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Stepping stones to socialism

**How socialists see South Africa's
economic reconstruction**

ARTICLES BY ALEC ERWIN, JJ KUNENE AND BHEKI LANGA

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Sweep out the crooks and assassins!



EDITORIAL NOTES

The ANC's historic national policy conference has just ended. The conference has endorsed and elaborated the ANC/SACP/COSATU programme of action.

We are giving the De Klerk regime until the end of June to

- release all political prisoners;
- agree to an elected and sovereign constitution making body;
- establish an interim government; and
- create the conditions for a free and fair election.

Unless these basic demands are met, the tripartite alliance, and the widest range of democratic forces will be unleashing a rolling wave of unprecedented mass action.

These decisions must be seen against our deep frustration with the way in which the regime has been conducting itself at CODESA. The deadlock at CODESA 2 was deliberately engineered by the regime.

FW wanted deadlock

CODESA 2 happened to deadlock around the crucial issue of decision making in an elected constitution making body. But if there had not been deadlock on this issue, the regime would have found another issue over

which to deadlock. Going into CODESA 2 the evidence was mounting that De Klerk wanted a deadlock at all costs :

- In the course of April the regime's allies in CODESA Working Group 3 were caucused. The message to them was that things were moving too fast, and the regime needed a 6 months breathing space.
- Not surprisingly, in the same month, in a much publicised event, De Klerk held his first summit with Buthelezi since Inkathagate. Ciskei's Gqozo, and Qwa Qwa's chief minister were also present. In a well-orchestrated move the three homeland leaders "told" De Klerk that CODESA was moving too fast. Of course, this is exactly the message De Klerk had asked them to convey!
- In the week before CODESA 2, the Human Sciences Research Council, ever willing to produce statistics at Pretoria's bidding, came up with the astounding claim that "the majority of South Africans, black and white", preferred the present regime to remain in power, rather than see an Interim Government installed!
- According to well-informed journalists senior regime sources admitted that after

their top negotiator Gerrit Viljoen's withdrawal from CODESA he was deliberately not replaced by a senior person in the key Working Group 2. The regime preferred to rely on the relatively junior Tertius Delport. This meant that he had little authority in the crucial weeks before CODESA 2. His constant referral of matters back to De Klerk helped to slow everything down.

In the run-up to CODESA 2, then, there was plenty of evidence that the regime was looking for a deadlock.

The next question is why?

Why FW wanted to delay

There are at least three immediate reasons why the regime wanted to delay the process of settlement.

- The first of these reasons is neatly summed up in the sub-headline and opening paragraph of a *Rapport* centre page article, dated 29 March 1991, which, translated from the Afrikaans reads:

"Needed: Four million brown and black voters by 1993

Required: a million brown and two to three million black supporters for the National Party.

Delivery Date: 1993.

Objective: To ensure the National Party of a viable position in the next elections".

The NP is calculating that there will be some 15 million voters of whom only 3 million will be white in the first non-racial elections. If they succeed in getting most of the 3 million whites and some 4 million blacks they reckon they will have close to half the votes.

But, as the *Rapport* article concedes, they will have to battle bitterly to make any significant impact among blacks. The work has only just begun. De Klerk is certainly in

no hurry to see a more level political playing field, as envisaged in the CODESA agreements. He needs, for instance, his present monopoly over the SABC to assist him in his electoral probe into black areas.

- A second factor behind the delay is the Angolan election scheduled for September 29-30. This is a connection to the regime's CODESA strategy that has passed unnoticed in the local media. But Pretoria's strategists, not least those in its Department of Military Intelligence, have never viewed the transition process in South Africa in isolation from the wider sub-regional situation. The dissident military intelligence major Nico Basson revealed last year that the elections in Namibia and Angola were being seen as dress-rehearsals for the "real thing" here in South Africa.

A top secret military intelligence document leaked to *The Weekly Mail* (15 May 1992) expresses concern that the peace negotiations in Angola could go badly for South Africa, impacting on local negotiations. "The process of negotiations in Mozambique and Angola...will determine the nature and extent of the deployment of defensive conventional forces in the neighbouring states."

According a *Le Monde* report (see *Guardian Weekly* May 15, 1992) the South African airline SAFAIR is presently providing Savimbi with a C-130 Hercules aircraft to help him move about Angola for his election campaign.

And the same SAFAIR is also providing an old Dakota for journalists covering his campaign. Although SAFAIR is a privately owned company it has plenty of SADF connections. It is unclear who is paying for this electoral boost to Savimbi. We can be sure that the planes are just the tip of a large Comops-style operation of the kind mounted



FW De Klerk: The deadlock at CODESA 2 is a sign of his insecurity and vulnerability

in Namibia during the election there.

Clearly, De Klerk is in no hurry to agree to any multi-party control, or even monitoring over security force operations, until at least after the Angolan September elections.

• The third immediate reason for delay has been the regime's relative failure at CODESA itself.

When the PAC and other critics of CODESA argue that 16 out of 19 delegations at CODESA are either tricameral or bantustan entities they are perfectly right. Yet, despite this fact, the ANC-led alliance at CODESA has generally outmanoeuvred the regime and its allies.

It is the ANC-led alliance scenario (based on the Harare Declaration) that has emerged as the dominant position. It is within the

framework of this scenario that all the negotiations are now taking place. By contrast the elaborate proposals put forward by Inkatha, the position originally set out by the Democratic Party, and the countless proposals mooted by the regime have all been swept from the table.

The regime has basically been forced back into the position of seeking to undermine and spoil the ANC scenario from within. Without for a moment underrating the regime's cunning, its present defensive position within the negotiations compels it to reveal its hand more obviously as the spoiler.

From all of this we need to understand that **the deadlock at CODESA 2 is not a defeat for us. It is a sign of De Klerk's relative insecurity and relative vulnerability.**

FW fears democracy above all

An election campaign into black areas, the Angolan election, the moral high ground at CODESA itself, these are all factors behind the present deadlock in negotiations. But at the end of the day the main reason for the deadlock is that the regime has still not given up its hope of postponing, forever if possible, democratic majority rule in our country. And, at the end of the day, this is why they must now be taught a lesson.

The deliberate deadlock at CODESA is all the more unacceptable because every week brings fresh confirmation of the sinister and decadent character of De Klerk's regime.

Sweep the crooks and assassins out of office!

It is clear that De Klerk's regime is not fit to rule. Every week there is more evidence of far-reaching corruption, of mismanagement and the squandering of tax-payers' money. Every week there is more evidence of a massive security force network, of hit

squads and continuing special operations.

