Party's political agenda. We need these resources for education and housing.'

He added that the system can only change if people with valuable information voice their opinion from within the system to the public.

'We will support you if you speak out. Soldiers For Peace is a safe haven for weary and disillusioned people like you. We will give you proper legal assistance, create a proper public image for your own safety, assist you with professional counselling and get international governments to support your case', he said. - *African Communications Projects*

Year of 'class' struggle

The closure by government of unutilised white schools is being challenged by the liberation movement. The National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) intends to occupy 50 of these schools on the Witwatersrand, to highlight the continuing shortage of classroom space in black schools. As momentous as the NECC's intended campaign will be, it follows on widespread occupations of township schools earlier this year.

Early in June, the Department of Education and Training (DET) reported that it had lost control of a number of schools in the Pretoria townships of Attridgeville, Soshanguve and Mamelodi, where 31 principals had been expelled by members of the Congress of South African Students (Cosas) in early February.

A similar form of protest was taken by students in Kagiso, Krugersdorp, where it was reported that four secondary schools were taken over by students in January. These were then administered by their student representative councils.

In parliament recently, the Minister of Education and Training, Stoffel van der Merwe, said that occupations had affected over 100 headmasters at 95 schools in the Transvaal and other parts of the country. According to one observer, 'It is important to note that students in these cases were not pursuing the worn strategy of boycott protests. They were experimenting in a more creative form of protest.'

A headline of the *Sunday Star*, 'Pupil-run schools soldier on', captures the spirit of that experiment. The article refers to a classroom in which a 17 year-old girl provided history lessons. Another account refers to a student, appointed by his colleagues, as principal of a school.

Overall, the press has regarded student occupations negatively. For instance, a headline in the *Sowetan* recently read: 'Chaos at more schools.' But it seems that the students were supported by their teachers, whose demands they also articulated. Students openly called for the reinstatement of teachers dismissed for

going on strike last year. Students have also been able to win the support of some principals, with 18 principals in Alexandra, Johannesburg, joining a hunger strike sit-in at DET offices recently.

Unreasonable as some student demands (such as the abolition of the DET) might seem, students have concentrated their energies, not on engaging the armed might of the government (as in 1984 to 1986), but on expressing their grievances to the authorities through the more influential medium of their principals. Thus, students have insisted on principals submitting memoranda to the DET before they were allowed to return to their schools.

Despite government assurances of vastly increased expenditure on black education, the experience of shortages of teachers and facilities suggests no change in the status quo. Therefore, students feel that it is legitimate that they should revolt against an authority which shows little regard for their grievances. However, these township school occupations could fail to make an impact in addressing demands for genuine reform in education, if no support comes from political organisations.

Azapo and the PAC have expressed opposition to the occupations. They argue that students should lay off politics and accept an inferior system of education as better than no education at all. These organisations consider the occupations simply as a lack of discipline on the part of students. Such lack of support limits the potential of these occupations to spread and show their capacity to wield real influence.

The leadership of the ANC and SACP, some argue, also do a disservice to this movement by not publicly stating their support. However, the NECC's planned campaign and the ANC's recent endorsement of mass action, might produce a more positive desire to lead black student occupations of their own schools.

The occupations are similar to the occupation of factories and institutions of learning in Paris, during May 1968. This occurred in response to conditions similar to those in the townships - overcrowded lecture theatres, lack of facilities and no formal student representation. What started in Paris as an occupation of one university, became a social movement of students and workers for reform.

The Parisian uprising, although defeated by De Gaulle's government, made important gains. Workers received long-standing wage increases, while students won the right of free speech on campus, and the removal of harsh controls over their movement. High school students were given the right to elect representatives to a school council. Subsequently, conditions in French education were thoroughly reformed. - *Joan Kettle*

Marxists get together

The beginning of July saw the country's first-ever weekend of open discussion and debate between marxists from varied traditions. The Socialist Student Action Committee, an affiliate of the newly-formed International Socialists of South Africa (Issa) hosted the event, which attracted an average of 50-60 people to each of its ten meetings.

The weekend proved a success, with political activists travelling from the townships of the Reef as well as from as far afield as Turfloop, with most prepared to enter into debate. While there was no official representation from the SACP, the audience included many of its supporters. This was most apparent in a session on the political nature and potential direction of the SACP.

Heated debate ensued as to whether the party still considered revolution and a workers' state (the 'dictatorship of the proletariat') as its ultimate goal, and if it didn't, what implications this held out for the South African revolution.

This debate was kicked off in June by Phambili Books, a progressive bookshop in Johannesburg, which hosted a forum on the relevance of Marx, Engels and Lenin to South Africa. Speakers from the SACP, Issa, the Workers Organisation for Socialist Action (Wosa) and two academics participated. However, the number of speakers made it difficult for real debate to take off.

According to an Issa member, 'For us debate forms an essential part of our tradition, a tradition that was begun by the Bolsheviks (in Russia) and slaughtered by Stalin...It is only through theoretical debate and the practical activity which flows from our theory, that the present groping to build a socialist alternative' will bear fruit.

Issa is linked to the International Socialist tendency, of which the British Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) is the most prominent component. Issa members broke away from Wosa last June (see *WIP* 75) and, although still tiny, it plans to play an active role in promoting its vision of socialism. Besides its weekend on marxism, Issa has already produced its own journal, *The Socialist*, which it hopes will 'be on the streets regularly'. - *Rehad Desai*

Unions back sanctions

Delegates at an international trade union conference, which took place in Gabarone from 9-11 July, condemned as 'unilateral' and 'premature' the US administration's decision to lift sanctions against apartheid. A representative of the American union federation, the AFL-CIO, told the gathering: 'We have only 30 days to act to have Bush's decision reversed'.

The conference was organised by the Brussels-based International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), and attended by top unionists from 39 African countries, including Cosatu and Nactu.

The conference underlined an increasing determination by African unions to be at the forefront of struggles for democracy, which are gathering momentum throughout the continent.

• Meanwhile, at the United Nations' New York headquarters, workers are still demanding basic trade union rights. ICFTU general secretary John Venderveken wrote to UN secretary general Perez de Cuellar early in July, and asked him why union rights appeared to be off the menu for catering staff. More than 60 workers at the UN's restaurant facilities have been 'permanently replaced' after going on strike to get their employers, Restaurant Associates, to recognise their union.

The company has hired a notorious union-busting firm to help conduct its campaign. It also wrote letters to staff urging them to reject their union. - *ICFTU* •

Moving closer to democracy

The prospects for democracy in South Africa have never been better. Three events in July have opened the way for an assertive thrust forward towards a fundamental restructuring of South African society: the 'Inkathagate' scandal, and the congresses of the ANC and Cosatu.

The scandal about government secret funding and covert involvement in fomenting 'black-on-black' violence, while coming as no surprise to the majority of black people, has outraged South Africa's liberal community (and increasingly international opinion). This is its real significance, for it brings closer the ANC's demand for an interim government and constituent assembly.

Oliver Tambo at the Cosatu congress: the alliance is poised to regain the tactical initiative

DEVAN PILLAY argues that the 'Inkathagate' scandal has, by exposing the anti-democratic intentions of the government, brought the goal of democratic transformation, underlined so graphically at the July congresses of the ANC and Cosatu, all that much closer

Government ploys

For years the ANC and its allies, Cosatu and the UDF, have accused the government of using organisations like Inkatha and its 'trade union' ally, Uwusa, to instigate violence against the ANC and its supporters. When the violence was exported from Natal to the Reef last year, then ANC vice-president Nelson Mandela repeatedly blamed 'third force' elements within the state as being instigators of the violence.

The strategy, claimed the ANC, was to blame the ANC for the violence, or at the very least show black people to be fighting each other, so that a 'neutral' police and army could intervene and bring peace. This would then boost the National Party's image as a moderate peacemaker, and South Africa's only real hope for future democracy.

Many bought this ploy, including many business people and others within the liberal community. De Klerk's National Party was set to forge ahead with a 'moderate' christian democratic alliance, which would draw in majority support from the white, coloured and indian communities, as well as large sections of the african population.

Confidence was growing in ruling class circles that such an alliance might very well win South Africa's first non-racial elections.

But now, unless De Klerk pulls something dramatic out of his hat soon, that strategy looks set to fail. The ANC no longer talks of a 'third force' being aided by elements within the security establishment. Huge question marks now hang over the entire government, and the liberal press is expressing its outrage at being duped.

Liberal outrage

Consider these comments from the 'liberal' establishment:

Finance Week editor Allan Greenblo reported recently that, at a Breakfast Club meeting organised by the magazine on the day the scandal broke, Nelson Mandela said that De Klerk's hands were 'dripping with blood', because it aided and abetted 'certain people' who were attempting to grab a share in the power

stakes on a 'pile of innocent black corpses'. Commented Greenblo:

'To many in the audience of business people, who treated his claims with either scepticism or disbelief, Mandela's performance was regarded as cliched and his charges exaggerated. Little did anybody realise how dramatically these perceptions would change within 24 hours' (*FW* 25-31/7/91).

The normally conservative, and widely read, *Sunday Times*, in an editorial headlined 'Inkatha: puppet of apartheid', said on 21 July:

'Nobody, not even the members of Inkatha themselves, will doubt that they have been made unwitting tools of the Nationalists in their white man's fight against the ANC, and that Chief Buthelezi was the conduit...The question that nags, above all, is whether government support and manipulation extended beyond the holding of rallies, to the violence that followed the rally in March 1990, and to the general violence in which Inkatha supporters have been implicated. There have been just too many instances, like the Swanieville massacre, in which the relationship between the police and Inkatha has been questionable.'

Interim government

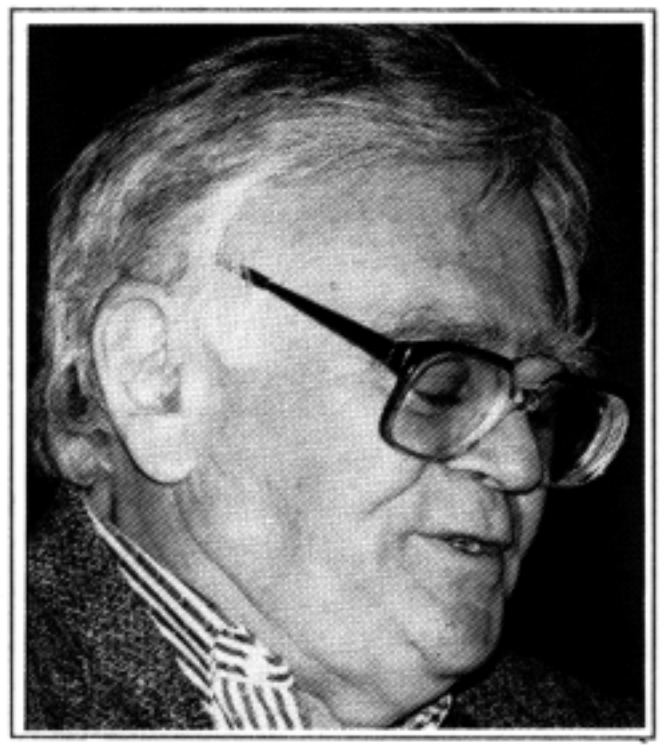
The ANC's call for an interim government, and its pleas to the international community to maintain sanctions until the transition to democracy has reached a point of irreversability, has now been considerably strengthened.

The influential *Business Day* commented on 26 July: 'The disclosures...have made life difficult for De Klerk's growing band of friends....who took the...risks to go out on a limb to end American and EC sanctions against South Africa.' It went on to say:

'...the National Party is losing the moral legitimacy and credibility to continue ruling South Africa on its own until a new constitution has been adopted. There are many reasons why a new form of power sharing or interim government is a desirable element of a successful transition.'

At their recent congresses, the ANC and Cosatu reaffirmed their commitment to a transitional government which will, at minimum, ensure a neutral security force and state media while the process towards a new constitution, and elections to South Africa's first non-racial parliament, is underway.

The two giant organisations also stressed the need for a democratically-elected constituent assembly, which will decide the composition of the table that negotiates a new constitution. This demand, which has been rejected by all outside the liberation movement, now has a greater chance of being accepted by a wider range of forces. The argument that Inkatha's claim to massive support (and hence a substantial say in the negotiations process) has to be put to a test, will now be given added force.



The SACP's Joe Slovo: unions must retain independence

This essentially democratic demand, which is premised on a conception of democracy that gives maximum power to ordinary people, underlines the growing belief that it is the ANC-led alliance that represents the only hope for true democracy in this country.

Hope for democracy

The ANC impressed a wide range of opinion with the disciplined, organised and open manner in which the over 2000 delegates to its July conference discussed crucial issues of our times. As newly-elected NEC member Patrick Lekota told *WIP*, contrary to press speculation that the ANC was about to split into 'hawks' and 'doves', the conference concentrated on, amongst other things, 'hammering out a new constitution' as an essential step towards 'shaping a new organisation after its unbanning'. This extremely difficult task, he said, was achieved 'without even the threat of a break-up of the conference'. In particular, the manner in which the organisation's new leadership was elected was extremely encouraging.

The infusion of new blood into the ANC's top leadership promises to ensure greater rapport between the NEC and the base, and a more careful commitment to stick to mandates. The election of unionist Cyril Ramaphosa as secretary-general is particularly significant.

The union movement, and Cosatu in particular, has been at the forefront of developing modes of operating that ensure the highest degree of democracy and accountability. Cosatu's recent congress confirmed that it has not swayed at all from this path. Ramaphosa's views on democracy, articulated in a recent interview with the *Financial Mail* (19/7/91), reflects this union experience:

'The type of democracy we want...goes way beyond that we have seen in practice in capitalist countries. It is the type of democracy in which civil society organisations are fully empowered to get to grips with issues of the day, and able to feed all their debating into the highest structures of government.'

Unity

The prospects of greater unity within the liberation movement were also boosted by the scandal. This was clearly demonstrated at the Cosatu congress, which was addressed by ANC national chairperson Oliver Tambo, SACP general-secretary Joe Slovo as well as PAC president Clarence Makwetu and Nactu general-secretary Cunningham Ngcukana.

Re-elected Cosatu general secretary Jay Naidoo called for a summit meeting of all liberation organisations, to work out a programme of action aimed at the resignation of the government. This will act as a step towards forming a patriotic front of all anti-apartheid organisations.

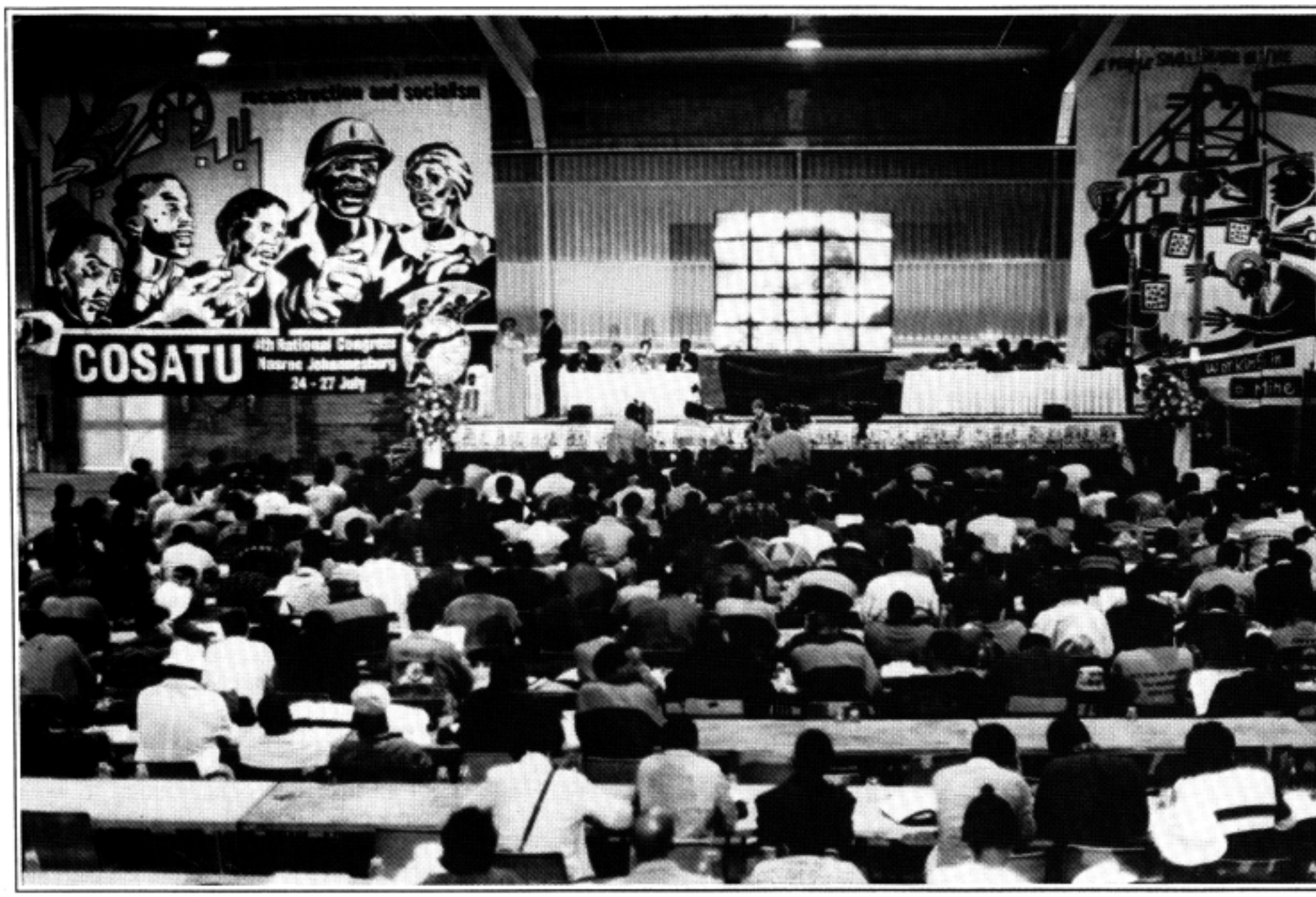
Ngcukana was constantly cheered during his address, when he called for 'one federation in one country and the unity of the working class'. He stressed that the 'division of the working class is a luxury we cannot afford'.

Significantly, Ngcukana said that the central issue was not unionists occupying office in political organisations. Unity could be achieved, he believed, as long as the independence of the union movement was safeguarded.

Makwetu told the congress that 'the unity of the oppressed is not an optional luxury, but a historical necessity'. Politics, he said, was not a matter of colour, but of national and class interests. Workers were 'the cornerstone of the struggle', and they should 'form credible and principled alliances with all revolutionary classes which have a contradiction with the enemy'.

Slovo's address repeated the theme of union independence, and the struggle for socialism. In striving towards the long-term goal of socialism, he said, unions had to engage in the political struggle, otherwise:

'the field will be left free for a take-over by other classes and strata amongst the oppressed, whose conception of liberation goes no further than a desire to change the colour of the person who is ex-



Top: Delegates at the Cosatu congress – not swaying from the path of democracy and accountability
Above: PAC president Clarence Makwetu: 'the unity of the oppressed is not an optional luxury'

ploiting you.'

Regaining the tactical initiative

The prospects of forming a patriotic front around the demand for a constituent assembly, and a broader coalition of forces around the demand for an interim government, are greater than ever. But much depends on how the liberation movement exploits the space created by the scandal, and how the government acts.

If it is found that the entire cabinet, including De Klerk, has been directly involved in secret funding and violence, then the negotiations process will be in danger of collapsing. This could either see the rise of a hardline leadership of the National Party, or a takeover by untainted 'reformers'. If the former, a patriotic front is likely to also adopt a hardline position, with the prospect of a return to repression and armed struggle.

However, there is too much at stake for this to happen. The prospects of either a 'clean' De Klerk or a more reformist successor giving in to the demands for an interim government and (eventually) a constituent assembly are high.

The liberation movement has regained the tactical intitiative. It needs to employ all its resources to ensure that it does not lose it again. •

The women's quota debate: Building non-sexism

By MARY TUROK

Unexpectedly, women's emancipation, and the mechanisms for implementing it, was the subject of a major debate on the second day of the ANC's July conference.

It was appropriate that Oliver Tambo, long a champion of women's emancipation within the ANC, should have fired the opening salvo when he saluted the Women's League for 'championing the largely unresolved issue of women's emancipation'. Appropriate too that this conference, the first in South Africa for thirty-two years, should have again been held in Durban where, in 1959, women were hailed as heroines of the struggle.

Affirmative action

The 1991 debate was sparked off by a proposal by the constitutional commission to drop the 30% quota for women on the national executive committee (NEC). The quota had been recommended by the ANC Women's League conference in April, and was accepted by the NEC in preference to a proposal to include Women's League chairpersons and secretaries from each region on the NEC.

Concern has long been felt within the ANC, particularly by women, at the gap between pronouncements on women's emancipation and practices. The NEC statement on 2 May 1990 recognised the prevalence of 'patriarchal attitudes', especially at decision-making levels, and made a commitment to addressing the inequalities women faced in the organisation. It said:

'Patterns of discrimination and inequality are not self-correcting. Rather, they tend to replicate themselves. To break this cycle we need to take affirmative action within the ANC... Women's right to democratic participation in all decision-making must be there in principle and in practice."

In defence of the 30% quota, women's leaders at the Durban conference were heeding the call of the May statement to 'take a lead in creating a non-sexist South Africa..., (and) move the ANC to adopt policies that facilitate the participation of women in the struggle that still lies before us'.

Not men versus women

Contrary to the impression in the media, this debate was not an occasion where women were pitted against men. While the majority of men who participated in the debate were opposed to the quota, several men supported it. Like the majority of women, they were concerned that the ANC should not slide back from its support for women's equality, and saw this as one logical next step in that direction.

One after another women leaders, young and old, stood up to demand that the organisation honour its commitment to women. The argument that 'merit' should be the sole criterion for election was challenged.

Women were not responsible for their own subordination – gender oppression in South Africa was institutionalised. Women's mobility had been controlled and their unpaid labour had underpinned the migrant labour system. There were close parallels with the absence of blacks in the universities, civil service and business. To argue that women should only advance on grounds of merit was similar to saying that blacks must raise themselves up. It amounted to saying that women were inferior.

Merely declaring that the ANC stood for a non-sexist South Africa has not liberated women, nor did it mean that gender could now be forgotten, as some claimed. Those who wished to continue to rule women sheltered behind this argument, said one speaker. In reply to the argument that women must start with a 10% quota at grassroots level, one speaker pointed out that women would not accept this as they had always been there.

Affirmative action was our remedy for discrimination, and would be a major weapon for survival in post-apartheid South Africa, said a male delegate. But, he said, we must be consistent and apply it to women too. Affirmative action did not disregard merit, but it gave an opportunity to those whose merit had not been recognised.

The arguments against

Opponents of the quota came from a wide range of opinion. Some did not even accept that women had a special case. 'All discrimination should be ended. Why choose women?', one asked. The fact that only around 10% of 2,000 delegates at the conference were women seemed to have escaped him.

Some saw the 30% quota as an infringement on their right to elect people of their choice, compelling them to vote for women. Indeed, women constituted not much more than 30% of all nominations, and had the quota been accepted, a substantial majority of those nominated would have been elected to the NEC.

Others, while accepting that women were inadequately represented in decision-making, felt it was up to the women to make themselves heard and prove that they deserved to be leaders. Several delegates argued that women should be advanced gradually. But perhaps the argument which won the most support was that the 30% quota might become a precedent for the representation of other groups – in other words, for the entrenchment of 'group rights'.

It was readily conceded by supporters of the quota that inadequate groundwork had been done to explain the proposal to the membership. Indeed, it has to be said that the debate that has been going on within the ANC for several years on this issue, has taken place in exile, and then only within a limited circle.

The ANC 'will never be the same'

As the debate proceeded, it was clear that the majority of the delegates did not support the 30% quota, and finally it was agreed to drop the proposal in favour of a compromise resolution on affirmative action. Some women's leaders conceded that the quota was not necessarily the best mechanism. But all seemed to agree that the debate had been a valuable start, and that a lot of work needed to be done. Perhaps the election of nine women to the NEC reflected this.

As Nelson Mandela said after the conference: 'I can say with all confidence after that debate, and after the women had demonstrated their intensity of feeling on this issue, the ANC will never be the same.'

• *Mary Turok is a longstanding member of the ANC .* •

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103	SML ANC SW/TP/b	40.00		
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106	BIG LOGO SW/TP/w	40.00		
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WIP

Amidst a climate of increasing repression in the Ciskei, organisations in the Border region launched a partially successful boycott recently, in order to pressurise business to intervene and help resolve the region's deepening political crisis. ***CLAIRE KEETON*** *reports*

Border boycotts business – and wins a peace conference

Is the consumer boycott still an appropriate weapon in the changing political climate in South Africa? This is the question being asked in the wake of the month-long consumer boycott, which ended in the Border at the beginning of July.

While none of the boycott demands were actually met, the boycott is being billed as a success by the ANC/SACP/Cosatu alliance and the Border Civic Congress (Bocco). They say the action has forced business to take the political crisis in the region seriously. The ANC's regional information officer, Marion Sparg, feels that the boycott's 'success' illustrated how mass action could strengthen negotiations.

But the boycott was not supported by everyone: there have been reports of intimidation, and lack of proper consultation, both in the manner in which the boycott was called, and in the way it was 'suspended'.

Gqozo increasingly irrational

Ciskei's military ruler, Brigadier Oupa Gqozo, is showing signs of increasingly irrational political intolerance: a news clamp on Radio Ciskei has banned any mention of political organisations like the ANC, and there have been incidents of harassment of opposition figures and even people expressing a critical opinion on taxis. There have been growing fears that the Border region is being prepared for an outbreak of violence, becoming the latest of South Africa's killing fields.

It was to address this crisis that the ANC alliance launched the boycott. According to Sparg, 'The people in the Ciskei and the Border cannot be expected to fold their arms and hope for the resolution of the conflict'.

The initiative for a consumer boycott came from a regional ANC conference on 11 May, attended by most of the 116 ANC branches in Border, including Ciskei. Delegates to the conference endorsed the idea of a consumer boycott in response to the increasing repression, formal and informal, against the ANC in the region.

ANC members had been shot at, assaulted, detained and harassed by members of the Ciskei and South African security forces over the last few months. The ANC was convinced that the South African government and its 'puppet regime' in the Ciskei was fostering violence in the region. The ANC had evidence of collusion between South African and Ciskeian security forces, and was worried about the build-up of these forces in the region.

Boycott demands

After consultation, the SACP, Cosatu and Bocco decided to support the boycott, and a list of eight demands was compiled. Although they included national political demands, the focus was firmly on political issues surrounding the Ciskei.

According to Border ANC assistant secretary, Dr Crispian Olver, 'These are specific crisis demands. Our long-term demand is a democratic transition to a democratic government which we are not addressing in this list.'

The national political demands were for the government to end violence (or that Minister of Law and Order Adriaan Vlok be fired); for the return of exiles and the release of political prisoners; and for the resignation of black local authorities.

The demands focusing on the region were for the lifting of a curfew imposed in the Sada area of northern Ciskei; the removal of 'all the CCBs, Koevoet and Askari elements'; Gqozo's resignation and the reincorporation of the Ciskei into South Africa after due consultation; an end to repression by the South African police in various small towns; and the reinstatement of civil servants dismissed for striking.

The last demand flowed from the ruinous conflict between Gqozo and his civil servants, who went on strike for pay parity. Thousands of members of the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (Nehawu) were dismissed by the Ciskei government as a result (see *WIP* 75).

The Ciskei, under Gqozo's increasingly autocratic rule and pressure from South Africa to cut its salary bill, showed no inclination to take back the strikers. For Nehawu, the boycott represented one of the few forms of pressure for the reinstatement of the workers.

Inadequate consultation

Towards the end of May, the ANC announced the boycott would begin on 3 June. But by that stage, a local decision in King William's Town had led to the boycott there being launched a few days early.

Throughout the weeks that followed, King William's Town seemed slightly out of step with the rest of the region. Support here was weaker than elsewhere, and there were more reports of intimidation from the town than anywhere else (see later).

The new political climate had a major influence on the course of events. During the period of mass struggle leading up to the state of emergency, communities were united by the repressive atmosphere. Campaigns like consumer boycotts were fully supported.

But this time, support for the Border's boycott, while generally solid, was less enthusiastic. After four weeks, when the boycott was being reviewed, there was considerable grassroots pressure for organisations to suspend it.

A consumer boycott requires broad consultation and preparation. Organisations who call for a boycott need to be confident that they can lay the groundwork properly. The ANC and its allies were able to consult their members in Border about the boycott and demands, but the PAC complained that the ANC had not thoroughly consulted other organisations about the boycott.

The ANC said it had tried to consult the PAC, Azapo, Nactu and the independent unions before the boycott, and to

hold ongoing consultation during the boycott, but it is clear that communications did break down.

Intimidation

Inevitably, intimidation was another issue that arose. The ANC condemned intimidation and said they would confront members found guilty of it. ANC regional publicity secretary, Hintsa Siwisa, said: 'The ANC has been preaching political tolerance and the democratic right to decide what to do.'

Despite this, there were some incidents of intimidation. And there was some unhappiness about the way the decision to call the boycott off was taken.

Some consumers felt compelled to support the boycott. Clearly intimidation does not win support for the organisations who initiate the boycott, but it can sow seeds of division.

The mayor of East London and a National Party MP for King William's Town were quick to accuse the ANC of intimidation. Initially, with the launch of the boycott, there were daily reports of intimidation from the police, but they became less frequent after the first week. One ANC member from Gonubie, East London, even laid a charge against the police for falsely accusing him of intimidation.

A valuable lesson learnt in this boycott was the importance of a steady flow of information on the progress of the boycott for its supporters. The ANC regularly spoke to the local press and was available to respond to inquiries on the progress of the boycott.

Businesses lose sales

Despite the uneven support, however, shop managers throughout Border were unanimous that their trade dropped sharply. Wholesalers, supermarkets and clothing stores lost thousands of rands daily with the onset of the boycott.

Pick 'n Pay regional manager, Paul Doster, said their stores in East London, King William's Town and Bisho lost many customers during the boycott.

Several businesses reacted to their losses by suspending workers for the length of the boycott. These temporary retrenchments, particularly in rural towns, led to hardship. In some small towns like Sterkstroom, nearly the whole workforce in the CBD was laid off during the boycott.

In Aliwal North, the owner of a store exempt from the boycott received a bomb threat from somebody claiming to represent the AWB.

In Sterkstroom, a shopowner similarly exempt from the boycott was apparently told by the municipality to stop selling to blacks.

Cosatu meeting in King Williams Town: a local decision led to the boycott there being launched a few days early

Monitoring groups co-ordinated by the regional campaigns committee found it difficult to monitor the course of the boycott. Monitors, still suffering from the hangover of the repression under the Emergency, were hesitant to approach shoppers and discuss the boycott for fear they were acting illegally.

Boycott suspended

On 28 June the tripartite alliance announced the suspension of the boycott. When they first called the boycott, it had been made clear that the action would be reviewed after a month. There was a widely held belief that 'review' meant 'suspension', and people were eager to use the last weekend of the month for shopping.

In fact, this pressure more than anything precipitated the decision to lift the boycott. Organisations feared that if they did not lift the action, it would begin fraying badly.

It was a hard-fought decision. It took meetings on three consecutive evenings by the campaigns committee to reach it, but even then there was unhappiness about the way in which the decision was reached. There had been a plea for a delay in order to allow organisations to consult with their members. But Cosatu argued very strongly that its locals had discussed the issue and had given a mandate for suspension, due to the suspension of some workers in small towns.

Siwisa announced that the boycott had been called off because the business community had taken 'positive steps to address the serious problems raised in the boycott demands'.

At first it was unclear what these 'positive steps' were, even though it became known that businesspeople were setting up a forum to take discussions on regional political issues further. Beyond this, there was only vagueness from all sides.

It was several weeks later that the planned Border Peace Conference was announced. At the time of going to press, the conference was to have discussed the political instability in the region and security in the Ciskei.

Details are not yet clear, but the ANC is pointing very strongly to this conference as the major success of the boycott. Sources said the boycott alerted the business community to the 'destabilising role' Ciskei ruler Oupa Gqozo is playing.

If business is genuinely coming to share the view that Gqozo must go, to be replaced by another caretaker government, then it would indeed be significant. So far, though, no matter what business leaders have said in closed meetings, they have not come out clearly in public on these issues.

However, there is little time to waste. Gqozo's recent launch of the African Democratic Movement, and the signs of increasing intolerance of opposing political viewpoints, all combine to show that he is determined to chart a course of confrontation with the ANC-led alliance. – elnews •

Beyond protest politics

Political confusion about the role of civics and their relationship with ANC branches is hindering the movement away from resistance politics to developmental politics. The largest civic association in the southern Transvaal, the Attridgeville-Saulsville Residents Association (Asro), has found itself caught between accusations by the PAC and Azapo, on the one hand, that it is controlled by the ANC, while on the other hand local ANC officials are concerned that the civic is developing an alternative power base to itself.

Amongst ANC supporters, the questions raised are: Should civics assert their independence and become 'watchdogs' of the ANC? Or should all energy be focused on building strong ANC branches which would take up bread and butter community issues like housing, electricity, transport, rents, health and standards of living, so that the ANC ensures a mass support base. If this happens, then what about the objective of uniting the *whole* community, irrespective of political affiliations, into strong, democratic civic associations?

Many in the civic movement believe that ANC branches should be involved in 'purely' political issues, while the civics deal with community issues, and maintain independence from the ANC. At the same time this ought not to prevent civics from aligning themselves to the ANC.

The problem, according to some ANC members in Attridgeville, is that since the February unbannings civics have now distanced themselves, prematurely, from the ANC. This has resulted in the weakening of ANC branches, with the civics becoming an alternative power base.

This, however, is contrary to the views of PAC and Azapo activists in the area, who maintain that the problem is that Asro refuses to distance itself from the ANC.

A 'neutral force'

There are about 7 000 ANC members in Attridgeville, out of more than 250 000 residents (including children). Most civic members are ANC members, but are mainly active in the civic. The civic also has some Azapo and PAC members.

According to an ANC activist, people who were previously UDF (and generally ANC) supporters are now saying they are 'neutral forces', and their duty is to take up 'civic' issues. The result is that the ANC branch is becoming separated from its mass base. He feels that a new ANC government is not yet in power to 'afford people the luxury of being watchdogs' and to talk of 'civil society'.

According to this activist, 'certain ex-UDF executive types' said a few months ago that the ANC branch in Attridgeville should become a sub-committee of the civic! This, he says, indicates the level of confusion that exists. These 'types' are apparently now involved in the new National Interim Civic Committee (NICC), which has set itself up as the 'watchdog' of the ANC. 'There will be a stage when this will be necessary, but now the ANC is not in power and the important issue is to strengthen ANC branches', he argues.

Asro has recently begun to issue civic membership cards at the price of R3 (ANC membership cards cost R12). This has increased tensions with the ANC. According to another ANC member in the area, 'Some people are ambitious and want to secure positions for themselves. They are setting themselves up in opposition to the ANC by issuing cards. They know people like cards and three rands is better than twelve rands.'

Independence and unity

The Asro chairperson, Reeves Mabitsi, also an ANC member, feels the civic should maintain its independence, but this does not mean working against the ANC, a view also expressed recently by Zohra Ibrahim of the NICC, in the ANC mouthpiece *Mayibuye* (Vol 2, No 5).

Mabitsi concedes that the issue is a confusing one, and ANC branches will have to take up bread and butter issues when the need to discuss national issues such as the release of political prisoners, the constituent assembly and interim government no longer exist.

But he points to recent instances when both structures worked jointly and successfully on major campaigns. On the last big march, in June, the community went first to the police station to demand the release of political prisoners and then to the town councillor's office to hand over a memorandum demanding better sewage, roads and other facilities. These included ordinary residents, members of the ANC, Azapo and PAC, ANC-aligned civic members and non-aligned members.

Independence, argues Mabitsi, is necessary to try to unite the community, whether they are members of the ANC, Azapo or the PAC. Issues like the rent boycott and electricity cuts affects all residents, not just the ANC. The PAC and Azapo were welcome to stand for elections to the civic executive, and get elected by popular choice, but this has not happened, he says.

Civic issues are political issues

Dr Abie Nkomo, the chairperson of the ANC branch in Attridgeville agrees, but feels that civic issues are 'political issues' in essence. He argues that civics are there to engage in day-to-day community issues, and to defend the rights of people at that level, but 'what must not be forgotten is that the very existence of these townships is a political factor'.

Nkomo adds: 'It must also not be forgotten that the struggle has not yet been won, and we are not in a post-apartheid South Africa. In practice it is difficult for people to accept this compartmentalisation of civic issues and political issues. They in the final analysis are the arbiters of the direction the struggle will take, not in terms of rhetoric but in reality.'

Attridgeville is demarcated into 15 area committees, one of which is a hostel area committee (apparently none of the hostel dwellers are Inkatha members). Area committees meet every week to discuss issues that need immediate attention, like the rent boycott and power cuts.

The nine-month rent boycott ended in Attridgeville in January this year, during which time the community suffered some of the worst and longest power cuts in

GLENDA DANIELS visited the Pretoria township of Attridgeville, and found the civic association in the middle of accusations, on the one hand, of being ANC-controlled, and on the other of trying to be too independent of the ANC

Other Pretoria townships

The other townships in Pretoria, Mamelodi and Shoshanguve, are still run by town councillors, although the civics don't recognise them.

What all the townships in Pretoria have in common is a severe housing shortage. In Attridgeville people have been on the waiting list for nearly twenty years. But while this is so, Attridgeville does not have a huge squatter settlement like Mamelodi and Shoshanguve.

The 'Indian' township of Laudium also has a severe housing shortage, but only last June were attempts made to set up a civic association, with the help of Asro.

A Laudium ANC member says the community is one of the most apathetic politically. He finds the township-cum-suburb is 'interesting' and 'fascinating' in that it has amongst the wealthiest Indians in the country, as well as tremendous poverty. •

the Transvaal. Each resident had a say in the amount they were prepared to pay for electricity, in order to reach a compromise with the administrator, Dr Ernie Jacobsen. The arrears, which amounted to about R3-million, was scrapped by the Pretoria City Council.

The area committees had several meetings after inviting all the residents in their area to discuss what the compromise should be. They decided on a R50 flat rate after heated debate. After this negotiations began with the administrator of the Pretoria City Council, who accepted the rate.

But when this was taken to the Transvaal Provincial Administration (TPA) it was rejected for being too low to meet the cost of electricity, let alone other service charges like water and sewage. Negotiations resumed in July to reach a compromise. In the meantime, electricity has been cut again, and the township is in darkness. The residents are determined that R50 is what they will stick to.

The point, says Mabitsi, is that all residents had a say in the issue and were all happy with the R50 flat rate:

'I'd say without hesitation that there is democracy in the Attridgeville community. There was participation of all irrespective of whether they were Azapo or PAC.'

'Political opportunism'

Meanwhile, according to Asro, the PAC and Azapo have 'jumped on the bandwagon' of the confusion. Both organisations do not have a history of working on the ground to tackle the day-to-day crises that the community faces, say some residents.

The PAC and Azapo, in turn, accuse the ANC of manipulating ASRO and are calling for a complete separation of civics from 'politics' (see later).

In June the PAC held a mass meeting to discuss the electricity crisis and to 'unite' the residents over civic issues. PAC deputy president Dikgang Moseneke and Azapo's Patrick Molala addressed the residents. In opposition to Asro they formed the Attridgeville-Saulsville Interim Committee and announced a new tariff rate of R90 per month. The interim committee met the TPA and signed an agreement setting the new rate.

This is a new source of confusion for the community. Should they adhere to the first agreement of the R50 flat rate or the newer rate of R90?

Mabitsi says he can't understand why a political organisation wants to call a meeting to discuss civic issues when a civic body exists. They could participate at the area committee level, where their views would be accepted on merit. 'It seems like political opportunism to me', he says. In addition, it contradicts their call for a separation of 'political' and 'civic' matters.

PAC and Azapo respond

Barney Desai, the PAC's publicity secretary, says that from the beginning the civics excluded PAC elements and were geared towards one tendency, then the UDF and now the ANC.

But, he says, this has changed and the organisation now encourages its members to participate in civics. This decision was taken at the PAC's congress last December, where a resolution was passed on unity and co-operation with existing civics.

Desai feels that the civics still suffer from a lack of democracy. 'They can't claim to speak on behalf of everybody else and they must be truly representative.'

While he agrees that civics cannot avoid being political, he stresses that 'when they do approach political issues they must be non-sectarian'. A 'clique of people' cannot think they are making democratic decisions for residents, he says.

'Attridgeville's position arises because the civic refuses to become non-sectarian. The civic there imposes its will on the people with regard to rent...We tried to persuade them to behave more democratically. The PAC in Attridgeville said enough is enough!', says Desai.

He does not feel that there is a contradiction between the PAC, as a political organisation, intervening in a civic matter, and at the same time calling for a separation of civic issues from politics. He says: 'Political organisations must give the lead. The UDF and ANC have always done this, why is it that when we do we get attacked?'

Azapo's publicity secretary, Strini Moodley, agrees with Desai that civics should be 'non-sectarian', while at the same time they should have a 'healthy relationship' with all in the liberation movement.

But, says Moodley, up to now this 'has not been working well because of the desire of some to want civics to become echoes of one organisation, which contributes to divisions in society, leading to violence.'

Nevertheless, Azapo, like the PAC, urges its members to join civics where they can, and to participate actively. But, says Moodley, 'when we have, our members' views have been suppressed, especially when they have tried to push for civics to become non-sectarian.'

He adds that there have been numerous clashes around the country over this issue.

But there have been instances of successful joint action in other parts of the country. In Mbekweni, Paarl, a joint working committee was set up in recent months to resolve the electricity crisis that plagued the township. This was very effective, says Desai.

Considering these ideological splits in the community, what direction should the civics be taking to unite the residents?

From protest to development

Civics should definitely be moving from protest politics to developmental politics, says Mabitsi. Last year the civic organ-

ised a soup kitchen which was enormously successful. This year Asro is thinking of plans to install a day-care centre. They also wish to run leadership training workshops and projects on local government. But before any of this happens, funds are required, says Mabitsi:

'The solution is to be financially self-sufficient and for a start, members should start paying their membership fees...But our ultimate goal in the civics is one city, one municipality with a single tax base. Negotiations will take that direction.'

While all members of the umbrella body, the Civic Associations of Southern Transvaal (Cast) support this demand, there was a much publicised split over participation in the Johannesburg Metropolitan Chamber to achieve this end (see *WIP* 73). Much of this focused on the participation of discredited councillors.

The residents of Attridgeville, like most other townships, adopted a very hardline attitude towards township councillors or 'puppet' leaders. And last year, Mayor Mathebula and his cronies were ousted from the township by the community. This year the council is run by the administrator who the civic prefers dealing with directly.

A difficult dilemma

Some maintain that the time is not yet ripe for civics to move from protest to development politcs:

Firstly, civics don't have the financial means to be embarking on projects that are needed in the community, like day-care centres.

Secondly, apartheid is well and truly alive and support is needed to strengthen ANC branches, rather than creating another power base in opposition to the ANC. The time to talk of 'civil society' and independence will come later. This might happen in six months or in a few years, depending on the pace of constitutional negotiations.

Others, however, maintain that development initiatives should not depend on progress at the national level. In addition, development work requires the participation of all, hence the necessity for civics to be independent and non-sectarian.

According to Patrick Lephunya, coordinator of Cast, developmental work will have to be blended with protest action, because power still lies with the apartheid administration.

While it is necessary to unite different political ideologies and be non-partisan, it must be acknowledged that it was UDF members and ANC supporters who, before, during and after the States of Emergency, tackled bread and butter issues by creating various community structures. These were the people that set up civics and believed in their importance. Some of them still belong to the civic and others concentrate their energies in the branches of the ANC. There are others who in the interest of unity and a good working relationship belong to both structures, like Mabitsi and Nkomo.

The crucial question facing the ANC is: what will ANC branches address once all political prisoners have been released and all members have discussed what a constituent assembly and interim government mean? Many ANC members are tired of marching, chanting slogans and discussing relatively abstract issues such as interim government, which they have given up on trying to fathom anyway.

According to one observer, Humphrey Ndaba, ANC branches have been left with very little political activity to keep them alive. This has unavoidably led to some branches taking up civic issues.

But if this happens the ANC will be accused of dominating the community politically, thereby alienating those of other political ideologies and persuasions.

This is a dilemma that has to be resolved soon.

• *Mbulelo Sompheta assisted with some of the information for this article.* •

Youths and civics in rural areas

TONY HARDING looks at the relationship between the youth and chiefs in the Northern Transvaal in recent years, and argues that democratic rural civics have the potential to empower ordinary people who live in fear of their chiefs

Since the unbanning of the ANC new political tensions have emerged in rural communities. In a bid to secure popular support the ANC has attempted to draw chiefs into the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (Contralesa). Some chiefs have gladly returned to the ANC fold, while others have used it as an opportunity to manipulate the ANC.

In some cases this has led to conflict between ANC Youth League members and the older generation of leadership in ANC branches, who have nurtured links with chiefs. Youth have been actively canvassing for the establishment of civics and the dissolving of corrupt tribal authorities.

Many parents still respect chiefs and expect to take the lead from them. It is very difficult to hold a successful public meeting unless a chief has shown support for it, and this has limited the ANC's capacity to recruit membership among parents in rural areas.

The debate around the transitional role of chiefs has surfaced in *Horizon* (April 1991), the journal of the ANC Youth League, which suggested that chieftainship should be maintained, and that civics should play a (subordinate) developmental role in consultation with existing tribal authorities.

This article draws out the history of some of these conflicts, which have important implications for the emergence of democracy in rural areas in South Africa.

Time of 'comrades'

The 1985-90 period of popular revolt saw a massive growth of political activity in rural areas countrywide, particularly among youth.

In 1986, the mass political struggle in the townships of the PWV overflowed into the Northern Transvaal, initially into the North-Sotho self-governing bantustan Lebowa, and then spread rapidly to KwaNdebele, Gazankulu, KaNgwane and Venda.

In the months before the explosion, there had been moments of tension between youth and local authorities when activists, popularly called 'comrades', attempted to establish progressive political structures in the region, as part of a campaign against bantustans.

Since 1985 attempts by militant youth to establish student representative councils (SRCs) had been rejected by the Department of Education. Activists, working under the banner of the Congress of South African Students (Cosas), carried militant township political culture into the countryside, and focused their challenge on corruption in schools and local authorities.

The comrades took up popular civic issues: petty crime; high tribal levies; and abuse of school funds by local (tribal) authorities and school committees.

Relationships between the youth and migrant workers became strained over the paying of customary tribute *(sebego)* to chiefs. Youths attempted to isolate chiefs known to be collaborators with the bantustan administrations.

In some areas 'witches' and police informers were caught and burnt. The 'sjambok' also brought rough justice to many alleged 'enemies of the people'.

Schools were closed temporarily at the height of the crisis. In some areas political education around the Freedom Charter took place on hills outside villages, traditionally the site of initiation school *(koma)*. This also provided protection from attack by police.

Alternative programmes never got off the ground as activists lacked resources and skills to transform schools, and failed to win the support of teachers. Insecurity on unfamiliar terrain led to authoritarian leadership practices, which alienated student support. In some schools SRCs re-instituted corporal punishment.

Time of fear

When the police and army detained 'comrade' leaders organisational discipline began to collapse. Criminal elements, mainly among unemployed youth, began to set up 'roadblocks' to steal from commuters, which criminalised the reputation of the 'comrades'.

It became a time of fear. The soldiers arrested youths found with 'political' materials – T-shirts, pamphlets, newspapers, minutes of meetings, scraps of paper mentioning organisational matters, even books or magazines. Youths fled to townships in the PWV to avoid detention.

Police detained Peter Nchabeleng, president of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in the Northern Transvaal. Nchabeleng had been putting his considerable political skills – developed as an ANC cadre over many years – into stopping the burning of 'witches' and giving direction to events.

Nchabeleng's subsequent death in detention was a warning to those who had been responsible for the campaign to isolate the police and local authorities from the community. In some areas unpopular tribal authorities were given armed protection.

Links with UDF activists at the University of the North, who had provided political education and support, were broken when the army occupied the campus and detained student leadership.

Dispossessed communities

During the 1970s, many labour tenants and 'squatters' evicted from 'white' farms in the Northern Transvaal moved into villages in Lebowa and surrounding bantustans. Families who had enjoyed access to productive land in the reserves or as labour tenants found themselves without land or cattle, and forced to live in 'closer settlements' or rural townships, under tribal authorities to which they owed no allegiance.

Dispossessed of their productive lands, many parents realised their children would need schooling to secure better jobs as clerks in the expanding Native Affairs Department, as well as in hospitals and schools. Community-funded schools sprang up in many villages. These schools were also attended by students from urban areas, where schools were overcrowded, and the children of farmworkers.

Some community schools gained reputations for academic success. However, by the 1980s the education system began to collapse.

Land and social control

As the legitimacy of the tribal authorities became more and more fragile, land became a major instrument of social control. Families or individuals who rep-

resented a threat to the chief, would face threats of land alienation.

In some cases, tribal levies for school building funds, and other alleged community purposes – which were never implemented – were imposed at will by unpopular chiefs.

The tribute *(sebego)* system also became a form of control. Migrant workers would offer tribute to chiefs as a guarantee that they would be offered a burial site in the tribal graveyard, or that a marriage would be recognised.

For this reason, among others, migrants would retain close linkages to the chiefs, even if the legitimacy of their rule was in dispute.

Tribal funds for various purposes were banked through magistrates which made it very difficult for a community to gain access to tribal accounts, which led to numerous accusations of corruption in local government.