De Klerk, your mask is off! You can no longer hide behind the past, you can no longer claim that apartheid is dead, or that it was all your predecessor, PW Botha's fault.

In the time of PW Botha, YOU, De Klerk, were a loyal servant of the total strategy war on our people.

When Goniwe was assassinated, YOU, De Klerk, were a senior member of the national security council.

It is under YOUR presidency today that general CP van der Westhuizen, not only continues to walk free, but serves as head of Military Intelligence.

It is under YOUR presidency, at this very moment, that an extensive hit squad network, operated by the Security Branch you claim to have dissolved, is functioning on the East Rand. This is one network that has been exposed, how many more are in existence?

It is during YOUR presidency that the level of violence has surged to record levels.

In April this year, while township dwellers were being killed in their scores in taxis, on trains, in their beds, it was YOU, De Klerk, who reassured whites during the

whites-only referendum that the "nature of the violence has changed since February 1990, soft targets are no longer being hit."

It is under YOUR presidency that more than 400 political prisoners continue to be held hostage.

It is under YOUR presidency that men like Gerrit Viljoen, totally discredited by the corruption in departments they headed, continue to serve as senior cabinet ministers.

It is YOUR department of so-called correctional services that released the murderer Shange.

The list goes on and on and on.

You tell us, De Klerk, that our threats of mass action are undermining "the spirit of negotiations". If you are so concerned about the spirit of negotiations, perhaps you can then also tell us who it was that was bugging the SACP and ANC phones at CODESA?

We are serious about negotiations. We want negotiations to work. But negotiations are not just about talking, the negotiations must ensure that our country moves very rapidly **FROM CORRUPTION, FROM MURDER AND MISMANAGEMENT TO DEMOCRACY, TO JUSTICE AND TO GOOD GOVERNMENT!**

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We repeat: Release our political prisoners NOW!

When the ANC-led alliance first began the process leading to negotiations, we set various pre-conditions. These were obstacles whose removal we said was essential to secure a climate conducive to a peaceful transition to democracy. Amongst these was the unconditional release of political prisoners.

In the course of 1991, following the Inkathagate scandal, the ANC-led alliance moved more forcefully on to the offensive. We began to define the present government itself as the main obstacle to transition. In line with this, our immediate demand began to be for the establishment of an Interim Government.

However tactically correct this shift might have been, it created a degree of ambiguity over the status of the other obstacles to progress. Was the resolution of the political prisoner question now something that could wait for the establishment of an Interim Government?

We have never adequately clarified the relationship between the struggle for interim arrangements and agitation for the immediate release of political prisoners and for the immediate removal of other obstacles.

The effect of all of this has been that the heat has been taken off the regime on the political prisoner issue. Meanwhile over 400 political prisoners continue to be held hostage.

When the issue is raised in CODESA, the regime responds by saying that it is a bilateral issue between itself and the ANC. In

other words, it is not a matter for discussion in the multi-party context of CODESA. Yet there has been little progress in these bilaterals. In fact, there seems to be retrogression, with the regime seeking to link the release of political prisoners with concessions from our side on MK.

We in the SACP do not accept that the question of political prisoners is only a bilateral issue between the ANC and the regime. Indeed, some of the leading MK prisoners - Mthetheli Mncube, Mzondeleli Nondula and Robert McBride - are also SACP members.

The regime brazenly and cynically releases common criminal murderers, like the infamous KwaZulu policeman Shange. But it continues to flout the agreements through which Mncube, Nondula, McBride and other indisputable political prisoners should have been released many months ago.

We need to marshal mass power once more, to open the jails as we did in releasing comrades Mandela and others.

We repeat: Release our political prisoners now!

But this time we are not speaking, in the first place, to the regime. We are speaking to ourselves.

We are reminding ourselves of our solemn duty, and of our mass capacity to bring about the release of our comrades.

No more delays. No more legal technicalities. No more games.

THEY SHALL BE FREE! ★

Eavesdroppings or ... the credulous Kriel

An exasperated Hernus Kriel, the regime's Minister of Justice, was having a hard time in a sub-committee of CODESA Working Group 1. The sub-committee had been charged with looking into the question of "political violence and intimidation".

Delegate after delegate hammered the regime's security forces for their complicity in the violence.

"Some people come here thinking they have lily white hands," said Kriel, looking hard at SACP representative Ronnie Kasrils. "Well, I am going to expose them once and for all."

Kriel then dramatically produced a TOP SECRET/UITERS GEHEIM government intelligence file. He proceeded to read from one of the reports in it:

"On December 4, 1991 at a meeting of the South African Communist Party in a Hillbrow hotel, Walter Sisulu said that for every township resident killed we must respond by killing 10 policemen'. Chris Hani said that 'if MK is not integrated into the SADF we must begin killing SADF soldiers'. And Jay Naidoo said that 'when we get to power the first thing we must do is ban Inkatha.'"

Kriel closed the file with a triumphant smirk on his face.

It took him some time to realise that he was virtually alone in the sub-committee in believing this preposterous report.

In fact, the SACP did hold a function on December 4 in a Hillbrow hotel (the Park Lane, to be exact). It was a cocktail party for our international guests and for the media on the eve of our 8th Congress.

Chris Hani said a few words of welcome.

As far as we can remember neither Walter Sisulu nor Jay Naidoo were even present. Certainly neither of them made any kind of public address.

Both Sisulu and Naidoo did, however, speak the next day. They delivered the keynote messages of support from the ANC and COSATU at the opening session of the 8th Congress. These speeches were delivered in the full glare of media coverage. As the more than 50 journalists present, including many from the NP-party supporting press, will testify, neither Sisulu nor Naidoo made any blood-curdling calls, or any threats of banning.

"Either your informant was inebriated or he was taking you for a whopping ride," Kasrils told Kriel.

Most of the delegates in the CODESA sub-committee demanded that Kriel withdraw his allegation. Eventually the reluctant minister did retract, but only after he had been warned that his claims were both false and defamatory. He might have ended up in one of his own courts!

The whole episode has, of course, its amusing side. But less amusing is the insight it gives us into the kind of "intelligence" reports upon which the Department of Justice and the regime in general operate. This is the kind of information that has led to thousands of us being detained without trial, to the banning of organisations, and (who can say?) very likely to the "permanent removal" of more than one activist.

Kriel's eavesdroppings shows how urgent is the need for the security forces to be restructured and for them to come under proper civilian control. ★

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Walter Sisulu

A discussion with the ANC's vice-president in which he looks back on his years in the struggle, the people who influenced his thought – and what it was like to disrupt CPSA meetings in the late 40s!