Unemployment

In the period between 1976 and 1986, increased unemployment and inflation meant that communities were unable to build new schools or classrooms. School buildings thus deteriorated, and the drop-out rate grew.

Rural youth criminal activities grew, as did social problems such as alcoholism, drug abuse, prostitution, and mugging, especially of migrant workers. Relationships between youths and parents became increasingly tense. Most youths rejected practices such as tribal initiation *(koma)*, which traditionally secured their allegiance to chiefs, and this further threatened the legitimacy of the authorities.

Women were forced to become hawkers in village market-places. However, they faced constant police harassment for selling goods without licenses, and for eroding the economic power of local business interests allied to the chiefs.

Many youths felt this intimidation of their mothers as a direct threat – their minimal profits secured them places in school.

Tribal authorities, conscious of their loss of patronage and power, became increasingly corrupt and defensive. Neither men, women nor youth could challenge the use of that power without facing the force of the law – the magistrate, the departments and the police.

The chiefs, tribal authorities, school committees, and the 'homeland' administration bureaucrats looked closely after the fragile basis of their power, and actively suppressed the growth of a more democratic alternative. The 1986 uprising was a consequence of this process.

The role of rural civics

The failure of local government has left a significant 'power vacuum' in rural communities. This has made necessary the development of democratic civic structures to represent in particular the interests of women and youth. But, although youths have challenged the legitimacy of the bantustan administration, they lack the skills and authority to implement democratic alternatives.

The potential exists for common cause to be established between youths and their parents, particularly mothers, around development issues such as rights of education (pre-school, school and adult), democratic local government, access to productive land and market-places, as well as water and electricity, and adequate health care.

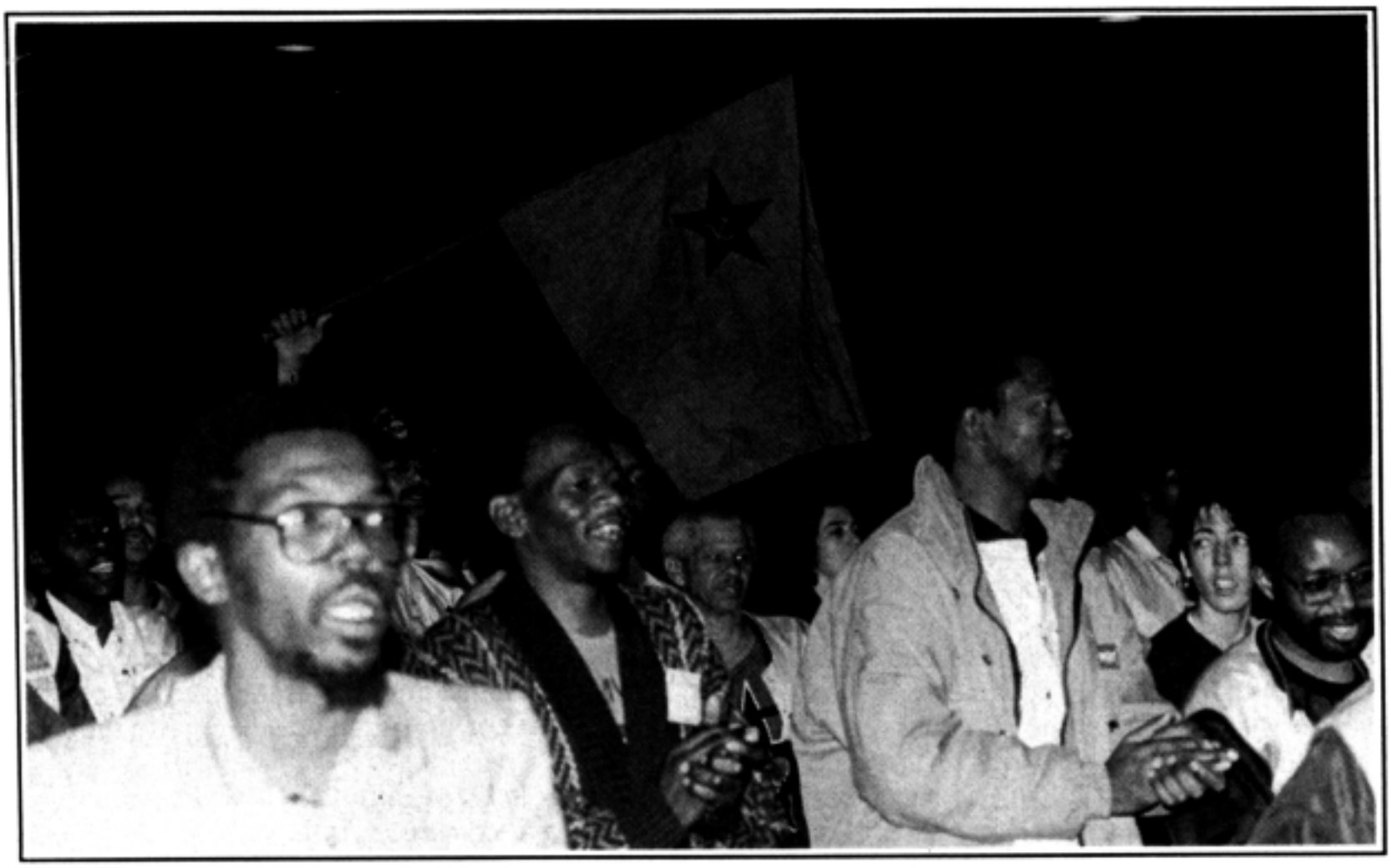
The interests of migrant workers – especially security of land tenure and participation (at a distance) in local matters affecting them – are fundamental. Without their support rural transformation cannot succeed.

Rural civics have the potential to facilitate development in rural areas, but this potential cannot be unlocked without organisational and political skills. Civics must have the capacity to demonstrate to ordinary people, who live in fear and respect of their chiefs, that democratic structures can address development needs more effectively.

In the past, these needs have been addressed largely through informal projects, which have faced intimidation from powerful rural interest groups. Civics could play an important role in pulling together these strands of grassroots resistance and giving them a political platform organised around development issues.

It will not be an easy task for civics to establish themselves, or to co-exist with the corrupted remains of chiefly rule.

• *Tony Harding used to work in non-formal education projects in Northern and Western Transvaal rural areas.* •



The SACP: trying to forge a realistic yet imaginative path between 'revolutionary vanguardism' and 'reformist capitulation'

Can the SACP change track?

DEVAN PILLAY looks at the challenges facing the SACP, and argues that the party either has to become a more independent alliance partner of the ANC, or dissolve as a party and become an open socialist 'platform' within the ANC

On 29 July 1991 the South African Communist Party (SACP) celebrated its 70th anniversary. Born in 1921 as the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), the party now faces one if its most challenging periods ever.

It faces enormous pressure, as a legal party emerging from forty years of clandestine struggle, to radically transform itself - but at the same time retain its appeal as a protecter and champion of working class interests.

The party hopes to have 30 000 members by December, when it holds its 8th congress. But while the party has made inroads into some areas (such as the mines), its image in other areas has lost a bit of its shine. In Port Elizabeth, for example, the party has virtually no presence - because many activists apparently do not see why they should spend time going to party meetings when they can achieve similar ends through the ANC. In the Border region the party is growing, and still retains much of its appeal. However, apart from the party's more impressive emphasis on political education, party activists in the area are also unsure what it is that makes the party distinct from the ANC. Similar concerns have been expressed in other parts of the country.

Ideological confusion

A large measure of this uncertainty about the party's role has to do with a significant degree of ideological confusion within the party at the moment. Having been tied rigidly to the Soviet Union throughout its history, the party is finding it difficult to fully internalise the deep implications of the crisis of 'socialism' in Eastern Europe.

A significant layer within the party retains, to one extent or another, an adherence to 'Stalinist' thinking and practice (see page 34). This goes against two other distinct currents within the party:

Firstly, a (perhaps dominant) current which attempts to recast 'Marxism-Leninism' to make it fit into a revolutionary 'democratic socialist' discourse (see Cronin), thus distancing Leninism from Stalinism.

The second current goes further, and sees Leninist roots in Stalinism. It therefore seeks the abandonment of a 'religious' devotion to Lenin, in the search for a completely transformed socialist project which draws heavily from, amongst others, New Left Marxism, feminism, the green movement as well as the experiences of social democracy (see for example Steinberg).

But these differences are fluid. The collective mind of the SACP sways backwards and forwards as it tries to comprehend these differences, and forge a realistic yet imaginative path between 'revolutionary vanguardism' on the one hand, and 'reformist capitulation' on the other.

The alliance

But the problems facing the SACP cannot be solely reduced to ideological confusions. There are acute practical and strategic difficulties the party has to overcome if its socialist project is to move forward. These relate to the manner in which it operates within its 'revolutionary alliance' with the ANC, in particular the 'multiple hats' dilemma mentioned earlier.

This dilemma, of course, does not arise if the party retains a vanguardist

approach to politics, which compels it to seek to direct and control its alliance partners in a secretive, often conspiratorial fashion. But the party as a whole does not want this. It seeks to shape an open, democratic relationship with the ANC and Cosatu, where it will attempt to influence, rather than conspire to dominate, the direction of the alliance.

The party's objectives revolve around the socialist transformation of South African society. In recent years it has emphasised the link between socialism and democracy, where bureaucratic, commandist methods of transforming society are replaced by more bottom-up, people-empowering methods.

Given the new conditions, the party faces at least three options: it retains and strengthens its current role within and in alliance with the ANC; it becomes a completely independent partner which nevertheless retains the essence of its alliance with the ANC; it dissolves as a party, and reconstitutes itself as an open socialist 'platform' or 'forum' within the ANC.

In considering its present role, the party has two priorities: Firstly, to help prevent the ANC from becoming a 'moderate' (possibly narrow) nationalist political party, which is the desire of the ruling class; and secondly, to assert a distinct democratic socialist perspective within the liberation movement, so as to sow the seeds of eventual socialist transformation.

Maintaining the status quo

The party can opt to maintain the status quo, in the hope that it will derive the best from both worlds - namely retain its long fought-for strategic position within the ANC, while at the same time continue to exist as a separate party. However, it will then have to overcome a perhaps irresolvable tension between developing a distinct, independent role for itself (to justify its separate existence) whilst at the same time not straying too far from the ANC's programme so as to jeopardise the position of communists occupying high office in the ANC.

If all party members are obliged to be active in the ANC, can it develop a distinct identity and programme to convince members, and potential members, that party work should also receive priority?

Some argue that the party's economic programme ought not to differ from the ANC's, because the party agrees with the ANC's short- to medium-term (basically social-democratic) programme. But if the party, because of strategic constraints, is unable to project a long-term economic perspective, why then exist as a separate party?

The ANC is sufficiently rooted in the working class (thanks partly to the SACP) for it to eventually be transformed into a socialist party - if that is desirable. The party, however, is acutely aware of the necessity for the ANC to retain its 'broad church' character, at least in the medium term.

The party may very well decide that, as long as the ANC listens to its predominantly working class base, and sticks firmly to crucial democratic demands such as the constituent assembly, then the ground will be sufficiently prepared for thorough-going democratic transformation in the long-term. The party therefore need not divert substantially (if at all) from the path the ANC follows. The party's role, then, is mainly focussed on political education, and keeping a socialist perspective alive (without compromising the ANC in any way).

An open socialist 'platform'

If so, then why remain as a separate party? An open socialist 'platform' or 'forum' within the ANC, as exists in the British Labour Party, or Brazil's Workers' Party, can perform all the functions of political education and consciousness-raising, without obliging its members to suffer a schizophrenic existence by wearing multiple hats. Such a 'platform', which could be open to any ANC member, and which would operate openly and democratically, could also exist alongside other ANC 'platforms' wishing to popularise, for example, alternative visions of socialism (such as the Marxist Workers' Tendency), social democracy or even capitalism.

For this to happen, the *right to form platforms* must be won in the ANC. And this can only happen if differences, debate and criticism are seen as potentially healthy, and not always divisive and to be buried. If 'platforms' are only allowed if they operate openly, and if members/supporters conduct themselves as disciplined members of the ANC – ie they carry out the policies of the organisation as decided by the whole membership – then there is no reason why they should be divisive.

On the contrary, they could forge greater unity, by explicitly acknowledging differences that exist anyway, and allowing them to engage with each other in an atmosphere of tolerance and openness.

More assertively independent

But the SACP may not want to so easily give up its identity as a 70 year-old political party (for maybe emotional reasons?). In addition, the party may feel that a long-term socialist vision needs to be much more assertively projected onto the political arena. As part of sowing the seeds of socialism, the party can play an active role as a watchdog for democracy, both within the liberation movement and at all levels of society.

If so, then the party has to become much more independent of the ANC. It cannot assert itself if its leadership spends most of its time doing 'ANC work', and if it feels bound by the programme of the ANC. An independent SACP need not give up its alliance with the ANC. Indeed, current conditions dictate that such an alliance is necessary and potentially mutually beneficial.

But an alliance does not have to mean inter-locking leaderships. By being more independent, the party can carve its own programme, and engage in activities which have a distinct socialist character. Instead of being locked into the pace at which the ANC, as a government-in-waiting, is forced to operate, the much smaller SACP can concentrate on longer-term strategic planning, and building a cadreship of quality.

As a spin-off benefit, an independent SACP can take the (red) heat off the ANC (see page 36), allowing the ANC in turn to concentrate much less self-consciously on drawing the widest range of social forces into its ranks.

The danger, of course, exists that the ANC will indeed fall into the hands of 'bourgeois nationalists'. But an 'independent SACP' does not have to mean that none of its members should occupy leadership positions in the ANC. It could adopt a similar position to that of Cosatu *vis a vis* the ANC, where there is no overlapping leadership at national level. In addition, the alliance, as a coalition of independent equals, could be strengthened, to the extent that *binding* decisions are made at alliance meetings.

Difficult decisions

These are not easy options for the party. All contain dangers which could seriously derail the struggle for socialism. But these are times for bold, courageous decisions. The party cannot remain as it is. It has to radically transform itself, the way it thinks, and the way it acts, if it wants to fully learn from the mistakes of the past, and take forward a thoroughly transformed, and richer, socialist project.

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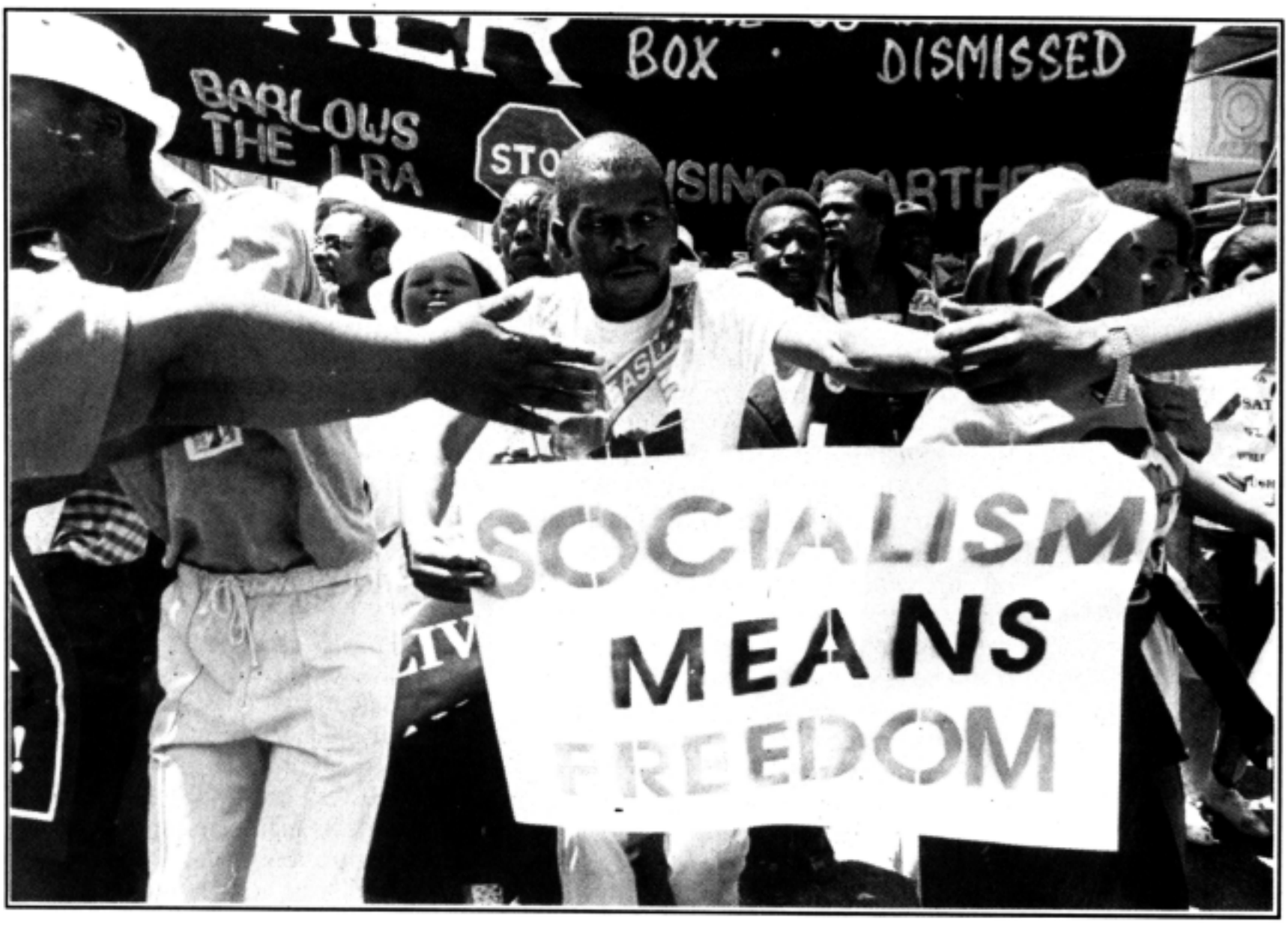
Socialism, democracy and civil society

The Case for Associational Socialism



A new democratic socialism has to be based on the socialist conception of extended democratisation and the democratic acceptance of diversity, uncertainty and pluralism.

***MARK SWILLING** argues that a truly democratic form of socialism is possible only if statism - the identification of the public good with the state - is discarded in favour of an emphasis on the vibrancy of civil society*

Joe Slovo's article 'Has Socialism Failed?' (see *WIP* 64) is a courageous and pathbreaking intervention that will mark the beginning in earnest of a thorough-going debate about South Africa's potential socialist future. It is, however, only a beginning because it does not go far enough in its critique of authoritarian socialism. This is because Slovo has not made a clear distinction between the crisis of socialism and the crisis of statism.

If it can be demonstrated that socialism is not inherently statist, then the collapse of communist states does not necessarily represent a crisis of socialism. Instead, the demise of statism in Eastern Europe could make it possible to develop a non-statist, and hence democratic, conception of socialism. But if we retain statist assumptions, then yes, socialism faces an irredeemable crisis.

The state and the public good

Marxists and social democrats have consistently identified the public good with the state. This has legitimised the actions of powerful elites in control of state power and subordinated civil society.

In South Africa this identification is so subtle and so uncritically accepted that it makes it possible for the ANC to argue that the policy of nationalisation - ie state ownership - is derived from the clause in the Freedom Charter that says the wealth 'shall be transferred to the ownership of the people'. This jump from the 'people' to the state is only possible if 'the people' are synonymous with the state. The road from this to statism, history has proven, is a short one. Slovo, unfortunately, may have considerably lengthened this road, but he has not blown the key bridges.

To purge socialism of statism, it may be necessary to cease identifying the state with the public good; or, put less crudely, look elsewhere for where citizenship is formed and constituted. If this project is impossible, both theoretically and practically, socialism will remain an inherently authoritarian doctrine.

The privatisation of authoritarianism

Before proceeding, it must be pointed out that the New Right (or neo-conservatives) has come to the same conclusion as democratic socialists, ie that the state can no longer be identified as the only source of the public good. And, like democratic socialists, they refer continuously to the need for an independent civil society.

However, for them, anti-statism means leaving civil society to the mercy of the giant, privately-controlled corporations which would like to deploy capital in the global village free of all social controls and constraints. This is not 'democratisation', it is the *privatisation of authoritarianism* that leaves civil society to the whim of the market and the power of private shareholders.

Classical liberal democratic theory was built on a fundamental strength and a critical weakness. Its strength was its acceptance of the right of a diverse set of interests to organise, associate and compete for public power. In other words, by institutionalising diversity, it created a democratic culture based on pluralism.

The weakness of liberal democratic theory, however, was to assume that only political life should be subjected to democratic rules and accountability. Economic relations were seen as private relations and not, therefore, in need of social control via socially accepted rules enforced by the state and other public agencies. Out of this emerged the notion of the weak but accountable state coupled to powerful and unaccountable private economic power. In the end, the state regulated society and private capital exploited it.

The quest for certainty

The marxist conception of socialism emerged out of the contradiction within liberal democracy between private power and public powerlessness. Socialism's overriding strength was its extension of the democratic principle to all spheres of society: political, economic, social, gender and, more recently, ecological relations.

To be a socialist today means, in essence, the acceptance of workers having a right to a say in how their workplaces are run; patients in their health systems; students in their schools; senior citizens in their old age homes; women in their families; commuters in their buses; teachers in their universities; and of course, breathers of oxygen in their environments, and so forth.

But socialism's critical weakness was its reductionism. It assumed that all power relations were reducible to one single power relation, namely class. From this flowed the assumption that the elimination of competing class interests by the proletarian state would eliminate power and bring an end to politics and the state, and usher in a classless utopia (ie communism).

This simple intellectual jump from reductionism to utopianism was driven by what liberal democrats had resolved would be nice but undesirable: the quest for *permanent certainty*. Seventy years of socialism has brought home the devastating consequences of this mistake. To use Leszek Kolakowski's words: 'there is no reason to expect that this dream can ever become true except in the cruel form of despotism; and despotism is a desperate simulation of paradise.'

In short, democratic theory accepted the uncertainty of pluralism but truncated the scope of democratic accountability. Socialist theory extended the scope of democracy but condoned the despotic consequences of utopianism by rejecting the uncertainty of diversity. This, in essence, is why democracy and socialism have come to contradict one another. If there is going to emerge a new democratic socialist alternative, it is going to have to be premised on the socialist conception of extended democratisation and the democratic acceptance of diversity, uncertainty and pluralism.

An authoritative state

Starting first with the democratic component, it is possible to identify three elements of a democratic framework. First, democratic institutions and mechanisms will be required to guarantee the rights, liberties and entitlements of citizens. Second, maximum decentralisation and devolution of power must be effected. Third, an independent and robust civil society will be needed that is protected *from* the state and not just *by* the state.

To construct an authoritative (as opposed to an authoritarian) state, the most important democratic mechanism is the *separation of powers* at central level, ie a separation between judiciary, executive and legislature, with the judiciary having the right to judicial review in terms of an entrenched Bill of Rights.

An independent (and possibly elected) judiciary, a democratically-elected legislature and an accountable executive should be the foundations for citizen equality; majority rule; direct participation; parliamentary sovereignty; voluntary associability; accountable representation; unrestricted political choice; honest apportionment of votes; public disclosure; alternance between incumbents and challengers; legislative scrutiny of executive actions; democratic control of the security forces and so forth.

Rights can be divided into:

- *Individual rights*, like habeas corpus; sanctity of private home and correspondence; right to a fair trial; and freedom of movement, speech and petition; and
- *Collective rights*, like freedom from punishment for expressions of collective dissent; freedom from censorship of means of communication; freedom to associate voluntarily with citizens with common interests; and the right to minority protection against the abuse of power by majority interests. Socio-economic entitlements are also invariably collective rights.

Decentralisation and devolution to regional and local government is the only way of placing the power to govern in structures that local communities can relate to and hence participate in. Centralisation leaves power in the hands of bureaucrats with national plans, politicians whose interests are tied to reproducing their positions, and capitalists who are more able to lobby national governments than any other major interest outside the state.

The New Right also supports decentralisation, because this breaks up the only power in society capable of matching large-scale capitalist power. For a socialist, however, decentralisation has to be reconciled with redistribution. This is perfectly possible if we have a national taxation system that redistributes tax income via local authorities according to a predetermined formula that cannot be set and changed only at the national level.

Civil society

Civil society has emerged as the codeword for the associational life of a society that exists somewhere between the individual actions of each person (what some might call the 'private realm') and the organisations and institutions constituted by the state (or 'public realm'). It is where everyday life is experienced, discussed, comprehended, contested and reproduced. This is where hegemony is built and contested.

The New Right, liberal intellectuals and even sections of the liberation movement are of the view that civil society should include the profit-driven share-

Democratic socialism means empowering people at the local level, in all spheres of life

holder-owned, industrial-commercial sector. This author is of the view that a true 'civil society' is one where ordinary everyday citizens, who do not control the levers of political and economic power, have access to locally-constituted voluntary associations that have the capacity, know-how and resources to influence and even determine the structure of power and the allocation of material resources.

In a word, building a civil society is about building 'voice' at grassroots level. This is very different to what states and corporations do: states plan, allocate and build political power; private corporations accumulate wealth for the shareholders and balance this out against servicing their customers. Neither of them has a vested interest in building 'voice'.

Instead of being dominated by private capital or state-controlled agencies, civil society in many societies is structured around social movements, community agencies and development organisations which mobilise collectivities and communities around immediate local interests. Not surprisingly, these increasingly powerful forms of social organisation have resulted in a rethink that has began to suggest that civil society should be the guardian of the public good and not the state.

Strengthening voluntary associations

Given that the essence of a civil society is a robust locally-constituted voluntary sector, six conditions for the strengthening of voluntary associations can be identified:

• Voluntary associations should not be constituted by the state, nor should they be dependent on the state for their material survival. In addition, they may have alliances with political parties, but they should not be the instruments of these parties.

• Large-scale businesses with their nationally and internationally-structured organisations should not be the initiators and primary funders of voluntary associations. They are, of course, also in the business of influencing associational life through communication and marketing. But these associations should not be the source of their power and this is why they cannot be defined as voluntary associations.

• Voluntary associations must have the organisational infrastructure and necessary skills to be able to articulate,in every possible way, the interests of their constituencies. It means being able to articulate interests in ways that can appeal in all possible social forums: on the streets, in mass meetings, in conferences, within the media and in the corporate boardrooms of state and business agencies.

• Voluntary associations must have the capacity to negotiate. In a society of free associations, being able to negotiate to achieve objectives and acquire resources becomes extremely important.

• Voluntary associations must have the capacity to govern their members. The Freedom Charter says 'The people shall govern'. This is normally interpreted in a narrow sense as being the 'political party that is supported by the people' shall govern. This narrow classical liberal conception must be replaced with the notion that governance includes government by non-government organisations that have members who receive services in return for support and/or money. Whatever the case, these organisations must be capable of governing their

members or constituencies by finding ways of resolving conflict, meeting needs or providing services before the formal legal or delivery systems are requested to carry these burdens. If they cannot command a collective loyalty, then their capacity to represent and negotiate is limited.

• Voluntary associations must be horizontally linked. If the inherent localism of voluntary associations leads to fragmentation, then civil society will be weak. It follows, therefore, that voluntary associations must be horizontally interconnected through coalitions, federations or fronts, whose primary purpose should be the strengthening of local organisations.

Socialist principles

For some, being a socialist means having a critique of capital and a belief in international revolution. The programme this gives rise to must, by definition, require people to make commitments now for something that may not be immediately realisable. What is missing is the basis for approaching the real world today. While a critique of capital in society is an indispensable starting point, the approach that is common amongst those who still hope for a future that is not dominated by capital contains the following seven basic principles:

* The accumulation of capital must not be left to privately-owned businesses. *Non-state cooperative ventures* are the alternative. Where, however, private interests retain control of investment, they must be subjected to democratic controls of some sort. Given that the deployment of investment determines where people live, how much they earn, what skills they have, how far they travel to work, where they spend their leisure-time and in what conditions they bring up children, socialists simply do not accept that private interests have a right to make these decisions without accounting to society.
* Socialists believe that *collective* (not necessarily state) ownership and cooperative organisation yields a greater set of all-round benefits than private ownership and the authoritarian management practices that usually (but not always) characterise capitalist enterprises.
* Socialists seek to promote *democratic decision-making* at every level of society.
* The market needs to be *regulated* or, to use an increasingly popular phrase, the market needs to be socialised. An unregulated market tends to allow elites with resources to accumulate economic, political, social, cultural and technical power in a way that disadvantages the majority in all these spheres.
* Socialists are committed to the *equalisation of opportunity*. Because inequalities are socially determined, society has a duty, via affirmative action, to redress unequal access to opportunities.
* Socialists would argue that economic systems should be organised in a way that invests huge resources in *skills training*. As many people as possible should be able to acquire the skills needed to diversify responsibility for the management and organisation of society in all spheres.
* Democratic institutions of government are required to ensure the *accountability of the state* to a society of free individuals and associations, ie a society where freedom and the public good are not defined and constituted by the state.

Towards associationalism

From a democratic socialist perspective, the democratic and socialist points of departure outlined above complement rather than contradict one another.

More important than the theoretical convergence, however, is a convergence in practice. If we mix together decentralisation/devolution, the importance of civil society, the need to control capital, democratic decision-making, collective ownership/organisation and self-reliance, what emerges is the absolute *centrality of the local* as opposed to the national in the definition of planning units.

As far as civil society is concerned, the strongest and freeist associations are locally as opposed to regionally or nationally defined. Neighbourhood, work, school, church, family, property, cultural identifications and leisure activities are all locally constrained.

The interface between the state and civil society is via local government. If this is weak, powerless and manipulated from above, democracy and localism as a positive force breaks down. If this occurs then, as Africa has shown, society could come to be structured via vertical linkages between central and local points of power via undemocratic relationships such as patronage and corruption networks. If local government is strong and voluntary associations have greater political access to these institutions than national government, horizontally-structured civil society formations can help stabilise and democratise the governmental system as a whole.

Tripartite economic relations

Investment capital can be nationally and even internationally mobile, but if there is any substance to the commitments to reversing de-industrialisation, then again the local level - the level of the enterprise - is where this can most effectively be achieved. In contemporary economics and business strategy forums, there is much talk of industrial districts or regional economies. These refer to local areas where the major political, economic and civil society stakeholders come together into development coalitions in order to plan industrial and development strategies.

Using the new technologies to enhance backward and forward linkages between enterprises into cooperative supply and distribution networks, and by coupling community and/or employee needs and interests to investment strategies, it becomes theoretically possible to limit capital's spatial mobility, regulate the market and increase social control over investment and production.

This, in turn, should increase the magnitude of non-profit capital resources, enhance participation and build regional cooperative relations based on organised interests. For all this to work, however, democratic and responsive local government will have to be at the centre of the process.

In short, the image of economic relations that emerges from this is of a tripartite relationship between voluntary associations, local government and capital in all its various capitalist and non-capitalist forms.

Harnessing creative energies

The role of the central state in regulating these relationships at local level will depend on who is in power. But if a democratic socialist party is in power, its obligation would be to assist civil society via the fiscus, legal framework and policy process. If this party is not in power, then it will have to struggle within the existing constitutional constraints to build these kinds of relationships from below.

In the final analysis, what this society needs, above all else, is the space to expand and harness all its creative energies. But, if the old racial authoritarianism is replaced by a new populist authoritarianism, then all that will be initiated is a new era of stagnant, unimaginative, fear-driven uniformity that will drive us head-long into yet another - albeit more spectacular - African failure.

If we are to resolve our problems, we will need all the energy and creativity that we can muster. Everything must be done to build an environment that will promote rather than retard this. The conceptual framework that has been proposed in this essay is simply a contribution to the debate about how this can be done.

*• Mark Swilling's latest book is an edited collection entitled **Views on the South African State** (Pretoria: HSRC).•*

Civil Society – a contested terrain

MONTY NARSOO argues that current definitions of 'civil society' are inadequate, and may serve to camouflage the real forces at play between the public sphere of the state and the private sphere of the individual

Debates about civil society, particularly on the meaning of the term, are raging fast and furious in South Africa. In many instances the debates have shed more heat than light. It has, nevertheless, become fashionable to invoke the magic term 'civil society' as panacea for the ills of the failed East European regimes, the decline of the welfare state, the ailing economies of the African continent, and for reconstruction in South Africa.

It is generally accepted that the collapse of eastern and central European regimes was a result of the rampant statism practiced by the stalinist bureaucracies, which treated organisations of civil society as transmission belts (where they simply carried out orders from the Party). This top-down command style of politics and economics led to deeply undemocratic and repressive regimes, and to their inability to deliver goods and services efficiently.

Similarly, numerous one-party states and command economies in Africa, based on or inspired by the above models, also failed dismally. The already-weak organisations of civil society on the African continent were sacrificed for the greater good of nation-building and national development.

In addition, the decline of the welfare states and the 'victories' of Thatcherism and Reagonomics was, it has been argued, a result of the people of those countries becoming tired of the increasingly expanding and inefficient state bureaucracies.

Having seen the collapse of the Warsaw Pact countries and finally coming to terms with the economic and political crises in Africa, South Africans of all persuasions were not going to make the same mistakes. A strong and independent 'civil society', as an essential vehicle for democracy and development, is seen as the answer.

So we have had a heavenly chorus of neo-conservatives smugly reiterating they were always right about this; erstwhile stalinists repentantly proclaiming that we need independent organisations of civil society; dogmatic leftists pragmatically accepting that, at 'this stage' of the struggle, there is a need for independent and democratic mass organisations; and democrats of various hues wholcheartedly embracing the idea of a full and rich set of institutions of civil society.

Fluid definitions

The vision of a society where there are a thousand buds of power blooming, where there is a rich texture and depth of organisation, and where debate, creativity, innovation and self-expression abound is an attractive one.

The disturbing factor is that the definition of the term civil society is becoming the 'all things to all people'. Depending on what they are trying to punt, they will fashion the term in their own image. This is done in two ways.

The first is to include whatever institution or activity that is suitable to them and exclude whatever does not fit into their grid (this is evident in the previous article by Swilling). The second approach is to assess the strengths and weaknesses of a range of institutions and activities and then judge whether we in fact have a civil society or not, or whether it is strong or weak. Arising from this are a number of truisms about civil society: independence equals strength, diversity and equity go together, unfettered interest articulation is synonymous with freedom etc.

While these assertions are essentially correct, if we are not careful in our definition and assessment of organisations, we may be disguising the real forces at play, and may perpetuate a mythology instead of struggling to come to grips with the reality.

Let us look at some of the definitions that are around. The one conception, as expressed by an ANC spokesperson, is that civil society is independent of the state and autonomous from political parties. A development worker suggests that the fundamental pillars of civil society are the organisations representing various sectors in society: churches, trade unions, women's organisations, cooperatives etc. Civil society is therefore seen to be consisting of a myriad of social movements that are politically independent.

The other definition of civil society, posited by many but most commonly by neo-conservatives, is that it should, as far as possible, be independent of the state. That, outside of the state apparatus, there must be a range of organisations of self interest which are protected by various mechanisms, such as an independent judiciary and a free press, from interference by the state. These organisations

Old methods of non-collaboration and confrontation will have to give way to other creative ways of engaging the state and capital.

could be a little jazz collective, a multi-million member mass organisation or a multi-billion rand company. The greater the number and diversity of such organisations, the deeper the democratic content of a society. Important to this definition is that civil society is a range of forces, some democratic and some not.

There are some variations of this theme but, in essence, the two main definitions of civil society agree that it should be separate from the state and/or politically independent.

Historical roots

To my mind, these definitions still remain unclear. A brief historical overview may provide us with some clarity. The concept of civil society or 'society' separate from the state goes back to Roman times. A major component of this separation was the idea of private property as distinct from and autonomous of state or 'community' property.

The modern conception that civil society represents a separate sphere of human relations and activity and differentiated from the state appeared most clearly in the 18th Century. It was neither private nor public, embodying a whole range of activities apart from the private sphere of the household or the public sphere of the state. Its distinctiveness was characterised by the economic activities that emerged at the time.

In short, the modern economy was the major, though not the only, component of civil society. This system of property relations and capitalist appropriation provided the basis for the German philosopher Hegel to construct the conceptual difference between state and civil society. Of course the other essential element to this construct was the form that European states took at that time.

In the 19th century, Marx denied that the state was the embodiment of the people, as argued by Hegel, saying rather that it embodied the class relations and particularities within civil society.

Enter the Italian marxist Antonio Gramsci before the Second World War. Civil society, by his definition, comprises all private organisations such as churches, trade unions, political parties, and cultural associations which are distinct from the process of production and from the coercive apparatuses of the state. Civil society is therefore a sphere where capitalists, workers and others engage in political and ideological struggles and where political parties, trade unions, religious bodies, and a great variety of other organisations, come into existence. It is, however, not only where class struggles happen, but also where a whole range of other popular struggles around issues of race, gender, community, language etc occur.

Broad definition

A broad definition of civil society is that it is located between the public sphere of the state and the private sphere of the individual. Households and the individ-

ual as a citizen are part of the institutions of civil society. Politics, party politics included, is also an essential element of it. In addition, the state, outside its coercive functions, plays a major role in this arena. Public education and the state media are but two of the areas where the state engages in civil society. *Civil society is not only about social movements.* The institutions of capital are an essential part of it. It is, thus, the marketplace of economic activity, hegemonic battles, ideological skirmishes, cultural formation, resistance struggles, and state interference.

It would also seem that all the actors in this arena are not equal, with the state and capital having the most resources in which to engage in ideological and other battles on this terrain. The playing field, to use current jargon, is most uneven.

To claim otherwise would be to ignore the balance of forces on this terrain and, more seriously, to hide the relations of power. Any reasonably independent civil society does serve to constrain state oppression and its capacity to monopolise the daily lives of people. But, if we treat our definition of it superficially, we may disguise the other coercive and unequal relations within it.

In our haste to distance ourselves from the stalinist bureaucracy we may find ourselves in bed with the rabid free-marketeers.

The State

The present South African state had assembled a vast array of resources to constrain organisations, particularly black ones, politically, and to direct these and others economically. However, more recently it has allowed for more space for organisations to operate as a result of the political and economic crises it faced. This has had a major effect on civil society. The unbanning of organisations has thrown up a number of crucial issues, but these I will discuss later.

The issue I want to deal with is the state's divestment of various of its resources. It is privatising a wide variety of what were formerly parastatals, including that key instrument of ideological formation, the SABC. It is also looking to decentralise the functions of the central state. A key reason for this is so that the enormous state power it had to undertake its vast social engineering project should not be placed in the hands of the new rulers.

A decentralised state, and large chunks of former parastatals in private hands, will make it very difficult for the new governors to radically alter the balance of power in the new society. Here is an instance where *strengthening the independence of civil society does not necessarily mean greater equity or freedom.* The legacy of apartheid will require from the new state a redeployment of its resources and incentives to wipe out these backlogs.

This is not an argument that reintroduces by the back door the monopolistic tendencies of the state in politics, economics and development. The state, nevertheless, has the crucial role of orienting and providing society with a framework in which to address these problems. We may fall into the trap of not recognising the major role of the state in shaping civil society to suit its own project and thereby disguising its impact. In our haste to distance ourselves from the stalinist bureaucracy we may find ourselves in bed with the rabid free-marketeers.

If we are to understand civil society as an arena where a range of political and interest-based projects battle to get their ideas across and accepted, then the thrust of the South African apartheid state was to profoundly suppress that arena among black people. The ghettoisation and suppression of black politics was the centrepiece of its policy of political and economic subjugation. An emergence of differentiated interests, whether based on class or other special interests, was severely constrained.

National liberation

The by-product of this suppression was to provide the liberation movements with a powerful set of symbols, which were used to mobilise black people against white domination. Large sections of black civil society, therefore, were dominated by the national liberation project. The white state could not overcome its problem of lack of legitimacy, even when it tried to gain acceptance through patronage and the attempted co-option of certain communities.

Whether this situation of high mobilisation around a specific national project is going to advance the cause of democracy and independence of civil society at a time of reconstruction is uncertain.

The unbannings meant that these social movements had to revert back to organisations of interests. The transition has not been easy. They are still strongly tinged with the political mobilisation mode of operation.

Theoretically, if we accept that civil society is a terrain of ideological struggle, this is not problematic. The priorities and balance are at issue. While there is a stated commitment from the ANC that these movements should be 'independent of the state and politically autonomous', the practice on the ground suggests otherwise. Many activists in service organisations will only work with organisations that are of their political hue. The national liberation aspects excessively dominate local interests, and the danger is that it may subsume interests that will be at variance to future state-led projects. This would be a recipe for the transmission

belt syndrome (as mentioned earlier).

The social movements and politics

Interest-based organisations and social movements are traditionally supposed to represent the interests of their constituents or a coalition of interests. They would amend their behaviour to gain influence with the state or political parties or other organisations or they would attempt to change the behaviour of other parties.

In South Africa two main streams emerged in black society. The first one may be termed 'organisations of survival' and the other 'organisations of resistance'.

The organisations of 'survival' were the burial clubs, stokvels (informal savings clubs), hawkers associations, and even football clubs. There were also trade unions and professional associations which termed themselves non-political. Their basic tenet was to survive the rigours of apartheid and to provide some sustenance collectively.

However, as resistance and confrontation grew, particularly in the 1980s, many of these organisations were forced to choose sides. So there were a number of organisations which, for instance, adopted the Freedom Charter because constituencies became increasingly militant. For others, to achieve language rights in schools, for instance, they entered into an alliance with groups in the tricameral parliament. In essence, they were being squeezed by a state seeking legitimacy and liberation movements seeking hegemony in civil society. They, nevertheless, remained primarily defensive organisations, seeking survival though not aggressively articulating the interests of their members.

The organisations of resistance were formed to fill the vacuum created by the repression of political organisations. While styled as civics or trade unions, they were overtly political, sometimes having the painful task of straddling their members' interests with political considerations. Sometimes the two coalesced, at other times they were antagonistic. By and large, the political imperatives of the national liberation struggle won over. In urban areas, particularly, there is a highly politicised and militant social movement (which may not represent the majority of people, but which is the most influential in most areas).

As mentioned earlier, these organisations are more suited to resistance than reconstruction and negotiations. This has implications for a future development strategy. It has been argued that we have a history of autonomous, community-based, and self-reliant organisations. These would be ideal vehicles for non-governmental directed development. As suggested earlier, these were mobilisational organisations, and to convert them to development-oriented instruments requires a different set of organisational imperatives. Structures would need to be more permanent, instead of ad-hoc, and personnel will have to be trained in skills that will be different to mobilisational skills.

In addition, the tactical and strategic approach will have to be different. The old methods of non-collaboration and confrontation will have to give way to other creative ways of engaging the state and capital on the basis of interests. These interests have been constrained by the heavy tinge of politics. An example is the 'many hats' debate.

Many hats debate

Many are unhappy that certain leaders wear many hats. They are in the leadership of political parties, trade unions, and civics. In other circumstances or societies, this is not a problem. The trade unions and the Labour Party in Britain, for example, have a close relationship.

However, the overriding fear is that, because there is a greater potential here for subjugating specific interests to those of party-political interests, this is an area that needs to be trod carefully. Hence the strong push for independent social and interest organisations. The argument is not for them to stay out of politics, but rather that they correct the balance and that their involvement in politics is to further the interests of their members and not be swamped by other agendas.

The argument for politically independent organisations also comes from left critics of the dominant liberation organisations.

Theirs is an attempt to gain a foothold in the mass organisations to punt their ideas. It is, therefore, essential for them that these organisations are 'democratic'. Mass organisations and social movements, for them, should allow different political tendencies the opportunity to put forward their political positions within their structures.

Would such tendencies behave otherwise if they were in a dominant position is a moot point. The point here is that party-political alignment suppressed other political tendencies within mass organisations and, in some instances, actually weakened organisations substantially.

The sleight of hand being practised here is that, while politicians might claim that they want to have politically-autonomous organs of civil society, they clandestinely attempt to control them. Political parties will attempt to influence various constituencies.

Capital

Capital's insistence on a larger and independent civil society means it retains its dominant position within civil society as it is presently shaped. Great monopolies straddle our society. These institutions have enormous resources to influence, coerce and shape institutions and individuals. If this remains the case, then other organisations of civil society will be mere pygmies battling away at the periphery.

While I have implicitly argued that the state may play a role in mediating between the interests of capital and others, my intention is not to undermine the role that other organisations, such as trade unions, can play. My intention is to understand the role and strength of the institutions of capital in civil society so that we do not hide its real power. The number, independence, diversity and autonomy of organisations of civil society do not necessarily alter the balance of power.

A struggle

To recap, civil society is a terrain separate from the state and the process of production. Civil society is an arena in which all the sectors of society operate. The independence and diversity of civil society does not in itself ensure greater equity and freedom. Because the power relations are so unequal certain sectors like capital (under capitalism) will dominate it. The number of organisations in civil society is not an indicator of its vitality. This depends on a number of other factors such as the extent to which they are politically dominated, whether they can articulate their interests, whether they can balance their own interests against broader political imperatives, whether they have organised democratic expression, and whether interest groups can be sufficiently non-sectarian.

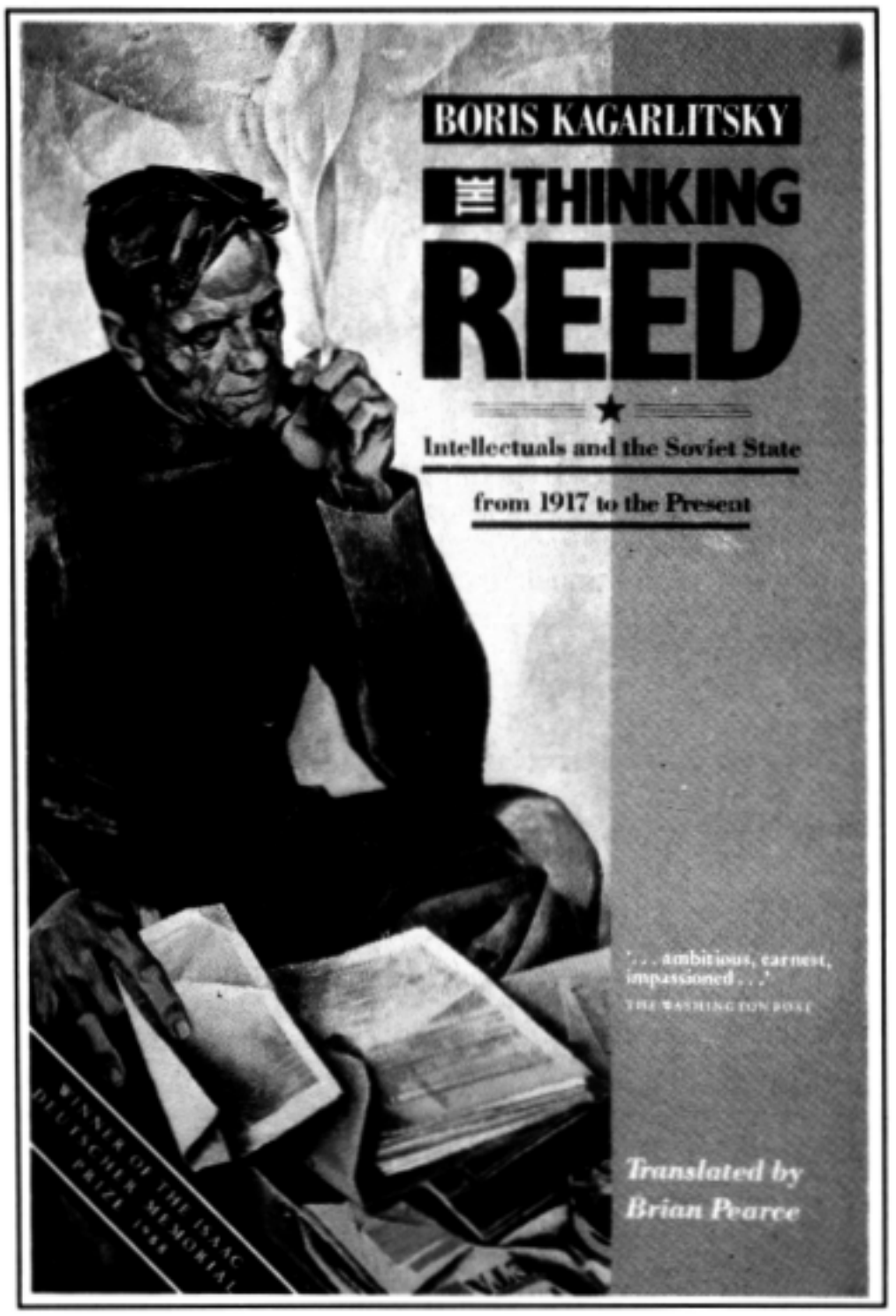
Civil society will always remain deeply tinged with politics and, by its very nature, must be. We do have the range of organisations and are better placed than a number of other societies to develop a vibrant society, but not without a struggle.

We must, however, address the deep socio-economic and political inequalities in our society. We must be for the poor in relation to the rich, the rural as opposed to the urban, women instead of men, the small against the big and the local against the national.

• *Monty Narsoo is the general secretary of the Association of Democratic Journalists (ADJ)* •

Socialist politics in post-Communist Russia

Workers of the World, Unite! Again?



Michael McFaul interviews ***BORIS KAGARLITSKY****, leader of the newly-formed Socialist Party of Russia, people's deputy of the Moscow City Soviet, reknowned author and former political prisoner*

In a revolutionary situation in which communism has been discredited and the Communist Party has been labelled a totalitarian organisation, 'socialism' is a dirty word in the Soviet Union today. The polarisation between Gorbachev's communist apparat and Boris Yeltsin's new cadres of liberals has left little room for alterative ideas or movements. Yet a handful of socialists are trying to carve out a *third path.* Led by Boris Kargalitsky and Mikhail Milutin, the Socialist Party of Russia has concluded that the peoples' interests are not represented by either the old system nor the new liberal agenda. Rather, they seek to build a truly socialist society out of the rubble of stalinism.