Walter Sisulu has just celebrated his 80th birthday. When he talks three words keep recurring: Organisation, Discipline, Struggle. Three hard words that he speaks ever so softly, this most human of human beings.

He was born and baptised Walter Max Ulyate Sisulu in the year 1912.

His family were peasants in the Engcobo area of Transkei. He was raised by his mother and an uncle. In standard 4 he was forced to leave school when his uncle died.

The 15 year old Walter Sisulu then followed the path of thousands before him. He travelled from Transkei to eGoli in search of a wage, a wage to support his family.

He worked in a dairy. He worked in a gold mine. He worked as a domestic in East London.

★

As old as the ANC itself

Walter Sisulu was born in 1912, coincidentally the exact year of the launch of the African National Congress. Their two histories have been inextricably linked.

'The most important period for me was the years immediately after I joined the ANC in 1940. I was struggling before, you know, directionless. When I got to the ANC I began to change, even though the ANC at that time did not properly formulate its policies.'

He returned to Johannesburg in the early 1930s. He worked in a number of factories, and always it was tough, always it was struggles with the bosses, and brushes with the law.

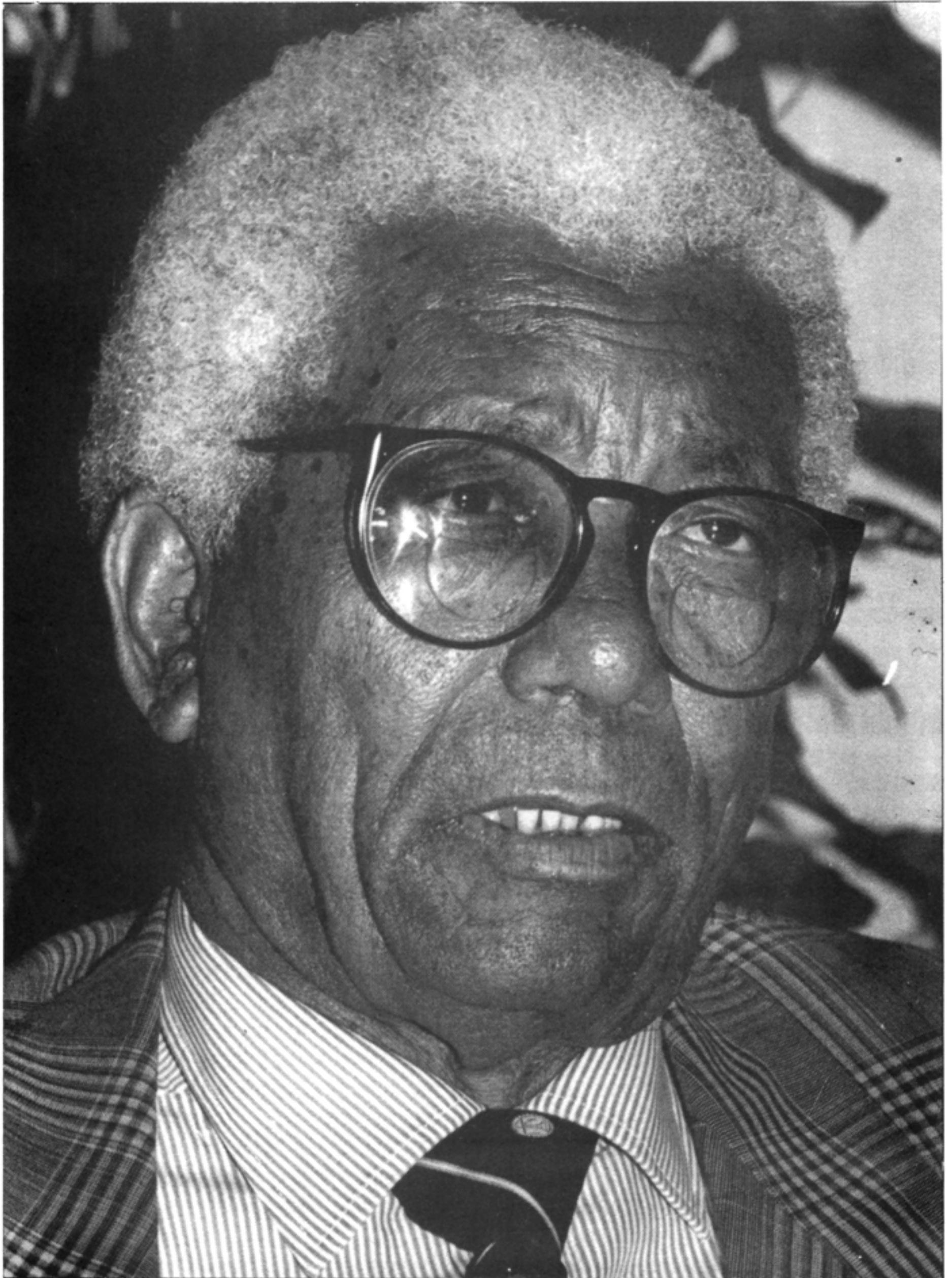
If joining the ANC changed Walter Sisulu's life, there is no doubt that Walter Sisulu was central in changing the character and direction of the ANC itself.

He was a founder member and treasurer of the influential ANC Youth League. He was elected to the Transvaal executive of the ANC.

In 1949 he became national secretary general of the ANC itself. These were the crucial years in which the ANC transformed itself into a more effective organisation, with a clear policy and programme of action. Above all, these were the years in which the ANC discovered its mass base.

"It was a changing period, it changed the approach and outlook of the ANC," he explains. "The 1944 launch of the ANC Youth League also helped to give greater direction to the ANC. When the ANC president of the time and the senior members thought of a youth league they thought of the National Party where the president gives the direction and the youth were merely the organ.

"We in the Youth League had other ideas. So much so that the ideology and the manifesto of the Youth League were completely different from the mother body. It was deliberately done to reshape the mother body as such.



“The idea was that you don’t elect people or appoint people into positions because of their status but they were to be elected on the basis of policies.”

Question: Can you tell us about some of the people who influenced your political outlook?

Sisulu: Yes I think there are outstanding personalities who I have worked with in the past. These include Moses Kotane, Dr Yusuf Dadoo, JB Marks, Michael Harmel and Rusty Bernstein.

By association, by discussion, by theoretical exchanges they helped to shape my own outlook.