In addition to his party activities, Kagarlitsky is a well-known publicist both in Russia and the West. He is the author of *The Thinking Reed: Intellectuals and the Soviet State from 1917 to the Present, The Dialectics of Change, and Farewell Perestroika*, all published by Verso Press in London. Since the spring of 1990, Kargalitsky has also served as a people's deputy in the Moscow City Soviet.

Q: How did you first become involved in opposition politics?
My parents were intellectuals who were both very connected to Western culture. Through their international acquaintances, I became accustomed to interacting with Western intellectuals, who were mostly radical leftists. At that time in Russia, there were many young intellectuals who were very critical of the (Soviet) system. But I was not typical because, from the very

beginning, I knew a lot about the very real problems of the Western capitalist system, and therefore had a more critical attitude towards capitalism. So, I did not just get involved in politics. I got involved in politics as a socialist.

A second influence on my political development happened when I was a student, when I got charmed by Marx and to a lesser extent Engels as philosophers and historians. Then, I began reading Gramsci, Marcuse, the French marxist school.

Q: When did you first form a political organisation?
In 1978, I joined a very small group called 'Varianti Circle'. They produced an annual collection of essays called 'Varianti'. Members of the group were mostly marxists. Most of the people who were active in that group are now members of the Social Democratic Party. We began to produce a *samizdat* (self-published) journal called the *Left Turn*, which I edited. After becoming editor, I was expelled from the theatrical institute where I studied, and later imprisoned in 1982.

After leaving prison, we had no organisation for some time. Gradually, we began to arrange political seminars. One of the people who came to these seminars was Mikhail Milutin, who later founded the Socialist Party with me. From these seminars, we organised the first informal organisation in Moscow called the 'Club for Social Initiatives' in 1986. The idea of the organisation was to help the process of legalising the informal movements. The following year, we helped to organise a conference of different informal groups. Here, we formed the first socialist organisation called the Federation of Socialist Public Clubs (FSOK).

FSOK disintegrated during the period of people's fronts, (which were) formed first in Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia. Then the movement shifted to Russia, (where they) were very different from the other republics as they were not nationalistic. Rather, they were more like broad social movements in favour of democracy. They also were not national, but regional. Moscow, Leningrad, Yaroslav and other major cities each had their own front, not affiliated with any national structure. And, in this sense, this period was a step backward, as we lost a national structure when FSOK disintegrated into people's fronts. Moreover, some groups did not join us in the people's fronts. Some of them moved to the right; others to the left.

Q: Which organisations did not participate?
Well, 'Obshchina', the Anarcho-Syndicalists, left the people's front and suddenly shifted far to the right, forming alliances with liberal groups rather than with our broad movement. For a while, they were very hostile towards us. But the people who formerly participated in FSOK, and the 'Club for Socialist Initiatives' remained in contact, and later formed the base of the Moscow section of the Socialist Party. The group changed names and affiliations, but there was always a core of people united by the project of building a socialist party. As early as 1987, our main agenda was to organise a party of labour with some sort of socialist orientation.

Q: Why did the fronts collapse?
Well, I think the period of broad movements was finished already in 1989 after the elections to the local soviets (1). Then, suddenly, many activists got elected to the soviets; in many soviets, they formed the majority. This situation was absolutely different. As a consequence of these elections, the structures of the fronts collapsed because the activists were no longer outside of government structures.

Another reason for the collapsing of the fronts was the emergence of political disagreements. All mass movements eventually have to make some sort of differentiation of interests between different classes and social groups. But then this differentiation goes too far, and you have to go back, regroup, and figure out which differences are basic and which are secondary. This is what we are going through now with the other groups on the left.

Q: Did the people's fronts play a similar role to that of the UDF in South Africa?
It was very similar. However, our fronts were not very broad in the sense that they were originally created as socialist organisations. (But) some of our activists during the period of 'differentiation' suddenly moved to the far right, becoming Thatcherites. For many of them, being socialist was a tactical option of being anti-communist. As the people's fronts were the biggest opposition movements at the time, it was a tactical option to join this movement.

Q: How do you evaluate the decision of leaders of the people's fronts to participate in the soviets?
There are no real legislative processes in the Soviet Union today. Rather, it is parliamentary chaos. These institutions (the soviets) do not function and cannot produce results. In this sense, we are disappointed that activists became deputies. Consequently, a few weeks ago, the Socialist fraction of the Moscow City Soviet adopted the decision to withdraw from these soviet activities. Instead, we are going to use our deputy status for different activities, such as helping the (teachers') strike committee or getting access to buildings and facilities.

But I want to stress that this is not a position of principle. If there were any sort of reasonable parliamentary process, we would participate - as an opposition, of course, as the majority right now is liberal or rightwing.

At the same time, we have to participate and win elections (to these soviets), (otherwise we) have no proof of having real mass support. No serious political movement can reject parliamentary methods entirely. Our position is a two-front strategy.

Q: Why did you decide to form a party?
In June (1990), there was a big debate over this question. Some people did not want a party. They argued for the formation of some kind of broad socialist front. In the end, however, we could not avoid forming the party as there was the danger some other group might try to create a party with the socialist label. Now, when opinion polls are conducted, we see that our Party has a stable potential electorate. In major cities like Moscow and Leningrad, we already receive 10-12% support.

So far, I think our support comes from name recognition, not any recognition of our politics. Rather, there is an important layer of people which favour 'socialism' and is critical of 'communism'. They do not want communism and they do not want capitalism. So the image of the Socialist Party is exactly what they would like to support.

Q: How is the programme of the Socialist Party different from that of the Communist Party?
In the Soviet Union, this distinction is very easy. This may be difficult for South Africans to understand, but here in the Soviet Union, the Communist Party for many years was not a real party, but just an element of the power structure. This is essential to understand. So, when we rejected the undemocratic, totalitarian regime in favour of democratic institutions, we thereby rejected the Communist Party. Ideology is not really at issue. Now, however, the Communist Party is trying to become a real party, though it is very complicated for them because they do not know what a real party is.

The communists now are trying to define themselves as the

party which defends the interests of workers. However, at the same time, they are still connected to the old power structure. Moreover, they are involved in privatisation processes. Because they are enormously rich, the (Communist) Party apparachiks are involved in the formation of bureaucratic capital and the newly-emerging oligarchy which we consider to be our main enemy.

So, in reality, they do not resemble a socialist or labour party at all. This enormous communist bureaucracy is one of the worst elements of the system because it could lead to the Third World-isation [sic] of our country, to the formation of a new bureaucratic bourgeoisie of the Third World, corruption model, whereby political power is transformed into ownership and property.

Q: Is this how you understand perestroika?
Yes, this is the objective of both liberal and communist projects of perestroika, though they have different tactics. But our position is that they basically have the same strategy. Their main debate is tactical. How to share the wealth? How to divide the property? Our position is to reject both of them. This, then, is the second difference between the communists and socialists. However, I should add that, within the Communist Party there are groups which support our position. We therefore do not reject communists *per se*. In fact, many people now are considering leaving the CPSU to join us.

The third difference between our socialists and communists is that we reject not just their political organisation, democratic centralism, but also the very religious, militant mentality of communism. We also reject the vanguardism that is *inherent* in communism.

We are in favour of a *social vanguard* rather than a political vanguard. Some layers of the population, including some layers of labour, are much more advanced than others. That is natural. In this sense, a social vanguard is necessary. It means that you have to establish some sort of hegemony by the groups which are socially more advanced while leading the groups which are more backward.

Q: Often, Western publications label groups such as the 'Democratic Union' as leftwing, while calling Boris Yeltsin a 'radical'. How would you describe these groups?
Two years ago, you could use the term 'leftwing' to describe some critics of the regime in so much as their behaviour was similar to that of a protest movement. Politically, they were confused about their positive goals. Now the situation has changed. After the differentiation period, everybody understood more or less their interests. So the dominant forces are rightwing liberals or neo-conservatives, in the Western sense. But, on the other hand, we have some activists in our Socialist Party now who were once Democratic Union members. Those were the people who spontaneously formed the opposition in the beginning. But they organically moved towards us after the differentiation (of interests).

Q: So this differentiation has taken place only recently?
It is still going on. It has finished among the politicians. It has not finished among the rank-and-file activists, and even less so among the masses.

Q: How does your Party interact with the liberal opposition parties?
Tactically, we support any individual or organisation which supports democratic rights. On the other hand, we are becoming more and more critical of the liberal elites in Moscow and Leningrad because they are undemocratic; they are completely hostile or indifferent to many democratic procedures, and are more interested in economic liberalism rather than political democracy. We are trying to use our hegemonic position in the left after last year's activities (of differentiation) to articulate a true leftist alternative to these liberals. Now, for example, the Anarcho-Syndicalists, left-wing Social Democrats and some of the Greens (members of the Green Party) have joined our ranks.

We have three main priorities. First, we are trying to form a new political culture of the left - redefining socialism, redefining the left, redefining marxism; not dropping everything, but reconsidering basic concepts. We are bringing people together in seminars to discuss rather abstract topics so as to create a new collective thinking about socialism again.

Second, we are trying to help create an independent trade union movement. The weakness of organised labour could be fatal in a situation like ours today.

Finally, we want to use our political power, including our authority as people's deputies, to create the best political cover as possible for the formation and development of this trade union movement, including for example, campaigning for the removal of the strike law. There are too many obstacles for declaring a strike.

Q: Nonetheless, in the last two years there have been some strikes. How were they organised?
Initially, there was no legislation. Then, these new anti-strike laws were passed, but they were not enforced. Now they are beginning to enforce them. This is good sign. It shows that they are afraid of the labour movement growing.

Q: Where is labour most organised?
Well, first of all , there were the miners' strikes (in 1989) which were initially an enormous success. However, this movement quickly subsided because there were no unions, no structures, no activists core, etc.

Q: But didn't the miners form strike committees?
Yes, but then the regional strike committees immediately lost contact with the (workers') collectives. We ended up with something like the American trade union bureaucracy but without the unions themselves. There were lots of scandals about corruption and so on. You cannot have a real labour movement without organising unions.

After these initial developments, there was a pause in activity. But now, strikes are emerging again in manufacturing, education, and in the mines again.

Q: How do you explain the lack of Soviet workers' activities in politics thus far?
Well, it is still to come. Different classes are becoming activated one by one. Initially, the intellectuals were better organised. They monopolised politics, which alienated the workers very much. Most of the workers were very anti-communist, but passively. But now, they have become frustrated with the liberals, not having any illusions about the virtues of capitalism. So, the time for the workers is yet to come.

FOOTNOTE

1. 'Soviet' in Russian means committee. Formally, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR is the highest legislative authority in the country. Each county, city and city district also has a soviet. After 1918, the soviets served as legislative facades for the Communist Party. However, after the first open elections in the Soviet Union in over seventy years, this has begun to change.

• Michael McFaul is doing research at Moscow State University on new revolutionary movements in the Soviet Union today. This interview was conducted on 6 March 1991.•

Through an examination of the recent history of the union movement, ***DEVAN PILLAY*** *and* ***EDDIE WEBSTER*** *look at scenarios of future relations between a democratic state and the trade union movement, and argue that the South African labour movement is well-poised to avoid the mistakes of post-colonial Africa*

Cosatu, the party and the future state

What will the relationship be between a future democratic state and the trade union movement? What lessons can the trade union movement learn from post-colonial Africa?

Fundamental differences exist in the perceptions of the trade union role, differences that have divided the movement since unions first emerged in nineteenth century Europe. The division lies between those who see significant potential in trade union activity, and those who argue that such activity does not in itself facilitate (indeed some hold that it may even inhibit) the transformation of capitalist society.

Hyman refers to the former as the optimistic tradition and the latter as the pessimistic tradition – foremost of which is the Leninist tradition which counterposes the leading role of the communist party to the inevitable 'economism' of trade unions (Hyman).

These differences have consequences for the choices trade unions make in the face of the unfolding struggle for democracy in South Africa. They affect the class content of any national liberation struggle, and will ultimately influence the character of a democratic South Africa.

'I think all the liberatory movements of this country are aware that Cosatu is powerful, and if Cosatu was to go against them, or maybe become an opposition party, they would be in serious trouble...' — Chris Dlamini, Cosatu Vice-president (Saturday Star 1/12/90)

The evolution of political unionism

An alliance between the trade union movement and the national liberation movement emerged in South Africa in 1955, when the South African Congress of Trade Unions (Sactu) was formed.

Sactu's alliance with the ANC and the Congress movement redefined its trade union role along the lines of 'political unionism'. Faced by a weak power base in the factories, a hostile state and intransigent employers, Sactu chose to engage politically with nationalism as a means of transforming its small factory base.

The 1950s experiment in political unionism hardly had time to consolidate before it was preempted by the state repression of the early and mid-1960s. South Africa was to experience a decade of 'industrial peace' (and economic growth). During the 1970s a new wave of shopfloor based unions began to emerge in the wake of the 1973 strikes. These emerging unions chose to concentrate on building democratic shopfloor structures, based on worker control, accountability and the mandating of worker representatives, as a basis for developing working class leadership in the factories.

These challenges, as well as the student uprisings that began in 1976, were to culminate in the recognition of black unions for the first time in South African labour history (1).

Different traditions

A new system of rule began to emerge in the workplace, laying the basis for a system of industrial citizenship. This was to give workers a new self-confidence. It created, for the first time in Africa, a shopfloor tradition amongst the unions affiliated to the Federation of South African Trade Unions (Fosatu), as well as the Cape Town-based Food and Canning Workers Union (FCWU) and the General Workers Union (GWU).

The FCWU and GWU initially combined this emphasis on shopfloor activity with a commitment to seeking alliances with the broader community. Through this united action, these unions were for a short period (1979-81) drawn closer to the emerging community organisations,

Post-colonial Africa and South Africa

Governing parties in post-colonial Africa, in striving to modernise and rise out of the ashes of under-development, have generally sought to control their countries' trade union movements . Unions have generally been seen as representing a relatively small, privileged class of employed urban workers, amidst a sea of unemployed masses living on a meagre subsistence (Damachi & Fashoyin). They thus faced enormous pressure after independence to play a developmental role (where 'national interests' come first) rather than a representational role (where members' interests are paramount).

South African trade unions have a lot to learn from the experiences of unions in post-colonial Africa. However, the level of industrialisation, as well as the size of the labour movement, makes South Africa a special case on the African continent. In essence, there are three important differences:

Firstly, in contrast to the rest of Africa, where the trade union movement was weak and divided, a future democratic South Africa will inherit a strong, democratic and relatively united trade union movement.

Secondly, whereas in post-colonial Africa the unions were not involved in the struggle for liberation, in South Africa an alliance has been formed between Cosatu and the leading liberation organisation, the ANC.

Thirdly, while in post-colonial Africa narrow nationalism often predominated, South Africa has a long history of class politics through the South African Communist Party, founded in 1921, and the shopfloor tradition that emerged in the 1970s. In addition, various strands of Trotskyism have persisted since the 1930s, particularly in the Western Cape.

Furthermore, the institutional power of the labour movement will narrow the range of options facing any future democratic state in South Africa. Unlike the states of post-colonial Africa, a future South African state will have to accommodate the interests of organised labour at all levels of society. If it resists, it faces a labour movement in *opposition* to it, with the capacity to develop an alternative (socialist) programme.

Africa has also seen relationships of partnership between unions and the state, or a degree of union independence. This is becoming more common, and recent developments in Zimbabwe (see Pillay,1991b) and July's Gabarone conference of African trade unions (see Briefings) indicate that unions in Africa are learning from South Africa, and adopting a much more assertive and critical role in their respective countries. •

and the new general unions. The most notable 'community union' was the South African Allied Workers Union (Saawu) which, following in the tradition of Sactu, stressed the need to link struggles in the workplace with township struggles. They argued that it was 'economism' and 'workerism' for unions to restrict activities to factory struggle.

This 'national democratic' or 'Congress'(ANC-oriented) tradition involved a view that South Africa could not be understood in simple class terms. Social reality was based on a 'colonialism of a special type'(CST), necessitating 'national-democratic' rather than 'class' struggle as the appropriate strategic response (2). This meant a multi-class alliance under the leadership of the ANC, drawing on all sectors of the oppressed masses and sympathetic whites, and aiming to establish a 'national democracy'.

A third political tradition, black consciousness (BC), spawned its own union, the Black and Allied Workers Union (Bawu) during the 1970s. BC emphasised 'black leadership' of the trade unions and opposed 'non-racialism' in favour of a policy of 'anti-racism'. In practice this has meant opposition to white intellectual leadership in the trade union movement.

The Council of Unions of South Africa (Cusa), which was formed out of those unions which refused to form part of Fosatu in 1979, was mildy BC. Although part of the four-year unity talks aimed at forming one trade union centre, Cusa withdrew in 1985, and did not form part of Cosatu. Instead, it joined with the strongly BC Azanian Confederation of Trade Unions (Azactu) in 1986 to form the National Council of Trade Unions (Nactu).

Strategic compromise

The rapid mobilisation by 'community unions' in the early 1980's, the emergence of community organisations overtly associated with the national democratic tradition, and the growing interest in political involvement amongst rank-and-file leadership, forced Fosatu to respond to criticism that it was isolating itself from wider political struggle (see Lambert & Webster).

Fosatu officially began to take up non-factory issues, for example opposition by the Katlehong shopsteward local to the destruction of shacks on the East Rand, and the rejection of the tricameral parliamentary elections. However, the turning point came when Fosatu entered into joint action with student and civic organisations in the historic 1984 November Transvaal stayaway. This was made possible both by the overlapping membership of these organisations and pressure from union members demanding action in the face of rising rents, transport costs, Bantu Education and the repressive local government system.

The formation of Cosatu in December 1985 brought together unions from all three political traditions described above: the well-organised unions drawn from the 'shop-floor' tradition; the general unions drawn from the 'national democratic' tradition ; and the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), having recently broken from the BC tradition.

Cosatu now faced the difficult task of blending these diverse political traditions into a working class political project. This challenge was captured by the NUM's Cyril Ramaphosa (now ANC general secretary), in his opening speech to the inaugural congress of the federation. Cosatu, he said, would take an active role in national politics in alliance with other progressive organisations, but

such an alliance would be on terms favourable to the working class.

Tactical, strategic and theoretical differences began to narrow in the first half of 1987, as Cosatu wove together what Jon Lewis has called 'a strategic compromise' (Lewis).

One example of this was the political resolution adopted by the National Union of Metalworkers (Numsa), at its May 1987 foundation conference. Rather than challenge symbols of the national democratic tradition, Numsa endorsed the Freedom Charter as a 'good foundation stone on which to start building our working class programme', thus attempting to imprint on the Freedom Charter the strategy of the shopfloor tradition.

In adopting the Freedom Charter, Cosatu also noted that it saw the struggle against national oppression and economic exploitation as 'complementary to each other and part of an uninterrupted struggle for total liberation'. There is, in this argument, no conflict between the struggles for national liberation and socialism (Fine & Webster).

Current balance of forces

The democratic trade union movement, almost six years after the launch of Cosatu, is still divided.

Cosatu itself has grown in strength, and now has over 1,2 million paid-up members. It is recognised by both the state and employers as the major trade union force, and has won a range of battles on the shopfloor, from union recognition and massive wage increases to maternity benefits and national bargaining. The three traditions which merged into Cosatu have by-and-large gelled into a *transformed* 'national-democratic' or Congress formation. 1990 saw Cosatu replacing Sactu in the revolutionary alliance with the ANC and the SACP.

However, although 1989 saw greater cooperation between Cosatu and Nactu, through the Workers Summit and the joint stayaway against amendments to the Labour Relations Act (LRA), the prospects of Nactu merging with Cosatu remain relatively remote.

Indeed, since its 1988 Congress, the much smaller Nactu has been in some disarray. In contrast to Cosatu's developing internal unity, Nactu has experienced an increasingly fierce internal struggle between its black consciousness (Azapo) supporters and it's africanist (PAC) supporters. The latter has since 1988 succeeded in taking control of the federation (see Pillay, 1990c).

Finally, there still exists a large number of small unaffiliated unions, eg the Cape Health Workers Union, which has established a strong base in the Western Cape. Outside the democratic camp, a range of unaffiliated unions recently formed the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of SA (Fitusa) in opposition to Cosatu and Nactu.

The Cosatu-ANC-SACP alliance

Cosatu worked closely with the ANC-aligned United Democratic Front (UDF) since its formation. When that organisation was restricted in 1988, Cosatu, as a major part of the loose replacement, the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM), often found itself taking the lead in political campaigns.

The alliance has taken on a distinct character since the unbanning of the ANC and SACP (which has occurred within the context of an unfolding climate of negotiations between the ANC and the apartheid regime). To what extent has Cosatu compromised its independence by entering into such an alliance, and to what extent has Cosatu played a determining role in the alliance? The answers to these questions have direct implications for the future relationship between Cosatu and an ANC/SACP-led government.

At one level, Cosatu has exercised a great deal of influence on the alliance, and is well-poised to play an even greater role in shaping the character of that alliance. Apart from MDM-related political activities, Cosatu's collective bargaining muscle and expertise has placed it at the centre of a wide variety of issues concerning a future democratic South Africa. The federation has played a prominent role in formulating policy on, for example future economic options, housing, education, health, training and social benefits.

A future democratic government will be unable to ignore the organised might of Cosatu as it tries to transform society, no matter what the exact nature of union/government relationship is. A degree of partnership will be inevitable at the socio-economic level.

However, at the strictly state-political level, the debate about the role of trade unions, and its relationship with political parties, becomes crucial. It has direct implications for the possibilities of constructing a democratic society such that working class issues and concerns are paramount.

Cosatu is not homogeneous

While Cosatu has moved well beyond the 'strategic compromise' of 1987-88, and strengthened its internal unity, it is by no means a politically homogeneous federation. On the one hand, the dominant Congress orientation of Cosatu is itself composed of various emphases, some of which stand in direct contrast to one another. On the other hand, some officials and shopstewards belong to other liberation organisations, including the Workers Organisation for Socialist Action (Wosa), the Marxist Workers Tendency (MWT), the New Unity Movement, Azapo and the PAC.

Differences *within* Congress range from the position that Cosatu should simply follow the lead of the ANC and SACP at the political level, to the position that Cosatu should be a more independent and critical partner in the alliance. Thus, in the first position, Cosatu does not need to be independently represented in negotiations with the regime, as the ANC and SACP can adequately represent labour (see Pillay, 1990a).

At the other end of the spectrum is the

position that Cosatu must be independently represented in all negotiations leading to a constituent assembly. Cosatu representatives should be directly accountable to Cosatu, and subject to recall if necessary. In addition, Cosatu should first formulate its own position at every stage of negotiations, and then meet with the ANC and SACP to formulate an alliance position, which is then taken to the negotiation table (see *SA Labour Bulletin* Volume 15, No 3).

This perspective has been strengthened by the way the alliance has been operating since the unbannings. Cosatu, as well as the SACP, have often complained about not being properly consulted by the ANC, particularly when the ANC has made fundamental tactical shifts. Many unionists now make a distinction between Cosatu's alliance with the ANC, and its alliance with the SACP, where it is felt that the unions' independence and integrity is respected more (see Daniels, 1991).

Significantly, out of the four unionists who publicly emerged as SACP leaders in July 1990, two are senior Numsa leaders. Moses Mayekiso, Numsa general-secretary and president of the recently-formed Civic Association for the Southern Transvaal (Cast), and John Gomomo, full-time Numsa shopsteward and Cosatu second vice-president, both come from the 'shopfloor' Fosatu tradition. According to Gomomo, the unions have been playing a central role in determining how the SACP structures its legal presence (Pillay,1990b).

The Cosatu-SACP alliance

The SACP's draft workers charter, which was circulated in 1989, gives a clear indication of current thinking within the party about trade union independence. In contrast to the traditional 'transmission belt' conception of trade unionism of the past, the party now states that there shall be 'no restrictions' on the rights of workers to belong to political parties or trade unions. Unions should be 'completely independent' and answerable only to the democratic decisions of their members.

It states clearly: 'No political party, state organ or enterprise...shall...interfere with such independence'. All workers shall have the right to strike, and all collective bargaining legislation shall 'require the consent of the majority in the trade union movement'. Thus the party sees the unions playing a vibrant and determining role in shaping a future South Africa (see *WIP* 62/63).

In March 1990 the party and Cosatu, after meeting together in Harare, restated the necessity of Cosatu remaining independent 'as a matter of principle and practice' (see Pillay, 1990a). These sentiments have been repeated by top party officials like Joe Slovo (*WIP* 64), Mac Maharaj (*SASPU Focus* Vol 1, No 3) and Jeremy Cronin (*SA Labour Bulletin* Vol 15, No 3). They came as a relief to many unionists in Cosatu, who over the years have witnessed dogmatic and sectarian practices of many party activists, within the unions and outside.

But for many unionists the question is: to what extent is the new party outlook and commitment to democratic principles and practices deeply *entrenched* in the party? This has direct implications for the extent to which Cosatu, as an alliance partner, is *compelled* by objective circumstances to compromise its independence in the interests of maintaining a united front against the apartheid regime.