I think Moses Kotane in particular has played a major part in bringing about a type of acceptable alliance between the ANC and the Party. He realised the importance of a nationalist movement. The doubts which people expressed

before, you must know that, in the period of the war, nationalism was something that was abhorred because of Hitler nationalism.

Even in the Party there were those doubts as to how you work with a nationalist.

Kotane and Dadoo were able to show that the dangers of extreme left tendencies would destroy the chances of the Party. If the Party itself did not understand this reality of nationalism, there was a danger of it being ignored by the great masses of the people.

Not enough is said today of Kotane and Dadoo, they are the foundation stone to the alliance of the present liberation movement. They broke down the antagonism that existed in the early days, the antagonism existed also because there were sectarian tendencies within the Party itself.

Perhaps the coming together of the ANC and the Party has done one thing which people

★

THE THOUGHTS OF COMRADE WALTER

NATION BUILDING

I myself, I’m a very firm believer in the building of unity in our country. When I talk of national liberation, and I talk of non-racialism, I am expressing my deep, and I mean deepest, feelings. And today the ANC is following that line, to be a nation building machinery is very important. In particular in this stage.

PAN-AFRICANISM

The Youth League had the idea in their minds of pan-africanism. Under the influence of the Youth League, a resolution was therefore passed at an ANC conference that there is a need for a Pan-Africanist conference. I then wrote letters to various organisations throughout the continent.

In 1953 I attended the International festival in Poland convened by the the World Federation of Democratic Youth. It was my very first trip abroad, my first chance to come into contact with the world. Because of my correspondence the delegates who came from West Africa, and from various other parts of Africa, were very anxious to meet me. I convened a meeting in Poland of all the African delegates. We exchanged views about pan-africanism.

At the time I was also corresponding with men like Kaunda (who still talks about those times today) and Nkrumah, suggesting a pan-african congress. We felt the pan-african congress should be held in Africa. And indeed such a congress was later convened by Nkrumah when (as a result of Ghanaian independence) he was in a position to do it.

do not understand. The Communist Party changed from being mechanical in the early 30s, to being broad in its approach. In other words, although people would think of the Communist Party being dictated to by Moscow, the situation was different. The Party had to consider the situation at home. It was dealing with a powerful movement, the ANC, and it was necessary to examine things soberly. Perhaps that is why they did not bring in a mechanical approach in our politics.”

Question: 80 years of struggle - what would you do different if you could go back?

Sisulu: You are asking me a very difficult question. Because you force me to say: I don't remember. I don't remember anything that I can say: No I regret, I shouldn't have done this. There has been consistency in my ideas of the struggle. That's all I can say. ★



DISCIPLINE

I am a firm believer, like Moses Kotane, in discipline. An organisation is not governed by anger. It must be governed by analysis, by examining the situation, and not mechanically.

STRUGGLE

Firstly I came into political struggle because of pass laws. I have personally suffered in the early 30s, gone into jail for passes. And all that has shaped my life.

MAKANA

Among the heroes that, as small boys, we were fascinated by was Makana.

It was especially the story that Makana wrote to the British governor, or some colonial authority, saying: 'At 8 o'clock I'll have breakfast with you.' Meaning he was going to attack!

That very approach, I mean, it fascinated us!

WALTER SISULU AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY

Question: About 45 years ago you were involved in the ANC Youth League, and the Youth League was associated then with strong nationalist and anti-communist sentiments...

Sisulu: Yes, (chuckling) I can explain EVEN those strong feelings of nationalism within the Youth League at the time. As a matter of fact, looking back, it was inevitable to people who have been oppressed racially. I also had definite feelings of anti-white provoked by the system, but I was not an extreme nationalist.



NELSON MANDELA:

In the 1940s we used to disrupt Communist Party meetings. I remember personally overturning a CPSA recruiting table. But, as for Walter, in the matter of breaking up Party meetings, he was always unreliable!

SPECIAL FOCUS

STEPPING STONES TO SOCIALISM

How do we begin to put in place stepping stones to socialism in the period of national democratic transformation itself?

Alec Erwin, JJ Kunene, Bheki Langa and the SACP's Economic Forum collective take up the discussion. Their interventions relate to critical areas - reconstruction, the role of the state, growth and redistribution, affirmative action. It is no accident that each of these areas has become a flash-point of controversy.

The ruling bloc in our country does everything in its power to pull the teeth out of any economic policy that seeks real democratisation. With their usual arrogance the bosses try to pour scorn on any progressive economic policy. Those who have plunged our economy into deep crisis accuse the broad liberation movement of 'economic illiteracy', of 'naivete', of clinging to 'outmoded models'.

The economic discussion papers we publish in this issue were all written before the recent ANC National Policy Conference, but each one has emerged out of the debates that preceded the conference. They need, therefore, to be read in conjunction with the important social and economic resolutions taken at the ANC conference.

TOWARDS A SOCIALIST ECONOMY – 1

Trade unionist ALEC ERWIN presents the outlines of an economic programme for reconstruction – and points out the vital role the SACP has to play

Economic reconstruction

In the present ideological climate there is a pervasive attempt to ensure that the SACP plays no role in the formulation of economic policy. The collapse of the USSR and the socialist states of eastern Europe is used to try to sideline the Party in regard to economic issues. Even within the ranks of socialists there is a loss of morale, a feeling that we have either to say the same thing as the ANC or say nothing. Others stick mechanically to previous orthodoxy.

The aim of this article is to begin the process of firmly reinserting the SACP into the debate on economic policy. I argue that the SACP is obliged to play a role that could be critical, not only for the future of the working class but for all of South and southern Africa's people.

At present there is a major contestation between two broad approaches to growth. The first stresses the revival of profitability as paramount and redistribution as a secondary consequence of this. The second stresses redistribution as the basis for viable, profitable and long-term growth of the economy.

The great weight of capital - both domestic and international - and powerful institutions

such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank favour the first approach. This paper builds on documents of the ANC and COSATU to develop the second approach more fully. This second approach is not unique to South Africa. Within the context of the specific conditions in many countries of the so-called "South" similar broad approaches have been set out.

However, to articulate in theory the second position is one thing, more important is the difficult struggle for its realisation.

The challenge can be stated quite simply: proponents of the first approach say that the second approach is simply not possible. Are they right?

The SACP has to develop a reconstruction programme that addresses the immediate needs of poverty and oppression, that acknowledges the realities of world economic and political power and that lays the basis for a future socialist society.

This is a difficult task. In this discussion paper I will argue that only the SACP has the political capacity to act as the catalyst to meet this challenge. What follows is a framework

that will have to be developed and translated into organisational and political reality.

The Essence of the Argument

In the current debate much attention has focused on the significance of the words AND, WITH and THROUGH when they are linked with two other key words - GROWTH and REDISTRIBUTION. So we can have:

- growth AND redistribution; or
- growth WITH redistribution; or
- growth THROUGH redistribution.

This is more than just playing with words. Stated simply:

Growth AND redistribution implies policies that encourage growth through rising profitability. Redistribution in this model will follow either by the trickle down of income to workers and small business, or by income transfers made by government.

Growth WITH redistribution implies policies that combine growth with certain redistributive activities in the form of social expenditure and welfare. The rate of growth would place limits on the extent of redistribution.

Growth THROUGH redistribution implies policies that make growth dependent on redistribution.

The actual policies being proposed are more complex than this. In fact, in all three cases the slogan does not fully capture the complexities of the policies being proposed. It would, therefore, be unwise to hinge everything on the slogan of Growth Through Redistribution. However, it would equally be unwise to say there is no real difference between the approaches.

In the introduction I referred to two broad approaches to growth. I will continue to use this distinction. Whilst differing substantially, the first two approaches (growth AND, and growth WITH redistribution) both place great-

est emphasis on growth. In my view they can be combined, they are variants of each other.

Growth THROUGH redistribution is substantially different. In this case the essence of the argument is based on an analysis of the social and economic structural features of South Africa. Emerging from such an analysis is a basic standpoint: Not only do we have to address poverty as a social and political priority, but to do so forms the economic basis for sustained growth.

Poverty must be addressed not just by transfers of income and slowly rising employment. It must be addressed by a dynamic redistribution of resources towards areas of poverty, social deprivation and towards overcoming the structural legacy of apartheid. To achieve this we will have to combine dynamic redistribution with a process of restructuring key areas of our political economy. The old structures are obstacles to growth.

This combination of dynamic redistribution and a restructuring process will generate a growth process that is viable and stable in the long-term. It is important to realise the necessity for restructuring also arises from changes in the world economy that must be accommodated to the benefit rather than the detriment of our economy.

In short, the key differences in the second approach (Growth THROUGH redistribution) as opposed to the first approaches (Growth AND or WITH redistribution) lie in a conception of redistribution as a dynamic process, and one that is broader than income transfers. This different conception of redistribution is linked to a process of economic restructuring. It is this link that sustains growth rather than growth sustaining redistribution.

The second, growth THROUGH redistribution, approach is not easy. It offers no short cuts and it implies change, consultation and determination. We need to examine it in more detail.

First, I shall look at the political economy of such an approach and then in more detail at the necessary growth strategy. The two are linked, but that should not surprise us.

The Political Economy of Reconstruction The SACP and the ANC-led alliance

The distinguishing feature of a Marxist socialist party should be that its programme is informed by analysis located in historical materialism. Such an analysis in South Africa at present points, in my view, to the historically specific centrality of the ANC-led alliance in the reconstruction of our society. The three partners could each play a crucial and distinct part in any reconstruction programme. If this is understood and acknowledged, then it is the sum of these three parts that offers the real prospect of achieving reconstruction based on growth through redistribution.

In the case of COSATU, it is not just because it is a large trade union federation that it is an important partner. COSATU remains committed to socialism and it has made an absolutely critical strategic choice. This strategic choice has been to conceive of its role in a way that is much wider than a narrow corporatism. COSATU and its affiliates actively campaign and negotiate for economic programmes that meet the needs of all in South Africa; and not just COSATU members or employed workers.

COSATU is, therefore, well placed to actively initiate programmes towards reconstruction. It is not a passive and reactive trade union movement that could be an obstacle to change. But, at the same time, it remains a trade union movement that is obliged to articulate and defend the interests of its members. Therefore COSATU can be an active component of

reconstruction, but it cannot claim to represent the interests of civics, small business, rural organisations, etc. Its internal democratic structures do not allow for this.

The SACP can, potentially, represent a very much wider constituency than COSATU in the struggle for socialism. As a socialist party it can both represent and retain an unwavering

commitment to all repressed classes and strata within society. This commitment to representing class interests on the basis of socialist theory will, however, place limits for the moment on the mass nature of the party. Its constituency for the present is not likely to be mass, even though its membership and support could be very large.

The ANC is also a powerful product of our history. Through strategic choices it made during the course of its own history it is now the only truly national

liberation movement that has the will and capacity to unify a nation in South Africa. For all of us who have lived in a divided society, and as we watch the costs of division emerging elsewhere in the world, the value of this unifying capacity is of the utmost importance. It is only by building such a new national unity that we will be able to eradicate the evil effects of apartheid.

The unifying capacity of the ANC lends it a truly mass character which will be its great political strength in the coming period. Yet in the area of economic policy this mass nature, and its resulting multi-class character poses particularly vexing problems. Stated simply the dilemma is this: if the ANC shapes an economic policy that is highly representative of its worker and rural constituency interests it will antagonise other numerically smaller but

Poverty must be addressed by a dynamic redistribution of resources towards areas of poverty and social deprivation, and towards overcoming the structural legacy of apartheid

economically powerful interests. This will undercut not only its national unifying role but it will also subject the ANC to an even more hysterical ideological attack.

If, on the other hand, the ANC's economic programme reflects the interests of domestic and international capital, then it will lose the support of its numerically much larger worker and rural constituency. It could lose this support in the first election. It will most certainly lose it in the second. This is a disastrous prospect since it will also undercut the national unifying project, it will entrench apartheid created divisions and minimise the prospect of democratic stability.

We should not underestimate the significance of this dilemma because it is not something we can stand back and watch resolved in the ANC alone. Its effects will impact on the working class very directly.

One way out of the dilemma is to deny it exists by an ideological sleight of hand. For instance, one might argue that economic realities dictate only one path to growth - the first approach outlined above. Accordingly there is no dilemma, because the second approach (growth through redistribution) is not a realistic prospect. The mass constituency will have to bite the bullet and accept a slower redistribution process. Sometimes this sleight of hand is moderated a little (it is accepted that some redistribution must take place, but its magnitude depends on successful growth) without abandoning the first approach.

This ideological sleight of hand is a persuasive one, because it reflects a truth **if certain key structural features of our economy remain unaltered**. But this argument, however persuasive it might be superficially, takes us down a dangerous path. In my view the first approach is likely to fail in the medium-term even on its own economic terms. It is not a sustainable growth option. It will certainly

never meet the most basic aspirations of the broad majority of our country.