Cause for optimism?

Although Fawu, of which Chris Dlamini is president, has been accused of adopting 'Stalinist' practices (see Theron, 1990), the four unionists (Dlamini, Mufamadi, Gomomo and Mayekiso) who are part of the SACP's ILG, all express views which reflect the party's *new* outlook, in particular a sensitivity towards the need to maintain trade union independence (see Pillay, 1990b).

'Stalinism' persists

While the party has shed much of the baggage of the past, some influential party leaders and rank-and-file activists are still bound by various forms of dogmatic, 'Stalinist' thinking and practices.

For example, central committee member Brian Bunting, until last year editor of the SACP journal *African Communist*, will only go as far as the current Soviet leadership in criticising the former Soviet dictator Josef Stalin.

In the Learning Nation (*New Nation* 25/5/90), in response to a Trotskyist interpretation of East European history, he quotes Gorbachev at length, including his view that, while Stalin's political errors and abuses were 'gross', Stalin made an 'incontestable contribution to the struggle for socialism'. Subsequent articles in the Learning Nation (*New Nation* 15/6/90 and 22/6/90) also reflect thinking which does nothing to dispel the suspicion of critics that the party's new thinking is but a continuation of the old policy of religiously following every 'twist and turn' of Moscow.

Newly-elected ANC NEC member Harry Gwala, a party veteran of almost fifty years, and a member of its Internal Leadership Group (ILG), said recently (*SASPU Focus* 1.3, July 1990) that glasnost is part of the *natural* development of socialism in Eastern Europe (as opposed to being a response to a severe crisis of such 'socialism'). The lack of democracy and openness of the past 70 years was a result of imperialist aggression, which necessitated a 'highly centralised and organised state machinery'. This implies that the iron fist of Stalin's rule was *necessary*. Gwala repeated these views publicly on other occasions.

The general secretary of Cosatu's South African Clothing and Textile Workers Union (Sactwu), John Copelyn, in the latest *SA Labour Bulletin* (Vol 15, No 8), informs us of a recent example of gross intolerance displayed by another SACP veteran, Raymond Mhlaba, chairperson of the ILG. At a Cosatu Eastern Cape regional congress, Mhlaba curtly told a unionist who raised some difficulties about the functioning of the alliance: 'We have had an alliance for decades, Those who challenge it are mischief makers and need to be brought before a people's court'!

The views of such prominent party leaders raises questions about the extent to which the SACP has *completely* moved away from, for example, a vanguardist approach to politics, and a 'transmission belt' conception of trade unionism. •

Gomomo reveals the extent of the unionists' influence by pointing out that, in May 1990, the party asked the unions to guide it in establishing itself as a legal, democratic organisation with proper structures of accountability. Gomomo feels certain that any remaining traces of 'Stalinism' in the party will be swept away by the thousands of union members who will be joining the party.

[Less optimistic unionists feel that the *unions* will be the ones to change, as the 'inherent' dogmatism and sectarianism of the party (see box on page 34) takes root, as evidenced in the recent history of Fawu (for example see Theron, 1990)].

As argued elsewhere (see Pillay, 1990b) these four unionists, and the Numsa unionists in particular, are unlikely to have been 'co-opted' by a form of 'Stalinism'. Instead, their appointments as SACP leaders point to a movement on both sides: the 'shopfloor' unionists having confidence in the party and appreciating the need to engage more assertively within the arena of state-power politics, and the party recognising that the organisational strength of Cosatu is largely due to the emphasis the old Fosatu placed on building an independent democratic organisation primarily around workplace issues.

Only time will tell whether these unionists' confidence is justified. Nevertheless, this convergence does suggest the real possibility of an extension and deepening of the 'leadership of the working class' in the struggle against apartheid, and the 'uninterrupted' transition to socialism.

Building 'working class politics'

'Working class politics' means different things to different political projects. For 'Trotskyists' in Wosa and the MWT, it means narrowing the base of the national liberation struggle to include only the 'working class' (rural and urban workers, the unemployed, housewives, school pupils), what is left of the peasantry and, at a distance, sections of the black 'petty bourgeoisie'. It means campaigning around workplace issues, living conditions, transport issues, etc, within the framework of a 'direct' struggle for socialism.

In practice this means avoiding broad alliances with all sections of the community, including the religious communities, certain bantustan leaders, sections of capital etc. Either the ANC has to be transformed into a working class party with a socialist programme, or an independent working class party (which may form a tenuous alliance with the ANC) must be at the head of 'working class politics'.

Cosatu and the SACP, however, have brought to the fore a different kind of 'working class politics' – one which can flow comfortably with the broad current of 'national-democratic' politics, giving it a distinct democratic working class imprint. This is to ensure that national liberation proceeds to a democratic socialism, and is not diverted to one or other form of exploitative authoritarianism.

In contrast to the neo-'Stalinist' perspective mentioned earlier, and the 'Trotskyist' perspective outlined above, the evolving relationship between the SACP and Cosatu point to a *critical* partnership path for Cosatu in its relations with the party and/or the ANC (depending on whether the ANC-SACP alliance continues as it is, whether the party and the ANC merge, or whether the party itself becomes a critical partner in a looser alliance).

In this sense 'working class politics' means building a strong working class movement (including the trade unions, the party and mass organisations within working class communities) that will bring working class issues and concerns to the forefront of national liberation politics. The campaign for a Workers' Charter, and the possibilities that it brings of forging a united workers' movement, is an essential part of this process (see Pillay, 1991a).

Future scenarios

Does the existence of a relatively strong labour movement open up the possibility of extending democratic working class hegemony in a future South Africa? In an interview with *WIP* (No 69), the noted radical sociologist Michael Burawoy has suggested that South Africa is unique 'in that its relatively advanced economic base has engendered powerful working class struggles before democratisation. In this context democratisation can further escalate demands which capitalism patently cannot meet'.

What are the politics of the labour movement likely to be in a democratic South Africa? It has been pointed out that, at one level, the objective situation will impose a high degree of cooperation between the labour movement and a future democratic government. As the current government is rapidly realising, the strength and expertise of the labour movement cannot be ignored at the socio-economic level. This is particularly so in terms of drafting labour legislation, developing the collective bargaining system, and formulating economic and social policies. However, while there may be union-state cooperation in certain areas, there may be conflict in other areas.

At the state-political level, the labour movement under a future democratic government will be faced with a number of options. As has been the case in post-colonial Africa, the path the unions will follow at this level will be largely determined by the struggles that are fought along the road to liberation (this will have a direct bearing on the relationship between the unions and the leading forces of liberation, the ANC and SACP). During the current conjuncture, the crucial issue is the manner in which a political settlement is reached.

If the current negotiations process does not involve the mass membership of the ANC, and the independent participation of Cosatu, and results in a behind-the-scenes settlement which falls far short of a constituent assembly (and therefore a highly compromised ANC government) then it is very likely that mass dissatisfaction with the process will rise amongst organised workers.

If, on the other hand, the negotiations process takes on a more bottom-up character, and results in a non-racial, democratic constituent assembly where the people, and in particular organised workers, play a determining role in drawing up a new constitution, then the tripartite alliance is likely to be strengthened.

Class contradictions

In a post-apartheid society, however, class contradictions are likely to come sharply to the fore as the new state embarks upon the task of national development (no matter how democratic this state is). Trade unions which emphasise their *representative* role by struggling to defend and improve members' working and living conditions, could easily be seen as opponents of the new state's attempts at national development. A new government is likely to argue that the urban organised working class is not the most dispossessed.

But attempts to forge national unity, to prevent the flight of capital and scarce skills, and to encourage foreign investment, will put pressure on a new government to limit its redistributive efforts (especially to the unorganised rural population, and the unemployed). The government is therefore likely to be strong on promises, but unable to meet all its commitments in the short-term. This could push the unions to continue to find common cause with other dispossessed strata – particularly if its alliance with a democratic party of the whole working class (which the SACP may become) strengthens.

These pressures will place the new

Capital and the apartheid state

On the one hand the trade union movement has, over the past year and a half, been engaged in greater mass militancy than previous years, and its leadership has become more sophisticated. On the other hand, the union movement has also, through struggle, improved its relations with sections of capital and the state.

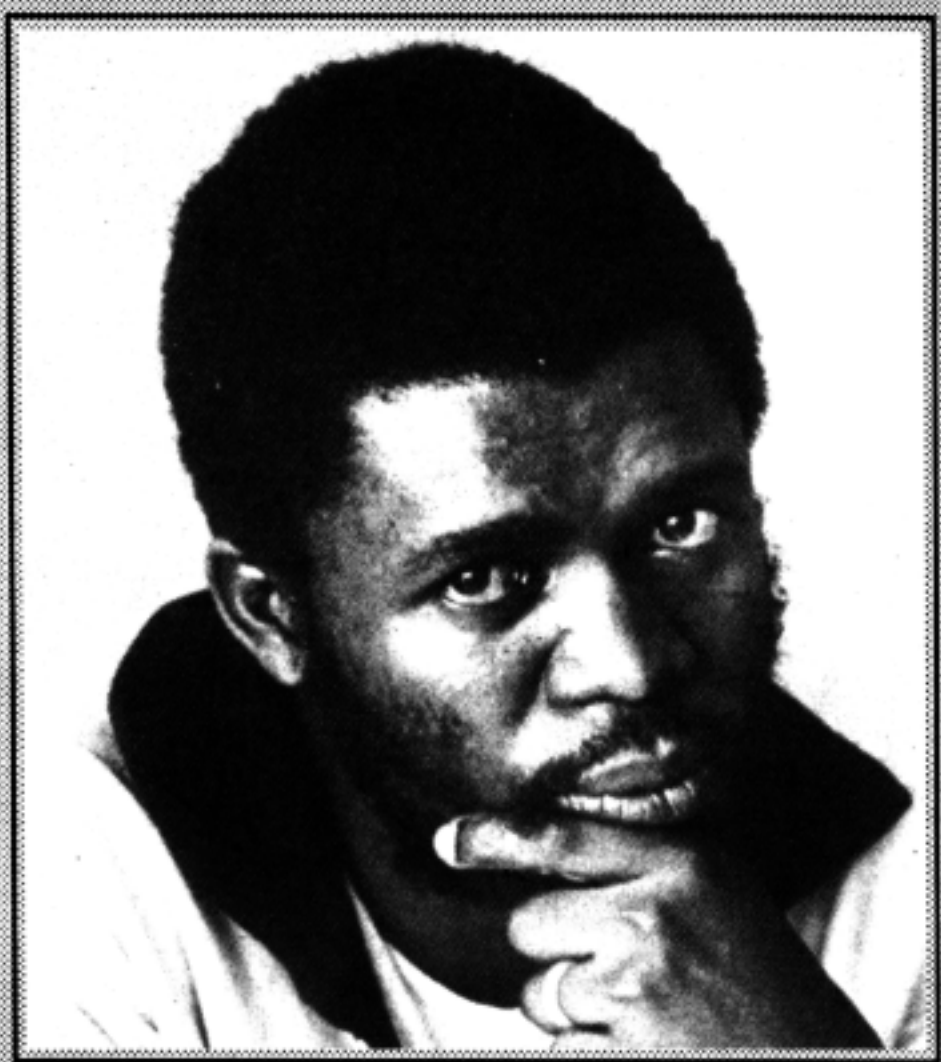
A year ago, Bobby Godsell, negotiator for the employers' federation, Saccola, and Anglo-American director, in rejecting notions of a 'subtle conspiratorial alliance' between the state and capital, spoke instead of a 'tactical alliance' between capital and labour against the state over the Labour Relations Amendment Act (LRAA). This was when the state refused to endorse last year's historic Cosatu/Nactu/Saccola (CNS) agreement on changes to the Act *(SA Labour Bulletin* Vol 15, No 2).

The recent agreements in the mining industry, where the NUM has accepted profit-linked wage increases in a situation of acute crisis, was heralded by big business as a new era in labour relations. Other companies seem to have impressed some of their shopstewards with ideas on 'participative management'. The device of casualised labour allows capital to significantly improve the conditions of work for a section of its workforce, while at the same time denying fundamental workers' rights to a substantial section of 'temporary' workers.

It is thus very possible that a privileged 'labour aristocracy' in certain sectors *may* be the end-result of the fierce worker struggles for higher wages and better working conditions over the past decade. This will leave workers in lower-skilled industries, domestic workers, farmworkers and the unemployed at the margins of society. The recent Mercedes Benz sit-in graphically points to tensions of this sort increasing within the union movement (see Von Holdt, 1990).

The attempt to 'de-politicise' labour, an objective of the 1979 Wiehahn Commission, is much more likely to be successful now. This is due to the possibility of a negotiated political settlement in the near future, and the government's seeming willingness in recent months to seriously consider some of the demands of organised labour. Hence the optimism in various circles about the possibilities of a 'social contract' between labour, capital and the state (see *SA Labour Bulletin* Vol 15 No 6).

Cosatu's then assistant general secretary, Sydney Mafumadi said last September that Cosatu was 'not averse' to the idea of developing the relationship between labour, capital and the state



Sydney Mafumadi: Cosatu is 'not averse' to the idea of developing the relationship between labour, capital and the state

beyond the CNS accord, in the common pursuit of 'organising our society along democratic lines' (*IPM Journal*, September 1990).

To some extent this can represent the flip side of the movement towards working class hegemony outlined previously. However, labour, and in particular Cosatu, has gone far along the road of politicisation which encompasses both the state-political sphere (the demand for democratic government) and the economic sphere (the demand for greater control at the workplace).

While state-political democracy is on the horizon, both the state and capital are very far from giving in to all the demands for greater economic democracy. The workplace can only be 'de-politicised' to a certain extent, but not completely under the conditions of authoritarian capitalism. Although a new style of management, characterised by 'worker participation' rather than direct control and repression, is emerging in some industries, the space for independent decision-making on the part of workers is severely limited (Maller, 1989).

The legacy of authoritarian rule at the workplace will not be easily erased, and a future democratic government is unlikely to satisfy demands for worker control in the early years. •

state in a dilemma: will it try to accommodate these working class pressures and become a state in which working class concerns as a whole predominate? Or will it allow the interests of capital to dominate, accepting the inevitability of a labour-dominated socialist opposition. A third possibility is that a socialist opposition could be the result of a creative tactical move by the triple alliance. The latter scenario has been identified by Burawoy (see *WIP* 69, p36):

'An ANC government could deliberately institutionalise a socialist opposition to itself in the form of the Communist Party and Cosatu. In this view the Communist Party would be more effective out of power. In alliance with Cosatu, it would propel a government towards redistributive socialism by mobilising pressure from civil society, from the community and workplace. Moreover, with socialism in opposition, destabilisation by international capitalism or a coup from the right would be less likely'.

A fourth option for the union movement is to become completely independent of political parties, in the interests of forging a united trade union movement. In terms of this scenario, Cosatu, Nactu and the unaffiliated unions could come under one umbrella, and the unions could decide to concentrate on collective bargaining.

The problem raised by collective bargaining unionism is that its exclusive focus on workplace issues may lead to an acceleration of the divisions between unionised and non-unionised workers mentioned earlier. Recent research on the labour market points to a growing stratification of the black labour force, in particular the emergence of a skilled stratum of african workers (Hindson and Crankshaw).

This creates the possibility of an increasingly divided african workforce in the 1990s, in which an 'economistic' trade union movement facilitates the divide between a well-paid unionised workforce and a growing stratum of rural and urban poor.

Given these structural trends unions face a choice: should they prioritise the narrow interests of their members, or do they continue with their central aim of building a social movement of working people as a whole?

Political unionism

The latter outcome could be facilitated by the existence of a party of the whole working class, which consciously forged unity between organised and unorganised workers, and the unemployed. If the SACP is to succeed in this role, it would

have to rid itself of all 'Stalinist' tendencies (see box), and become a party that is both internally democratic and a 'watchdog' for democracy everywhere.

By combining links at grassroots level with the development of public policy, Cosatu has developed a form of political unionism which challenges the traditional division of labour between unions and parties, whereby parties formulate policies and programmes while unions confine themselves to action over wages and working conditions. The implications of this form of unionism, is that the union movement is well-placed to formulate policies that synthesise a class interest, and that in this respect the electoral party cannot act as its surrogate (Higgins).

In some instances of developed political unionism, such as Sweden and the CGIL in Italy, the union movement has elaborated a general policy model and imposed it on its affiliated party.

The involvement of the union movement in public policy for the working class as a whole requires a rethinking of union-party relationships, in accordance with the political primacy of the union movement. This is desirable, writes Higgins, not only because the union movement is better able to synthesise a class interest, but also because its policy perspective is not limited to short-term electoral considerations. Such policy initiatives make permanent in-house research establishments necessary, as well as the ability to develop policy at arm's length from the government.

As the experience of Africa shows, the nature of the union/party relationship after independence is crucially shaped by the struggles that are fought along the road to liberation. These battles are not yet over in South Africa, but there is evidence to suggest that a new relationship is evolving between the SACP and Cosatu, in which independent and democratic trade unions are seen as an indispensible foundation stone upon which a democratic socialism is built. Such a perspective, given the strategic positions occupied by the SACP and Cosatu within the ANC (especially after the recent national conference), is well-poised to influence a future ANC-led government.

FOOTNOTES

1. This is an updated and much shortened version of a paper due to be published in a book arising out of a Harare conference in September 1990, called Ten Years of Zimbabwean Independence: What Lessons for South Africa?

2. Coloured and indian workers have since the 1920s been allowed to join recognised unions.

3. The differences between the CST thesis and the 'racial capitalism' thesis, which was popular amongst Congress activists in the early 1980s, are on close inspection more semantic than real (see Pillay, 1989).

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• Eddie Webster is professor of Sociology at Wits University. •

Unions chart a (slightly) different course

The current economic recession, and the accompanying high level of retrenchments, has resulted in unions taking slower resort to strike action this year, as compared to last year. This, coupled with several other developments, in particular the changed political climate, has moved the labour movement towards a new style of thinking and operating.

Cosatu in recent months has been debating economic restructuring and the conditions under which this should take place; calls for centralised bargaining; discussions about 'social contracts' and 'participative management'; talks about mergers between some of its affiliates, and unity with unions that remain outside the federation; and labour's role in the political future of the country. These questions have been occupying the forefront of union thinking.

These developments happen at a time when Cosatu has been slipping away from the political centre stage it occupied for the last few years, to make way for the ANC and SACP (see pages 31- 37). Although, as part of the triple alliance, Cosatu will continue to participate within the political arena, its new emphasis has afforded the union movement greater space to focus on reconstruction and developmental issues.

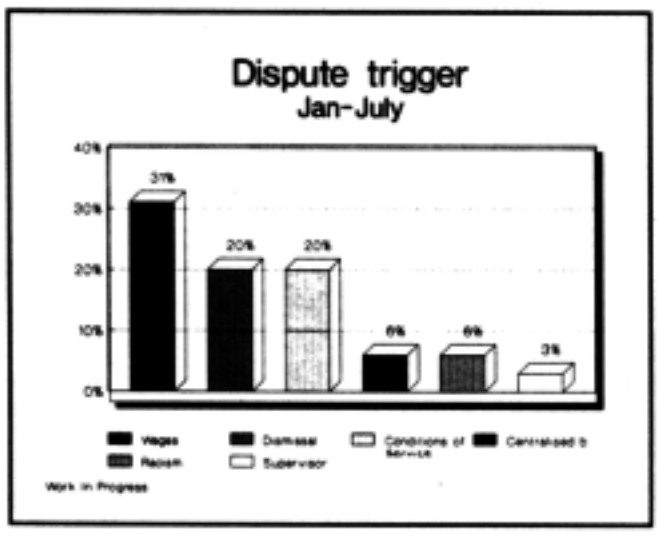
In recent years some employers have involved sections of their workforce in 'participative management', where workers play a greater role in decision-making (following the Japanese model). This trend can be linked to the unions' quest for centralised bargaining as, amongst other things, the most effective level at which to negotiate with employers over far-reaching changes at the workplace.

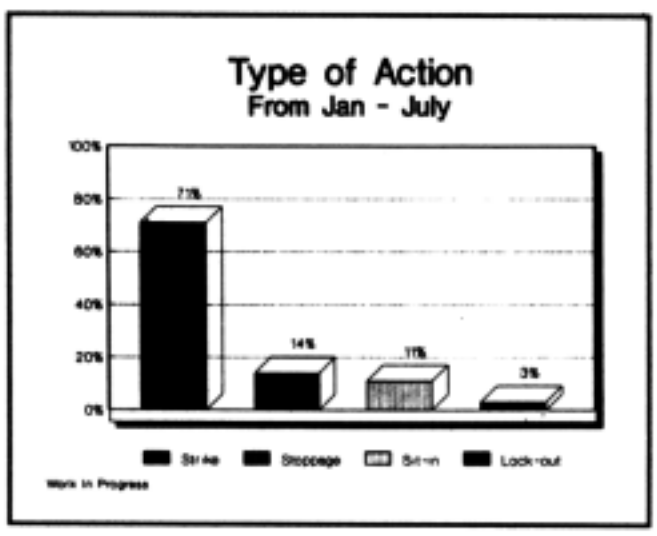
Related to this is the possibility of a 'social contract' being formed between labour, capital and the (future) state, where conflict becomes much more firmly institutionalised, through greater cooperation and concessions on all sides (as in West European social democracies). We have seen traces of this in the NUM-Ergo agreement, where the union and employers came to an agreement on profit-linked wage increases within the highly depressed climate of the mining industry. Cosatu and Nactu's participation in the National Manpower Commission, which includes representatives of the state and capital, also signify a desire on all sides to reduce tension and increase mututal cooperation.

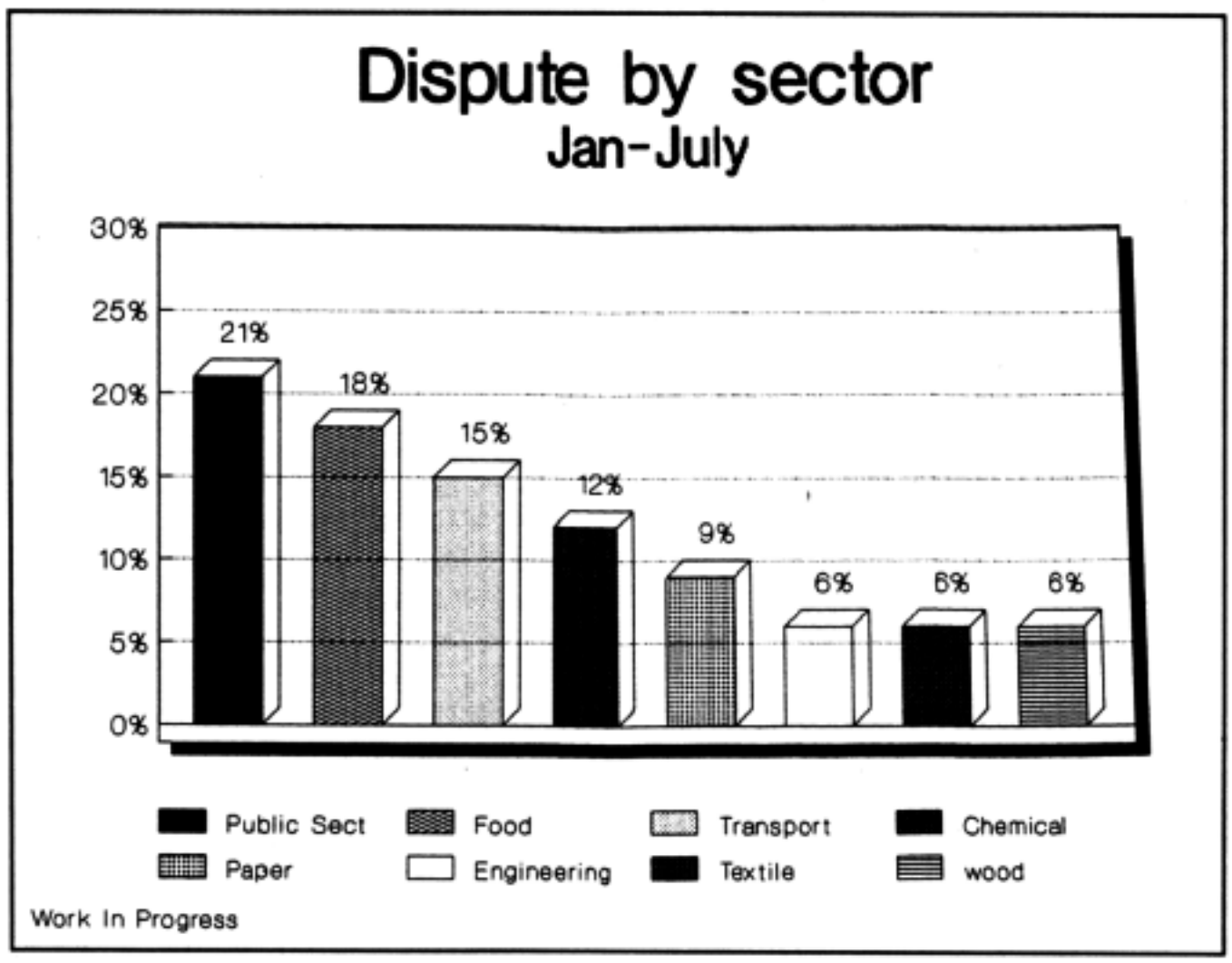
Jay Naidoo, general secretary of Cosatu, said recently that labour, employers and government must begin setting up democratic processes in civil institutions that influence broader society. 'Any political transition, to be successful, will have to deliver the goods on the ground. The employers, the state and worker organisations must try to develop a common approach to problems.' said Naidoo (*Financial Mail*, 19/7/91).