Unfortunately the prospects of this path becoming a reality are high, particularly if we take into account the power of organisations such as the G7, the IMF and the World Bank to shape the world economy.

We need to disentangle a few ideas if we are to develop an effective political counter to the sleight of hand. In the first place, while our opponents' projected growth path is dangerous, equally dangerous is an attempt to win mass support on the basis of false and unrealisable promises. A sense of realism on our part is, therefore, crucial.

However, there are two fundamentally different kinds of realism. One is a realism based on an achievable programme, where initial realism is rewarded by a continuous and increasing flow of well distributed benefits to the majority of our people. The other is a shut-up-and-wait realism based on political persuasion and discipline but thereafter followed by an inadequate and badly distributed flow of benefits. The latter is a recipe for disaster.

The ANC is under massive pressure to give its blessing and thereby "deliver its constituency" to this second kind of realism.

For big capital and the conglomerates few problems would exist with this option. They would see the ANC come to power without threatening their interests. And when the ANC loses power, as it is liable to do when it fails to deliver anything of substance to its major mass constituency, big capital would be well placed to reassert its direct political power in the new situation.

However, for smaller more competitive capital and petty bourgeois producers, who do not have the luxury of being able to juggle their profits and move them around the world, the position could be less favourable. As we have seen in the stagnant, repressive apartheid

economy from 1977 onwards, it is not the large corporations that suffer. It is small to medium business and the petty bourgeois producers that suffer. The collapse of a future ANC government will revert us to this type of stagnant, distorted and repressive economy.

For the mass constituency of the ANC the effects of the second kind of realism will be disastrous. This constituency is aligned to the ANC because the ANC offers it the only political possibility of eradicating apartheid.

The answer to the dilemma is a coherent economic programme of the tripartite alliance.

By beginning from a more analytical, political economy starting-point the SACP can act as a catalyst for and give leadership to an alliance economic programme that has mass support. But, in addition to winning mass support, it must be a programme that acknowledges the realities of present developments in the world economy. It needs to be both a popular programme and one which is sustainable domestically and in the context of world developments.

This combination of mass support and establishing a new location within the world economy will also create the possibility of capital, both big and small, accommodating itself to such a programme. But the key to the success of such a programme depends upon it winning support from a very wide mass constituency and on it being based on a coherent and attainable growth strategy.

A Reconstruction Accord

In widening the support for an economic programme we need to look at other forces and movements in society and examine the extent

to which they could be integrated into an alliance.

The struggle against apartheid and the struggle between a large proletariat and a powerful bourgeoisie has created a high degree of politicisation and mobilisation in civil society. Civics, trade unions, student organisations,

women's organisations, rural organisations all exist in greater or lesser degree, and play a wide and active role in socio-economic struggles. They play this role in the socio-economic field precisely because of the gross distortions resulting from apartheid.

As a result these mass organisations could be critical to the Growth through Redistribution path. There are two reasons for this. First, they are located precisely in the areas where redistributive policies will have to be implemented and where

restructuring will have to be fought for.

Secondly, if an understanding of what can or cannot be achieved by economic reconstruction is to be developed, then these organisations will be critical. This relates centrally to the issue of realism touched upon above. People become realistic by having to deal directly with problems. They will not be realistic if things are imposed upon them, from above or from without.

This implies, in turn, that while they are highly politicised, we must not seek to transform these mass organisations into party political entities. Their success in socio-economic change depends on them not operating in a party political manner.

This point is often not well understood and remains debated within the ANC and SACP, and it is often badly handled by activists. Within

By beginning from a more analytical, political economy starting-point, the SACP can act as a catalyst for and give leadership to an alliance economic programme that has mass support

the leadership of COSATU, the civics and many rural organisations, it is better understood. These mass organisations encounter on a daily basis the power of capital and of the apartheid state and its adjuncts. The success of their resistance depends on maximum unity around concrete issues.

This unity is developed around the issues at hand, be it in the workplace, township, school, health service, rural area or university. For the unity to succeed it must embrace all, irrespective of their race, gender or political affiliation. If one attempts to unify around party political organisation, then it is very difficult to win maximum unity around the immediate issues.

A political party takes positions on many issues within an overall programme. This is both inevitable and correct, a political party seeks to govern. It must have positions on all aspects of government. Support for a political party is, therefore, support for a wider programme of governing, it is not the same thing as wanting to take action on a particular issue.

If COSATU unions demanded ANC membership as a precondition for union membership, then workers who may agree with all other workers on work-place issues would now also be obliged to support participation in CODESA and other major policy issues when they joined the union. This kind of precondition would weaken shop-floor unity, and the only beneficiary would be capital.

The COSATU approach avoids this by setting no membership restrictions. So, even when COSATU enters into the tripartite alliance to achieve certain objectives, it does not deny individual members the right to express their own political choices on issues unrelated to work-place issues. Of course, things are not always so easy. A great deal depends on the organisational practice of unions.

However, in principle, this combination of issue-based politics and party political politics

could - if understood and nurtured - be the key to reconstruction.

In marshalling the power to implement a redistributive and restructuring growth path, a Reconstruction Accord that embraces the organs of civil society could be crucial. The alliance would here be giving leadership, without demanding political loyalty from each member of a mass organisation.

The success of such an Accord, however, depends on whether the economic programme that forms the basis of the Accord meets three criteria:

- it must meet the needs and aspirations of these mass organisations;
- the programme must be achievable within the macro constraints that are the legacy of the past;
- it must acknowledge and accommodate changes in the world economy.

If these three criteria are met, then such a programme will offer stable, viable and sustained economic growth. This socio-economic organisational base provides firm ground to negotiate with both capital and the international institutions.

The Meaning of Redistribution

A Reconstruction Accord that goes wider than the tripartite alliance would, as indicated above, need to win the support of a wide range of mass formations. How will this be done?

The approach to growth favoured by capital acknowledges that there is a need to address poverty. The proposed solution is rapid growth initiated by rising profits and by extending and deracialising the capitalist class. This, it is argued, will generate additional employment and create the necessary additional resources for the state to carry out a redistribution process to the poor and needy.

In this approach redistribution takes on a certain meaning. It implies that the revitalisa-



The combination of issue-based politics and party political politics could - if understood and nurtured - be the key to reconstruction

tion of existing structures will create surplus resources that can then be transferred to those unable to benefit from the growth within the existing structures. The size of the redistribution depends on the rate of growth - the larger the growth rate the more redistribution there will be.

In the Party we must broaden the definition of redistribution. While we should certainly understand redistribution to include common mechanisms like progressive taxation, wealth taxes and land reform - we must go beyond this kind of conception. This kind of conception of redistribution is particularly inadequate, given the existing structure of the South African economy. The combination of apartheid and a capitalist development based on cheap labour and the minimising of spending on social infrastructure for the majority has had major effects

on our economic structures.

Manufacturing has developed on the basis of protection, on the use of unskilled and semi-skilled labour, and on an inappropriate use of technology. This has led to low levels of human resource development, low levels of productivity, bad managerial practices and the wasteful use of the natural, including energy, resources of South Africa.

The basic financial strength of the mining houses led to their "invasion" of all other sectors of the economy and an excessive process of conglomeration. With their stranglehold the conglomerates were able to expand their own profitability despite the increasingly severe structural problems in the economy. These problems started to become apparent from the low levels of foreign investment the economy attracted from the late 1970s.

But the structural problems within the manufacturing sector - its low productivity, high costs, a poor skills base and bad managerial practices - remained hidden for many years. A high gold price and the general use of mineral exports to allow importation of machinery were useful in concealing the problems.

This meant that South Africa's manufacturing and export patterns were increasingly diverging from world trade and production patterns. World trade and production was rapidly moving towards commodities produced by skilled labour using flexible production methods capable of producing high quality products. Production processes now use lower quantities of raw materials for greater levels of output, thereby reducing markets for raw mineral exports. In addition, to meet these challenges, powerful new regional markets and trading blocs have been developed, particularly in the "North".

The existing structure of the South African economy therefore poses severe problems for the future. If the South African economy remains trapped within its present structural mould it will not be capable of significantly competing in the manufactured goods trade, it will be highly vulnerable to import competition, it will not be able to depend on gold or raw materials to increase exports and will no longer have a cushion of very high white standards of living.

This will limit the growth rate and make an initial growth spurt short-lived. This will have two further consequences for redistribution. First, a low growth rate will limit the available resources to effect an income transfer. Secondly, the redistribution of products such as housing will be limited by the gap between prices and the incomes of the majority. The state will not be able to close the gap by subsidies because of the first problem - a lack of resources. This will either mean no redistri-

bution, or pressure for macro-economic populism, that is, printing money and inflation. Both possibilities spell disaster.

The SACP, therefore, needs to define a growth strategy that widens the concept of redistribution to give it a dynamic character and more content than simple income transfers. Redistribution needs to be seen in a dynamic context and linked with a process of restructuring.

Growth Strategy

To achieve this wider conception of redistribution a growth strategy is required. This is an interconnected set of policy initiatives designed to complement and support each other so as to bring about structural change in the economy. It is not a magic formula, but rather a coherent approach in key areas of the economy.

It should also be stressed that it is not a quick fix designed to kick-start and maintain a momentum in a particular direction. Neither is it a detailed administrative plan to be implemented by the state.

What are the essential features of such a growth strategy?

- a redistribution process that not only deals with income but with the location of employment, production, products and their consumption in the economy. A redistribution of the access to economic power and skills in the economy. This is, in effect, developing the socio-economic capacity of the society across the widest front and involving the maximum number of people.

The point can be illustrated by reference to housing. It is no good providing houses (a form of redistribution) to a community without ensuring an income and human resource base in that community that can maintain the basic services and ensure effective local government.

- this will require a restructuring process in the

key areas of:

- industrial policy;
- human resource development;
- access to land and economic resources;
- the utilisation of energy and mineral resources;
- social and economic relations with southern African countries.

• a redistributive and restructuring process that forms the basis of long-term, viable growth by:

- expanding and widening (through rising employment) the domestic and sub-continental market;
- developing human resources to allow for appropriate use of technology, thus increasing productivity, raising incomes and hence deepening the expanding market;
- expanding full-time, economically viable employment through labour absorbing growth and the beneficiation of our mineral resources;
- allowing for sustainable environmental development through integrating environmental protection into industrial policy;
- realigning the ratio between product prices and wage income, so as to address poverty and to expand exports of manufactured products in a way that sustains the long-term viability and competitiveness of the South and southern African economy within the world economy.

The essential features of such a strategy can therefore be stated thus: a redistributive process that embraces more than a transfer of income will require a restructuring of certain key areas in the economy. The redistribution and restructuring combined will lay the basis for viable and sustained growth based on a growing market, higher productivity, expanded

employment and a sustainable export capacity in manufactured products.

This may appear to be a very sweeping approach with no content to it. However, the purpose here is not to present a detailed economic programme. I am concerned to spell out a strategy that locates redistribution as an essential component of the growth process, rather than just an adjunct to it.

In fact, a great deal of policy work within the areas identified in this growth strategy has been and is being done. It now needs to be given coherence by a clear growth strategy.

Growth

There are likely to be a number of objections directed at the above strategy. One obvious objection goes: Yes, to talk about redistribution is all very well, but isn't growth needed first to get the

resources?

In the first place in reply to this objection we should note that, even in the present situation, there are resources available which are not being used because of a lack of coherent policy. Housing and education are good examples. In the second place, the argument about the non-availability of resources would be stronger if our conception of redistribution was simply income transfers.

Another likely objection is that the strategy would mean that growth would be postponed to a period beyond a lengthy process of redistribution. On the contrary, I have little doubt that a revival of the growth rate is important. The strategy I have outlined in no way argues that we should keep growth down, or allow to it remain static while we redistribute resources. Indeed, experience elsewhere shows clearly that it is best to restructure industry on the

The SACP needs to define a growth strategy that widens the concept of redistribution to give it a dynamic character and more content than simple income transfers

upturn of the economic cycle, not on the downturn.

But is a growth revival possible? The answer must be yes. It will result from the so-called "apartheid dividend" (the benefits that will flow from the demise of apartheid). In the present situation there is gross mismanagement of public sector resources, excessive and expensive duplication and an incapacity to deliver. To mention just one example, there are no fewer than 26 separate agencies to channel funds into housing. The result is that nothing happens. The creation of a unitary state, or even just a unitary policy, will have rapid effects.

Political stability will have a positive impact on business confidence and will open access to international assistance. Increased tourism could also have beneficial growth effects.