Social agreements might be a strategy of labour to take the initiative to ensure, under conditions more favourable to workers, increased economic growth and development. It is possible that unions are merely testing the waters to see how much can be gained from increased cooperation with employers and the state, which means it might not necessarily be a trend.

But if a 'social contract' is a serious strategy for the long term, then the union movement is sure to consider it in terms of its socialist objectives. As things stand, however, the debate on a future 'social

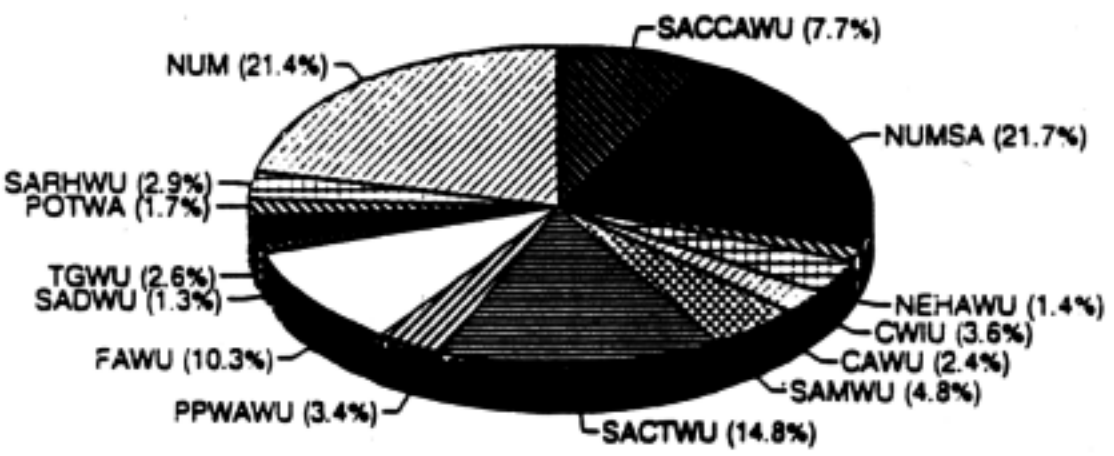






MEMBERSHIP BY AFFILIATE
1991

CAWU	30 123
CWIU	45 147
FAWU	129 480
NEHAWU	18 110
NUMSA	273 241
NUM	269 622
POTWA	21 467
PPWAWU	42 962
SADWU	16 462
SAMWU	60 304
SACCAWU	96 628
SACTWU	185 740
SARHWU	36 243
TGWU	33 324
TOTAL	1 258 853



Cosatu's membership grows dramatically

At its 4th national congress during 24-27 July, Cosatu announced an increase in total paid-up membership from 462 359 in 1985 to 1 258 853 in 1991, an increase of 172% in less than six years. As general secretary Jay Naidoo said at the congress, this growth rate is among the highest in the world. At its 1989 congress, Cosatu had a membership of 924 499. Thus in two years the membership rose by 36%.

As the graph and table shows, Cosatu's largest affiliate is now Numsa, with 273 241 members, just ahead of the NUM (previously the largest affiliate) with 269 622 members. The textile union, Sactwu, is third largest with 185 740 members, followed by Fawu (129 480 members), Saccawu (96 628), Samwu (60 304) and Cwiu (45 147).

If Fawu and Saccawu merge, as has been suggested recently, then the new union will become the third largest affiliate, with 226 108 members.

The transport unions Sarhwu and TGWU are also set to merge, probably with unions outside the federation, which is likely to bring a combined membership approaching 80 000. - *Devan Pillay* •

contract' has only begun, and the issues around it are still fresh and undeveloped.

Another issue that still remains unresolved among Cosatu affiliates is the national minimum wage. There has been little agreement about whether Cosatu supports a national minimum wage, with some affiliates (eg Sactwu) opposed to it, while others (notably the NUM) firmly in favour (see page 44).

Over 70 000 workers were retrenched in the past 12 months, and it seems like thousands more will lose their jobs in the months to come, say some researchers. The estimated number of unemployed in the country is more than five million. And as recession hits harder, so have wage demands (and resistance to those demands) become tougher in certain sectors.

While the more established unions in Cosatu are displaying greater caution, Cosatu's newest force, the relatively small public sector unions like the Post and Telecommunications Workers Association (Potwa), the National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union (Nehawu) and the South African Railway and Harbour Workers Union (Sarhwu), have engaged in the most militant action over the past six months.

Telecommunications and postal workers countrywide engaged in a protracted dispute this year with the South African Post and Telecommunications Employers Association, over improved wages and an end to the commercialisation of the postal sector.

Health workers were involved in disputes with the provincial administrations over improved working conditions, recognition of the union (Nehawu), wages and provident fund. By the end of July, railway workers were still locked in battle with Spoornet over wages. During the first day of the Cosatu congress, 30 000 workers marched through the streets of Johannesburg, demanding a R1 500 minimum wage, and a 40% increase for all Sarhwu members.

One established union, however, has also been involved in militant action recently. Over 24 000 vehicle assembly workers from Cosatu's largest affiliate, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa), went on strike for four days over wages and the restructuring of the auto and tyre industries. The dispute, which was not fully settled by the time of going to press (29 July), is said to have cost the industry R60m a day in lost turnover.

As the graphs on the previous page show, the public sector led all other sectors in disputes during the first half of this year, followed by food, transport, chemical, paper, engineering, textile and wood.

WIP monitored 35 strikes and disputes since January 1991 to mid- July involving 96 511 workers. Of these 71% were strikes, 14% were stoppages, 11% sit-ins and 3% lockouts. The trigger causing most strikes was wages, followed by dismissals, conditions of service, centralised bargaining and racism. Of these, six were national strikes held at Cadbury, Metro Cash 'n Carry, Metropolitan Life, Post and Telecommunications, Waltons and the vehicle and tyre industry.

The most active region during this period was the Transvaal, where 35 percent of all strikes occurred, followed closely by the Cape (34 percent of all strikes), Natal (11 percent), Transkei and Bophuthatswana (3 percent each). Fifteen percent of all strikes were national strikes. - *Glenda Daniels and Devan Pillay* •

Confronting cold economic facts

NICOLI NATTRASS responds to Numsa's Bernie Fanaroff, who in WIP 74 argued that business has made a mess of the economy

Table One: Annual Growth in Profits (%)

1991 Sector	Fanaroff	1990 Nominal	1990 Real	Jan-April Nominal	Jan-April Real
Engineering	45	21	6	-1,2	-2,4
Industrial Holdings	34	18	3	-1,2	-2,4
Electronics	18	8	-7	-0,8	-2,0
Steel	16	30	15	-6,5	-7,7
All Share	-	14	-1	-2,2	-3,4

Sources: Fanaroff's article and Old Mutual's data bank.

Fanaroff is correct to point out that business has contributed to messing up our economy (see *WIP* 74). However, in doing so he severely compromises his argument by producing incorrect and confusing statistics. For example, he has the economy growing at 4,6% per annum between 1980 and 1989 when in fact it grew at 1,3% per annum [Fanaroff originally had 1,6% and not 4,6% - a typographical error on our part - editor]. In other places Fanaroff overstates the economic mess by arguing that GDP per capita has been declining at 4% per annum when in reality it has been around 1 % per annum.

Problems relating to accuracy also apply to his graphs. The vertical axes on Fanaroff's top two diagrams are incorrect in either real or nominal terms. His graphical representation of gross domestic fixed investment in manufacturing is particularly misleading as it indicates a slight rise through the 1980S, when in fact investment declined in real terms at 6% per annum between 1981 and 1989!

Misleading

What is perhaps more disturbing about the article is the profusion of baldly stated, incorrect, observations. For example, we read that 'most production is for luxuries' and that 'business and government have not invested in training and skills'. South Africa certainly produces more luxury items than are socially desirable, but it is not true that *most* of our production is oriented towards this end. Similarly, business and government have not invested nearly enough in training and skills, but it is false to assert that they have *not invested* in these areas. Fanaroff was probably attempting to simplify the issues. However, the result was simply misleading and paternalistic in that it appears to assume extreme simple-mindedness on the part of the average reader.

My most substantial objection to Fanaroff's analysis concerns his observations about profits. Here again, his data is suspect. Citing an unreferenced survey of 245 companies on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE), he provides data which does not tally with that available for all companies listed on the JSE. A comparison of Fanaroff's figures with a more comprehensive set is provided.

Except for the steel industry, Fanaroff severely overestimates the growth in profits. Far from being able to maintain high profitability, many sectors have actually suffered declines in earnings. Interestingly, earnings on the all share index actually declined in real terms in 1990. Furthermore, there has been a collapse in earnings in most sectors during the first four months of 1991. It is thus incorrect to assume that profits are skyrocketing and that capitalists are able to 'keep profits high' while the economy collapses.

In any case, examining the returns on shares quoted on the JSE is inadequate as the averages are over-estimates and biased towards the performance of the largest companies. The performance of profitability in the wider economy is provided in Table Two for the manufacturing, mining and core (ie, manufacturing, mining, electricity, construction and trade) sectors. The profit rate is simply profits divided by the capital stock. This measures the rate of return capitalists get on their investment. As can be seen from Table Two, both real profits and the profit rate declined substantially in the mining and core sectors. Only the manufacturing sector showed a slight upward trend in profitability during the 1980s.

A further disturbing trend is the erosion of South Africa's position internationally (see Table Three). Compared to the rate of return on investments elsewhere in the world, South Africa fell behind the advanced capitalist countries and Europe between 1981 and 1987. Although manufacturing profitability in South Africa has recovered to around 17,5 per cent in 1990, indications are that similar trends upward are evident internationally.

The performance of profitability in South Africa should cause concern to capitalists and trade unionists alike. If capitalists are pessimistic about future profit rates and believe they would be better off investing in France or Italy, then South Africa will have great difficulty encouraging sufficient investment and job creation.

Business cannot be bullied

Talk about 'restructuring industry' without confronting these cold economic facts is extremely unhelpful. Fanaroff is correct when he argues that 'business and government must negotiate the future of industry and the economy with the unions'. He is also correct to point out that investment is the only way out of the unemployment jam and that South Africa needs to become more productive. What he fails to point out however, is that space must be created and accepted for business to improve profitability. You cannot bully business into investing. Business needs confidence in order to invest and Fanaroff doesn't mention the word.

According to Fanaroff, some money for investment can come from scrapping apartheid structures. However, according to recent economic analysis, less than 3,5 per cent of the GDP could be saved as a result of scrapping apartheid - hence such funds are limited. Fanaroff also cites nationalisation as a means of 'unlocking' investment funds. This is a very odd idea

Table Two: Average Annual Profit and Profit Rate Growth in the 1980s

Sector	Growth in real net profits (1981-89)•	Growth in the net profit rate (1981-88) ••
Manufacturing	1,3 %	0,8 %
Mining	-7,7 %	-12,8 %
Core	-2,5 %	-5,7 %

• This is the growth of the net operating surplus as measured in the national accounts. Data provided by the Reserve Bank
•• The net profit rate growth must be measured from peak to peak in the business cycle so as not to distort the trend - hence the dates 1981 and 1988. Data provided by the Reserve Bank.

Table Three: Comparative Manufacturing Profit Rates

Year	ACC	Europe	France	Germany	Italy	Japan	UK	USA	SA
1981	11,5	10,4	11,8	7,8	18,9	14,0	1,5	11,3	15,8
1982	10,2	10,5	12,0	8,8	16,6	13,9	3,3	8,5	11,0
1983	11,5	11,6	12,9	11,6	15,7	13,1	4,4	10,8	11,9
1984	14,2	12,7	14,5	12,2	17,5	15,3	5,0	14,8	12,7
1985	14,3	14,3	16,2	14,1	18,6	15,5	6,9	13,5	10,7
1986	15,1	16,7	19,1	16,2	21,6	14,3	8,5	14,2	10,9
1987	15,9	17,7	21,5	14,9	23,9	14,6	10,2	15,4	13,3

Sources: Reserve Bank and A. Glyn, Corpus Christi College Oxford, UK
ACC = advanced capitalist countries (weighted average).

because if you nationalise with compensation it costs the state vast amounts of capital, and if you nationalise without compensation you severely discourage both domestic and foreign investment. Whatever its merits in meeting other objectives, nationalisation is an unsuitable way of 'unlocking funds'.

Prescribed investments are certainly one way of ensuring investment in key areas like housing. However, there are limits on how much investment can be prescribed. Too high a level of prescribed investment in low (private) return areas can compromise the value of pension funds of workers and discourage capitalists from investing in South Africa.

In the final analysis, as Fanaroff correctly points out, investment funds will have to be generated by the growth process itself. This means greater productivity, training, planning, marketing etc. However, this happy scenario is premised on optimistic capitalists. Although unpalatable, this can only happen when unions recognise the expectations of and alternatives open to capitalists when they negotiate. Incorrect statements about excessive profits, serve only to mislead workers and encourage capitalists to invest elsewhere.

Fanaroff's focus on negotiation between capitalists and unions is a good one. However, bargaining about the future economy will only be succesful if both sides recognise and accept as legitimate, each other's needs and aspirations.

• *Nicoli Nattras is based at the Sociology Dept of the University of Stellenbosch.* •

Capitalism:

There is no alternative ... for now

STEPHEN GELB responds to the review of ***South Africa's Economic Crisis*** *by 'Gracchus' in WIP 75*

WIP 75 carried an extremely hostile and polemical review of *South Africa's Economic Crisis*, a book based on a Cosatu-commissioned report. The reviewer had neither the courage nor the integrity to identify him/herself, despite the review's excessive tone. This sort of thing is shameful, and sets back efforts to create a climate in which open debate and tolerance of different views is possible.

Many of the issues raised in the review are irrelevant distractions. Inaccessible language, for example. Dozens of articles down the years in *WIP*, *Labour Bulletin*, *Weekly Mail*, etc testify to the capacity of the book's contributors to write in a popular vein, when appropriate. On the other hand, one thinks of at least one famous old book - Marx's *Das Kapital* - intended to explain the workings of capitalism to a worker readership. It took me a university training in economics, and long hours of concentration, to make some sense of the arguments. Perhaps I didn't succeed even then.

Misleading picture

Has the *Economic Crisis* book somehow misled political organisations or unions? Surely the respective leaderships and memberships of the ANC and of Cosatu are quite able to decide for themselves how seriously to take whatever analysis and advice they are offered. The notion of a tiny group of intellectuals writing a book and leading these people astray is beyond comment.

What is worth pointing out, though, is that the reviewer presents a very misleading picture to *WIP* readers about the book's arguments. A central criticism seems to be that the book argues that one of the SA economy's main problems is excessive imports of luxury consumer goods for whites. Nowhere in the book is this issue seen as having any importance. On the other hand, at least four chapters identify as a key obstacle to growth the fact that most *capital equipment and machinery* have to be imported.

Even more misleadingly, s/he implies that the policy approach broadly sketched in the book is identical with the draft ANC economic policy formulated during 1990 (and which had input from the book's contributors, *amongst others*). S/he attacks a policy of 'growth through redistribution', a slogan used for a while to encapsulate the ANC approach (and now fortunately dropped). But the reader will search in vain for its appearance in the *Economic Crisis* book. Did this reviewer actually read the book, one wonders?

This is not a foolish question: the reviewer has entirely missed the main message of the book (and its central contribution to ANC policy debates), which is that South Africa's economic growth difficulties originate in production and in its international trade relations. This analysis is not likely to support a policy approach involving simply an increase in consumption, which the reviewer implies is the position taken in the book.

'Simple-minded' understanding

The reviewer says that the economics of South Africa is 'simple'. 'Simple-minded' is the only label for the understanding of economics displayed in this review. For example, his/her argument that there is a straight trade-off over time between consumption and investment (which, by the way, are themselves 'bloodless theoretical abstractions' of the sort that s/he seems to find so unacceptable in the book).

This position can be sustained only on the basis of the most primitive and static version of orthodox (read: bourgeois) economics. It confuses changes in aggregate consumption expressed in value terms as a proportion of total GNP, with changes in individual consumption expressed as a 'basket' of goods and services (ie the standard of living). It is quite feasible to have a rising standard of living, while aggregate consumption remains at about the same proportion of total goods and services produced.

To achieve this, what is needed are productivity improvements, which are one of the fundamental benefits of investment, but this factor apparently has no place in our reviewer's world. Neither, it would seem, does the need for South Africa to import most of its machinery, mentioned above. The 'simple' solution offered to restore growth is for capitalists' idle money balances to be used to buy machines to put workers back to work. (If capitalists do this voluntarily, it's called capitalism; if the state has to force them, it's called socialism. Or so we are led to believe.)

But are these machines just lying around waiting to be bought? If they're not already in SA (and they aren't), they have to be paid for in foreign currency. And foreign currency has to be earned (from exports) or borrowed (from foreign investors) - and later repaid. Already, a rather more complicated picture emerges...

Regulation theory

Once all the rhetoric and infantile accusations are stripped away, the real point at stake is whether or not the regulation approach is a useful version of marxist theory. By useful, I mean helpful in understanding the nature and condition of our society at the present time, as a basis for developing strategy. Perhaps it is the fault of the book, but the reviewer fails miserably to understand regulation theory. 'Regulation' does *not* mean some form of state 'direction' or 'management' of capitalism, as the reviewer implies - this is precisely why it *is* important to distinguish between the everyday English usage of the word, and its use as the central concept in a particular theoretical framework.

Regulation theory does not offer a pat set of arguments and strategies, applicable anywhere and everywhere. On the contrary, the basic idea is that the actions and behaviour of individuals and groups in society are not pre-determined outside of the relations they enter into with other individuals and/or groups. So the forms (institutions, social structures, social

processes) taken by these relations vary in different places and at different times.

In other words, classes and class relations change, evolve and develop as capitalism itself develops. Periods of crisis are important not only because they involve economic hardship, but because they are periods of rapid change and transition in the way classes and class relations are organised.

This may seem rather obvious. But much of marxist theory (including the approach of our reviewer) has (implicitly) based itself on the vulgarised idea that a capitalist is a capitalist is a capitalist, and a worker is a worker is ..., wherever and whenever they may be spotted.

Capitalism changes

If we take seriously the idea that the way capitalism works can (and does) change in a particular society over time, the implication is revolutionary (if I may use that term).

We on the South African left have been very unwilling for a very long time to shift away from the argument that South African capitalism is essentially backward and reliant on apartheid.

Therefore, most of us argued, socialism was not only desirable, but necessary (if there was to be social development) and inevitable (since South African capitalism was in the end incapable of reforming itself and abandoning apartheid in some guise).

Regulation theory leads to a very different conclusion: first, that South African capitalism is right now in the process of transforming itself, away from an excessive reliance on racially-defined institutions and structures; and second, that capitalism will survive its own transition, so that socialism is not on South Africa's agenda for the next round. This doesn't mean that we need to positively choose capitalism, or accept that it will continue forever, but it does mean we can expect to be living under it for a while yet. The forces for socialism in South Africa are too weak right now, and those favouring the survival of capitalism, *in a different form*, too powerful.

The real issue of the day, then, is what form South African capitalism will take in the next round, what the bourgeoisie and the working class will look like, and what the nature of their relations will be. This is what the 'great economic debate' is about in the end, though of course the outcome will not be decided purely in debate.

Socialist forces weak

The challenge for the left is to break out of its mould and drop the delusion of utopian fantasies. This is the first, and essential, step towards engagement with capitalism, the object being to intervene and shape a capitalist order which is both more humane and more dynamic than has been true of South African capitalism in the past, a capitalist order which could be more favourable for socialist prospects in the longer run, by enabling the working classes to become considerably better off, economically and politically, than they have been.

The trade unions are taking up this challenge directly, the latest instance being the joint initiative with the Chamber of Mines to investigate restructuring the mining industry entered into by the NUM, notwithstanding the union's very vocal (formal) support for mine nationalisation.

The position taken here is no doubt a tough one for socialists to come to terms with, and may well fuel the accusations of 'sell-out','looking for jobs to manage capitalism' etc, which our reviewer puts so eloquently - and so short-sightedly. So be it. I for one prefer the difficulties of grappling with the contradictions and tough choices necessary in class conflict, to the illusive security and irrelevant self-marginalisation of waiting for history to unfold on its inevitable course.

• *Stephen Gelb works at the University of Durban-Westville, and is the editor of* ***South Africa's Economic Crisis.*** •

Waging war on want

THE NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE or HOW TO FIGHT LOW PAY IN SOUTH AFRICA
By Gordon Young
(LRS Economic Policy Papers No. 1)
Labour Research Service, Cape Town (1991)
R6

PRODUCTIVE INVESTMENTS FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH: PROPOSAL FOR A NATIONAL INVESTMENT BOARD
By Mark Anderson
(LRS Economic Policy Papers No. 2)
Labour Research Service, Cape Town (1991)
R6

Reviewed by NEVA SEIDMAN-MAKGETLA

The Labour Research Service (LRS) has launched a series of economic policy papers aimed at stimulating and deepening the discussion of policy in trade union circles. These two booklets represent an important step in the development of economic views. The current discussion about the direction of policy after liberation surely requires greater input from the unions. Business has already demonstrated its capacity and persistence in lobbying both the state and the liberation movement. If the unions want an economic strategy that will favour workers, they must also make their voices heard.

Already, business organisations have begun to define the parameters of debate with regard to central issues, including, for instance, export orientation, housing and nationalisation. The demand for a legal minimum wage - which, as Gordon Young shows, has a long and honourable history in both the trade union and liberation movement - has recently given way before this onslaught. It is not even mentioned in the ANC's Draft Economic Manifesto.

These two LRS publications go a considerable way to rectifying the situation. With a wealth of detail and in easily readable style, they present coherent policy proposals designed to further the aims of the union movement.

Raising wages for the poorest

Young gives an incisive and much-needed argument in favour of a national minimum wage. Discussion of this measure has recently been drowned in fears about unemployment and inflation. Yet, as Young points out, a legislated minimum wage presents a logical response to the massive imperfections of the South African labour market.

Young provides a first-rate review of the arguments in favour of a minimum wage. First and foremost, of course, it provides a way to improve conditions for the working poor.

'If a National Minimum Wage were set at R550 a month, 34 percent of labourers would benefit directly, 27 percent of labourers would benefit indirectly, 27 per cent of low-skilled operatives, 15 per cent of semi-skilled operatives and 5 per cent of high-skilled operatives (about 710 000 workers in all and 12 per cent of the workforce)' (p5).

The measure would only provide a floor for wages, and so would never replace union activity. But it should contribute substantially to raising wages for the poorest workers.

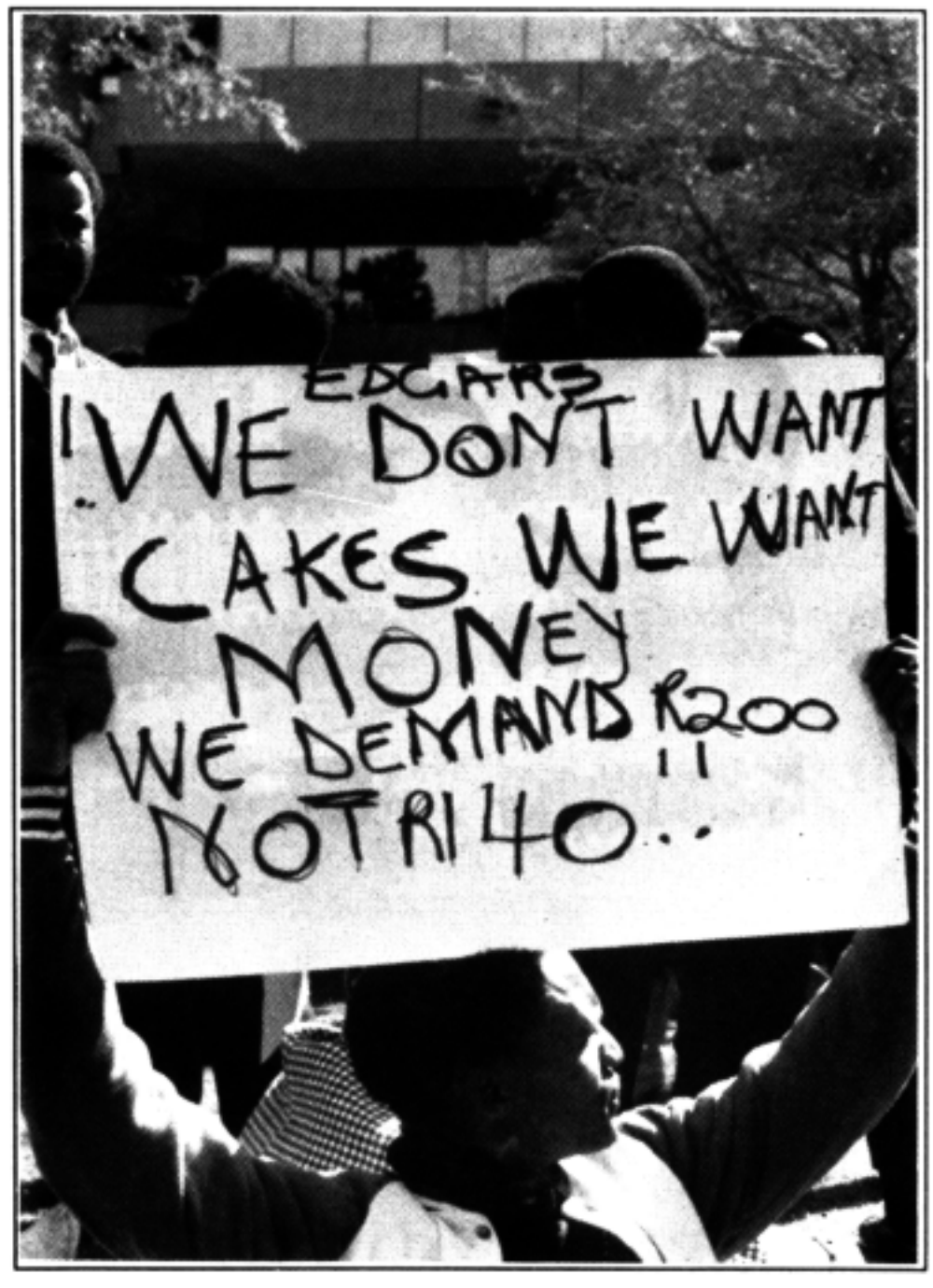
Increase productivity

In addition, Young points out that a minimum wage can increase productivity in two ways.

On the one hand, it should encourage employers to improve training and management. That process would shift the locus of competition from low wages - which impose enormous social costs - to actual productive efficiency.

On the other, the minimum wage would help counteract the myriad market failures that plague the South African economy. Even conservative economic theory considers it an appropriate response where, as in South Africa, employers would otherwise have enough market power to manipulate wage rates (p12).

More generally, the minimum wage underlines a commitment to a more humane and just economy, where workers no longer appear solely as a cost of production. Instead, they represent both a crucial factor in raising national productivity



A national minimum wage would only provide a floor for wages, and so would never replace union activity. But it should contribute substantially to raising wages for the poorest workers.

and, as people, the ultimate subject of any process of economic development. A decent wage 'can be expected to improve workers' health, reduce labour turnover, absenteeism and illness, and generally improve personal efficiency' (p11). Furthermore, as wages rise for the working poor, domestic demand will increase, stimulating further production and employment.

Young systematically demolishes the arguments against the minimum wage. Most such theses, in a crude version of neoclassical economics, implicitly or explicitly assume perfectly efficient labour markets. By definition, such a market needs no state regulation. That approach incorporates both a spurious methodology, and a very odd assumption about the South African circumstance.

Unemployment, inflation and investment

Young quotes a counter-intuitive survey showing that most employers do not think a minimum wage will spur either unemployment nor inflation to a significant degree. Essentially, this conclusion rests on the belief that the minimum wage may enhance productivity and demand. Young points out that, in any case, cutting wages hardly provides a desirable instrument for generating employment: 'Is there NO wage which is too low, as long as "jobs" are created thereby?' (p 12).

In this context, Young takes on the argument that higher wages will cripple the effort to increase exports. Seeking foreign sales at the cost of starvation wages appears a poor recipe for national development or social stability. Moreover, Young shows that most activities with very low wages, such as domestic work and security services, are not in the export business at all. Rather, South Africa's export industries, even in agriculture, generally have higher-than-normal pay for their sectors. 'Clearly', he sums up, 'a condition for participation in the export market is - higher wages!' (p 20).

Young also contests the notion that a minimum wage will slash profits, and thus reduce investment. That belief implies that profits in fact finance investment. But, Young points out, 'the rich in this country have a very poor record of saving and investment', preferring foreign bank accounts and luxury consumption to productive activities (p 13). In that case, maintaining high returns seems less likely to encourage productive investment than measures, like the minimum wage, that would bring about a more balanced economy.

In a particularly stimulating section (pages 13-18), Young discusses the institutional changes required to establish a minimum wage. His proposals attempt to take into account the legitimate needs of both employers and workers. Refreshingly, he pays considerable attention to the difficulties of implementing a minimum wage, rather than assuming that a post-apartheid government will be able to rule by decree.

Re-directing investment

Mark Anderson's proposal for a National Investment Board appears less compelling than Young's presentation, probably because the topic is more complex. Moreover, like many economists, Anderson tries to translate economic jargon, not by explaining it in the context of his argument, but through an apparently endless series of definitions.

Nonetheless, Anderson provides a daring, yet detailed, discussion of the issues involved in redirecting investment. The importance of his project emerges from the amount of money involved - he estimates up to R20 billion a year.

In essence, Anderson argues that a lack of resources cannot explain the current record low in productive investment in South Africa.

Rather, we must blame a failure of financial intermediaries. A few big insurance companies, pension funds and unit trusts control huge amounts of money. They hold their funds in the speculative stock market, however, rather than supporting projects designed to expand production and employment.

Anderson suggests a two-sided solution. On the one hand, the state would establish a 'National Investment Board', which would certify projects that meet national development goals. The Board's criteria might include, among others, job creation, poverty alleviation, export promotion or import substitution (p 12). On the other hand, the state would require insurance companies, pension funds and unit trusts to invest 80 percent of their annual investment flow - in essence, their net increase in assets every year - in schemes certified by the Board.

Anderson argues that this solution would underwrite an economic development strategy by 'directing the annual investment flow of financial institutions toward productive assets, while at the same time ensuring proper returns and protection of savers' assets...' (page 17). It would achieve these goals, essentially, by letting the financial institutions choose among the board-certified projects. The financial intermediaries would endorse only those investments that seemed most profitable and safe, thus acting in the interests of their contributors and investors (p 14).

Anderson's proposal has obvious advantages. But it lacks an explicit consideration of the central dilemma facing attempts to redirect investment in a mixed economy: namely, the difficulty of balancing risk to the individual investor against social needs.

Historically, investors have considered projects intended to bring about structural change in the economy to be relatively risky and unprofitable, at least in the short run. That fact presumably underlies the reluctance of financial institutions to invest in development projects today. In these circumstances, board certification and a required assets law alone seem unlikely to transform investment flows. Instead, they would probably cause a flight of capital from the institutions concerned.

Changes in format

Usually, a book review must treat its subject as a finished product. Luckily for us, the LRS has promised an on-going series of policy papers. Their largesse might be enhanced, however, by a few changes in format, which would make the publications more accessible.

First, it would be useful if each booklet started with a summary of the argument and the proposals. This procedure is, of course, standard for most policy documents. A summary provides a useful guide to the reader, making it easier to see the relationships between the various parts of the narrative.

Second, future papers might focus more on the underlying problem addressed by the proposed policy. Any policy recommendation benefits from a detailed discussion of the nature and causes of the problem addressed. In the case of Anderson's contribution, a more detailed discussion of the shortcomings of investment and plausible causes for this sad situation would have provided a stronger justification for his proposals.

Finally, future articles could deal more systematically with debates, counter-arguments and alternative policy options. Where authors leave disagreement implicit, the reader may not understand their emphases. They appear to shadow box with unseen opponents. Explicitly outlining and countering opposing views can only strengthen the reader's understanding.

One can, of course, find flaws in any proposal on economic policy. If the answers were obvious and easy, then we would already have found them, and the millenium would be at hand. These two booklets provide welcome and well-reasoned additions to the controversy over economic policy in South Africa. Hopefully, future policy papers from LRS will maintain their high standard.•

The great economic debate

COMMANDING HEIGHTS AND COMMUNITY CONTROL:
New Economics for a New South Africa
By Patrick Bond
Ravan Press, Johannesburg (1991)
R9.95 (92 pages)

Reviewed by TIMOTHY DLADLA

The book *Commanding Heights and Community Control* has appeared just in time for the Great Economic Debate taking place in South Africa. Amidst progressive economists, Patrick Bond takes a different and fresh approach from the now popular Cosatu/Economic Trends framework of analysis, which is based on the French regulation theory (see Gelb on p42).

Bond kicks off with sketches of history necessary to understand modern-day capitalism in South Africa, with emphasis on the large concentration of economic power in the hands of the Anglo-American Corporation.

In the second chapter Bond gives an overview of the different worldviews about South Africa's economic stagnation. Mainstream economists explain the crisis in terms of apartheid legislation, which interfered with the free movement of goods and services, and hence caused bottlenecks in the economy. In this view, trade unions are seen to be causing friction in the labour market through unrealistic wage demands while productivity is low. In addition, these economists believe stagnation is partly explained by disinvestment and lack of foreign credit.

Progressive economists, on the other hand, explain the economic crisis in terms of a turning point in South African capitalism. For South African capitalism to grow, it must change its economic path. Bond gives a reasonable brief on regulation theory, including an incisive critique by Warwick University's Simon Clarke.

Over-accumulation

Bond's contribution to the economic debate begins with the theory of over-accumulation of capital. According to this theory, South Africa suffers from the overproduction and excessive automation of the 1960s and 1970s. South African capitalism produced much more than could be consumed in the country, workers were replaced by machines and capitalists engaged in destructive competition to their own downfall.

Big business and the state have reacted differently to the crisis of capital over-accumulation. South African conglomerates have responded by opting for international expansion. The state, in the late sixties and early seventies, went into massive building plans such as Iskor and Sasol. By so doing it aimed to reduce its exposure to international capital for strategic purposes and, at the same time, prop up an ailing economy.

In the eighties, the state responded to the crisis through reformist economic and political packages, such as the tricameral parliament and privatisation. However, resistance to these policies only compounded the crisis.

While there is agreement between Bond and the findings of the Economic Trends Group, perhaps the major difference is that Bond's approach explains better the crisis in modern capitalism. An added explanatory tool for Bond is the idea, drawn from the American Marxist Paul Sweezy, of 'financial explosion', which focuses on the contribution of speculative investment to the over-accumulation crisis.

The ANC's economic model

The third chapter examines the ANC's economic model of growth through redistribution, big business strategies and government strategies. Bond gives a scenario analysis of the 1990's, in which the economy continues to stagnate, speculative investment persists, and the AIDS epidemic and international economic climate are unfavourable to domestic growth. The question is, can the ANC and its allies construct an alternative programme to counter this moribund scenario?

The closing chapter gives a sharp critique of both Cosatu and the ANC's economic policies. Their policies move from the premise of an economy which will inevitably suffer from over-accumulation. The growth through redistribution strategy of the ANC, argues Bond, is similar to the post-World War Two Keynsian economic strategies of west European countries.

While Bond's critique contains profound observations, the point is: how does he hope to dislodge the South African economy from its global tentacles, given that capitalism, whether we like it or not, is the dominant economic system today? Not that he is unaware of these problems, including constraints put by the IMF/World Bank on domestic economic policies. Against this background, can South Africa go it alone? Do we anticipate another experiment in the economics of self-reliance? Can international capital be restrained in its practice? These issues need to be resolved. Bond has not given a satisfactory explanation, he has merely opened up debate.

In the last chapter, Bond puts across his views on civil society and how it can control economic resources. His optimism is unbounded: 'Ultimately, after centuries of racial, gender and class oppression, the only satisfying South African democracy will be one where non-racial, non-sexist economic democracy can be established beyond any shadow of doubt.'

While these are laudable objectives, the question is, are they feasible? Some of the most conscious groupings, such as trade unions, political organisations, universities, progressive intellectuals, service organisations, and so on, practice the most tacit forms of sexism, racial bigotry, paternalism and self-glorification. If these groups fail now, what are the prospects for success in the impending post-apartheid state?

While the failure of democracy in Eastern Europe has been debated, there has still to be a thorough, clinical analysis of the economics of socialism. Nevertheless, Bond's faith that, after the shock treatment of human suffering, promises and betrayals, there is hope for the future, is encouraging.

Simplicity of style

While Bond has maintained a simplicity of style, elaborate issues in some places have been compressed together and brushed over.

On the whole, however, compared to other works on economics, this is an easy-to-read book that adds to the Great Economic Debate.

• *Timothy Dladla works for LERC in Johannesburg.* •

Looking for the future in the past

BEYOND APARTHEID - Labour and Liberation in South Africa
By Robert Fine with Dennis Davis
Ravan Press, Johannesburg (1991)
R39.94

Reviewed by JEREMY CRONIN

'Through a critique of the past, we search for a socialism of the future...the contested terrain of South African historiography is a small part of the definition and building of what is beyond apartheid.' (Fine and Davis, p296)

Robert Fine (working in collaboration with Dennis Davis) has written an immensely challenging book. It is divided into three sections. Two historical sections deal with the working class and politics in the 1940s and 50s up to and including the turn to armed struggle. The final, much shorter section, is a theoretical chapter that seeks to draw strategic conclusions from the earlier historical sections and from a very broad overview of the 1980s.

The work is challenging, in the first place, because it throws into question a number of widely accepted interpretations of our history.

Re-interpreting apartheid

Perhaps the most substantial of these is the explanation for the imposition of apartheid after 1948. The traditional explanation sees apartheid emerging in response to rapidly growing black urbanisation, unionisation and a rising wave of worker resistance, all of which posed an escalating threat to capital and segregationism. Fine and Davis challenge this picture on several grounds:

In the first place they argue that the growth of the industrial proletariat in the 1940s should not be exaggerated. 'It developed rapidly but only from a very small base...The black industrial working class was in its infancy...its power to effect historic change in society was far more limited in the 1940s than is suggested in a literature which emphasises its vast and irreversible growth.' (p5-6)

Likewise, they argue that, while trade union organisation grew rapidly in this period, it did so from a minimal base. Moreover, while black politics became radicalised in the 1940s, 'the political leadership ... also took a cautious attitude towards worker militancy...' (p6). Finally, while the ruling class was divided, 'it acted decisively in one respect: to suppress worker militancy and to contain worker organisation.' (p7)

The conclusion that Fine and Davis draw from all of this is that the conventional interpretation of apartheid as a last, extreme measure in the face of an escalating threat posed by black workers, completely ignores the major defeats suffered by the working class, and the substantial disintegration of the labour movement in the latter part of the 1940s. 'It was not because of apartheid that the resistance of black workers was defeated; rather it was through the defeat of their resistance that apartheid was able to resolve the crisis of segregationism in its own racist and dictatorial fashion.' (p7)

Strategic lessons

This is more than an academic or merely historical point. The authors, later in the book, draw out some perceptive strategic lessons from it. If apartheid is portrayed as a final resort in the face of a rising tide of working class struggle, then a number of false conclusions can (and indeed have often) been drawn. There might be a tendency to portray the ruling bloc as weak and frightened: the worse the repression the greater the 'proof' of its vulnerability. Similarly, if apartheid is a last resort in the face of maximum pressure for reform, then the validity of struggling for reforms, for organisational space tends to be negated. Instead, an ultra-revolutionary militancy, an all-or-nothing perspective takes hold.

Alternatively, the interpretation of apartheid as a last desperate resort to retain white privilege might present apartheid as an anomaly removed from class struggle, removed from a capitalist defeat of the working class. Therefore, the capitalist class (and the 'free market') might seem to be serious potential allies in democratising South Africa.

As the authors remark, these two traditions of thought ('one offering a liberal conception of reform; the other a rejection of all reform') are complementary. 'Their common ground lies in the dissociation of reform from the class struggle...' (p293)

There are loud and very contemporary bells ringing in all of this. The so-called 'hawks' and 'doves' debate (which was mostly a media construction but, let's face it, with some grains of truth within) has tried to present us with only two alternatives in our present situation. In a 'doves and hawks' paradigm we are given the choice of either liberal reform from above, with the working class looking on passively; or a 'back-to-the-bush' militancy, on the alleged grounds that 'nothing has changed'.

The book was completed before the debates of the last several months, but in the light of Fine and Davis' analysis it is certainly possible to better locate conceptually the so-called 'hawks' and 'doves' debate.

I am not sure whether Fine and Davis would concur, but the wisdom of the ANC's recent conference is underlined by their analysis. The conference affirmed the importance of the negotiating process (a process of reform, after all), but it has committed the ANC to mobilising and engaging the working masses of our country actively in this process. The quality and character of the change will be decisively affected by whether it is change dispensed from above, or change that is powered from below.

Communists and Trotskyists

There are many other insightful dimensions to Fine and Davis' book. Although the book is written, substantially, as a left critique of the Communist Party in South Africa, various Trostkyist formations are certainly not spared.

In South Africa, Fine and Davis write, 'Trotskyism never fully emancipated itself from its origins and remained to a greater or lesser extent parasitic on that which it most fervently opposed.' - [i.e. the Communist Party]. (p61) Consider their telling epitomisation of one South African Trostkyist formation in the 1940s, the Workers International League: 'the WIL's tendency was to present the achievement of socialism as the

precondition of any reform, turning the idea of 'permanent revolution' into a kind of ultimatum, according to which nothing was possible prior to socialism and socialism made all things possible.' (p61).

Or consider the self-revealing and purist accusation made by another Trotskyist group, the Fourth Internationalists of SA, against the selfsame WIL: they have 'plunged into work'! (p66).

But, at the end of the day, the major target for criticism throughout this book is the Communist Party. Again their approach runs somewhat against the grain of the usual left critique. Fine and Davis do not confine their attention exclusively to a supposedly 'Stalinist' and 'right-wing' two-stage strategy. Instead, in the 1930s through to the 1960s, they see a party that swings dramatically between 'left sectarianism' and 'a right wing populist opportunism'. (Earlier versions of 'hawks' and 'doves'?)

It is this instability, explained largely in terms of external factors (swings in Soviet policy), which characterises, for them, the essential shortcoming of the party. In their portrayal of events, both left ultra-militancy and right opportunism have the same net effect, they demobilise and disorganise the working class.

As an example of an 'left ultra-militancy', they argue that the turn to the armed struggle in the early 1960s transformed the working class largely into spectators, '...for in turning to armed struggle the liberation movement turned away from its only real strength, its reliance on the working class...The liberation movement turned instead to a select group of saboteurs, agitators, guerilla fighters, diplomats, propagandists and writers who remained undefiled by reformism and through their exemplary actions and words would educate the masses until they became a force capable of accomplishing national liberation. This approach was permeated with individualism' (p253).

How true? Considerably true, I think. But also one-sided. Who can doubt the enormously inspiring impact that the armed struggle had on regenerating and sustaining mass action in the following decades? (Not without generating some romantic illusions that we still live with today.)

But above all, it is the party's 'rightwing' tendency of which they are most critical. This is its supposed tendency to suppress independent working class and/or socialist organisation and to dilute these into nationalism.

Misleading inaccuracies

How valid is their overall critique? Well, it certainly cannot be lightly dismissed. I am not an academic historian, and I therefore feel more secure in my assessments of their final chapter, which deals with the last decade.

In the first place, there are a number of minor but irritating oversights and inaccuracies. For instance, the reference 'Hobsbawm 1989', which is extensively quoted in the chapter is, unhelpfully, not listed in the bibliography. Dimitrov is described as 'the Soviet architect of popular frontism'(p281). He was, of course, not a Soviet but a Bulgarian – unless, you consider all communists 'Soviets'.

There is reference to 'an article in *African Communist* entitled 'Errors of Workerism', (by) an author under the name of Isiszwe (sic)...' (p278). Yet more evidence of communist confusion? In fact, the article referred to was never published in the *African Communist*. It first appeared in the UDF journal *Isizwe* (September/October 1986), and was republished in the *South African Labour Bulletin*.

More seriously, their handling of quotations is sometimes devious. For instance, in his pamphlet, *The South African Working Class and the National Democratic Revolution*, (in a section on the difference between a trade union and a political party) Joe Slovo has a footnote: 'In addition, the most basic purpose of a trade union – to force genuine reforms in the work situation *within the existing economic framework* – tends generally to nurture reformist rather than revolutionary political tendencies. This perhaps explains why working class parties that have been fathered by a trade union movement and continue to be dominated by it (as in Great Britain) usually pursue social-democratic rather than revolutionary objectives.' - That's what Slovo wrote.

This footnote, and some later passages, get half quoted and half paraphrased by Fine and Davis in the following terms:

'Slovo argues that a socialist party should in any case 'represent the historic aspirations of the working class' without the corporeal presence of the working class itself. In this mode he criticised mass workers' parties based on the trade unions, like the Labour Party in Britain or the Workers Party in Brazil, as likely to 'pursue social democratic rather than revolutionary objectives', seemingly not because of any bureaucratic controls leaders of such parties might impose over the masses but rather because of their mass democratic character itself'. (p280)

Is that a fair summary? Judge for yourself.

'Workerism'

More substantively, in dealing with the debates around 'workerism' in the 1980s, the authors get things quite muddled.

In the first place, they quite wrongly imply that critiques of 'workerism' (like the *Isizwe* article) were attacks on socialism. In fact, many (perhaps not all) such critiques were of narrow economism and/or syndicalism, both of which were quite pronounced, and both were likely to undermine the cause of socialism.

In the second place, Fine and Davis attribute inconsistency to the critiques: 'Workerism is presented as both too revolutionary and not revolutionary enough...' (p280)

In fact, as a number of the critiques correctly noted, there were several distinct 'workerist' currents at play in South Africa in the mid-1980s. Some were economistic and reformist in character, others were of a much more militant syndicalist kind. Schematically, one might say that 'workerism' embraced currents as different from each other as the British Labour Party and the Brazilian Workers Party. It is a critical difference Fine and Davis seem anxious to blur.

This critical difference lives on in new forms here at present. Many of the more militant 'workerists' of the 1980s are now in, or close to, the SACP in a reciprocally enriching process. On the other hand, the economistic and reformist brand of 'workerism' also has its echoes – for instance, in some of the more conservative voices in the 'two caps' debate.

'Populist confusions'

At the end of the day all of this material, the deep insights, the fresh if controversial overviews, the misquotes and blurrings, is marshalled with one prime intention. This is to argue for an independent, socialist workers party that cuts the working class free from the 'populist confusions' of nationalism.

Well, they may be right. But there is one troubling thought that immediately comes to mind. Isn't this exactly (of course with very different motives) the unsolicited advice Gerrit Viljoen, Kobie Coetsee, Roelf Meyer and company are currently giving the ANC and SACP?

Fine and Davis develop an insightful criticism of certain negative tendencies that may emerge within liberation movements as opposed to political parties. Liberation movements have a tendency to present themselves as 'the will of the people', as 'the nation'. By contrast, they argue, a 'party claims to represent no more than a part of the people and its programme

is open to rational criticism by other parties with other programmes. A party programme is determined according to the more or less democratic decision-making structures of the party and is capable of being revised or scrapped as the party develops.' (p146-7)

Again, there is some merit in their criticisms. There have certainly been metaphysical and dogmatic presentations of the of the Freedom Charter, for instance. There has been a tradition of presenting it as some kind of 'timeless will of the people', immaculately conceived on a June day in Kliptown.

But we can have, and I would argue that the overwhelming number of ANC members do have, an entirely different conception of the Freedom Charter and of the ANC. The recent ANC conference provided ample evidence of this.

Fine and Davis' contrast of the political party and the liberation movement to the detriment of the latter, provokes a troubling thought. Again (for very different motives, granted) it is exactly a negative contrast that Viljoen and company are daily pushing. They are insisting over and over that the ANC should transform itself into a political party, and that it should drop the SACP.

What the regime most fears, and with good reason, is the combination of a working class political party with a relatively large following, and a massive national liberation movement. The regime hopes to present the South African situation as a relatively 'normalised' bourgeois democracy with a variety of political parties. Competing for the centre in this conception would be an ANC that hoists a flag called 'social democracy', and the NP and friends would hoist another flag called 'christian democracy'. Out on the fringes would be a series of miniscule 'ideological' parties, to the left and right.

But the democratisation of our society requires a broad national democratic front, and not a charade of a west European democracy. There are vast tasks, to overcome three centuries of racial oppression, dispossession and underdevelopment. Within this democratisation effort, yes, the working class as an organised, mass force needs to be active and dominant. To paraphrase Fine and Davis, the task requires the workers, the workers require the task. And, yes, the socialist project is not distinct from, but integral to the deepening and defence of this democratisation effort.

Perhaps Viljoen and his friends are quite mistaken about their own real class interests? Perhaps Fine and Davis are, therefore, right? Perhaps we need to break down the ANC as a national liberation movement, and build an entirely independent working class political in its stead?

Perhaps. But I think not.

• Jeremy Cronin is a member of the South African Communist Party and the ANC national executive. •

Let all know peace