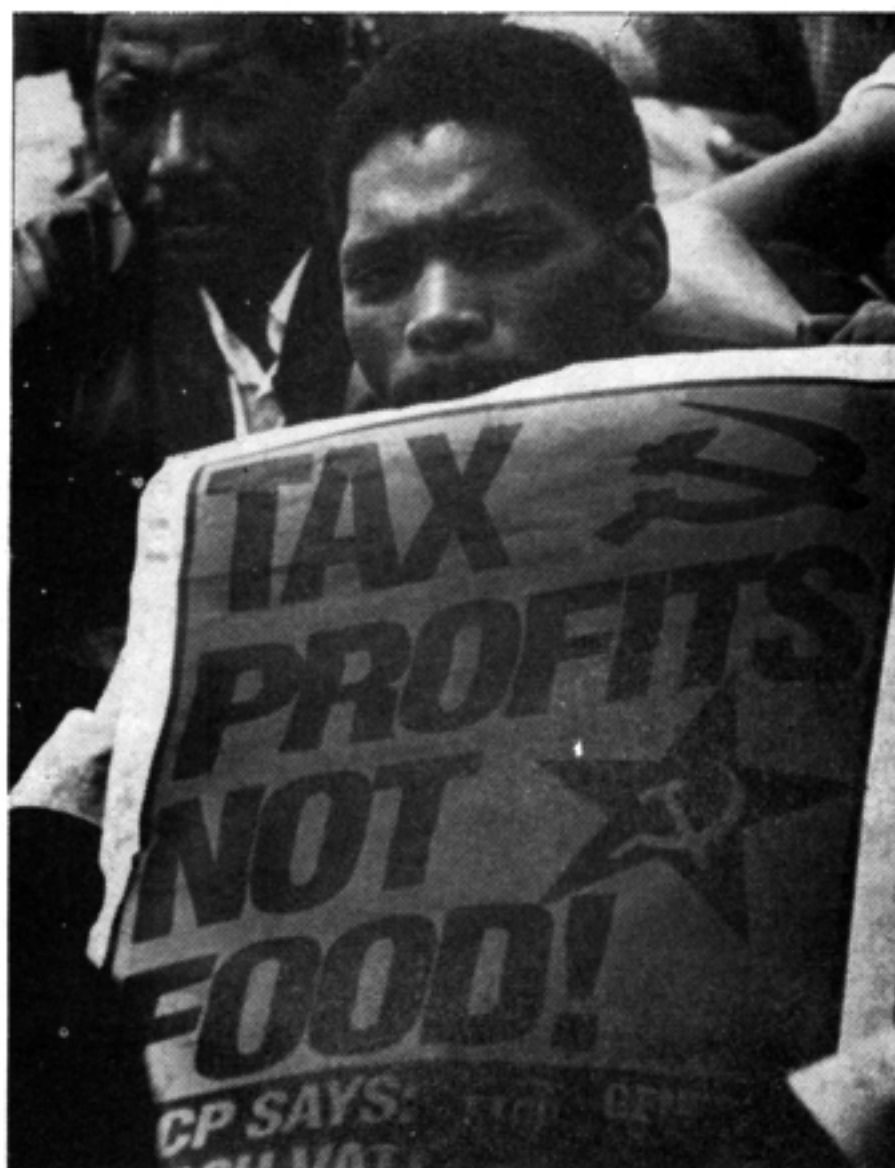
The issue at stake, therefore, is not to avoid growth that arises from the "apartheid dividend", but to ensure that it initiates the conditions for the long-term viable growth envisaged by the growth strategy. The existence of a coherent growth strategy with widespread support will also act to increase the "apartheid dividend".

We must avoid a growth spurt that eventually becomes overwhelmed by the structural deficiencies of the economy, or which is cut short by political instability arising from growing impoverishment.

The role of the state

The strategy I have outlined is based on policy interventions. The state and a planning process are, therefore, critical. This, of course, will immediately stir up ideological attacks about the state and planning. However, in real policy terms only fringe elements would seriously contend that the future state should have no role to play in reconstruction.

But what exactly is the role that the state



Building a broad-based, mass alliance around a reconstruction pact will present capital with a difficult choice

should play?

First, let us remember that the strategy envisages a link between redistribution and restructuring. I have highlighted the need for strengthening mass organisation in this regard. The involvement of mass formations in both redistribution and restructuring is essential if we are to avoid attempts at top-down planning and regulation that lead to an over-extended and ineffective state.

The state needs to plan and facilitate the overall strategy in the reconstruction process. The role of the state is not confined to nationalisation. As indicated above, the state needs to plan, and it needs to establish and facilitate a growth strategy. It will do this by using the public sector to achieve objectives within that strategy. However, over and above this, it will need to work with organised business, trade

unions and other mass organisations. This will be done by a combination of consultation, regulation, legislation and support programmes.

The role of the state will, therefore, be extensive. But this does not mean that the state has to take responsibility for all the areas in which it intends intervening. It should be conscious policy to shift much of this burden to mass organisations in civil society. This is opening new areas in the approach to the state and there will be a need to debate it further and clarify it in more detail.

The balance of class forces in reconstruction

It needs to be clear that in stressing redistribution we are not thinking of a once-off transfer of assets from the haves to the have-nots, as alleged by much of the commercial media. In fact, such an approach would be unhelpful, it would not involve the necessary restructuring. The strategy I have been outlining is based on a process, not a once-off act.

This is important because it corrects a number of misconceptions. For instance, many of our comrades believe that to bring about a socialist economy all you need is a seizure of state power and nationalisation. In fact, no socialist economy could simply be brought into being in South Africa with immediate effect because of the structural distortions of our economy. A socialist economy has to be developed, it cannot be brought into existence by political or military means alone.

The issue at stake in the period of reconstruction is whether the process benefits and strengthens the working class, or whether it further exploits and weakens the working class. The class composition of a future state will be important in deciding the outcome. Our own history makes this a less than simple issue. A major purpose in struggling for the second (THROUGH redistribution) approach to growth is to have a real impact on the class

composition of the future state and its policies. Even within this second approach to growth and reconstruction, the private sector will exist and play a very significant role in the economy. The process will involve much negotiation and many agreements with organised business and the capitalist class.

The debate around whether socialists can negotiate with capital or reach agreements with capital is not one of the key issues. The key issues are the conditions within which negotiations take place and the strength of our position in those negotiations. This will be influenced by whether a mass democratic political alliance and an attainable growth strategy linked to that alliance can be achieved.

In saying this it would be naive to expect capital to be happy with such a situation. Capital will do everything to prevent the success of such a project. If we are divided and incoherent in our policies, capital will succeed. The challenge which the SACP must take up is to strengthen the mass forces favouring the redistributive, restructuring growth strategy. It is the only basis for a viable, stable growth path.

Building up a broad-based, mass alliance around a reconstruction pact will present capital with a difficult choice. Apart from challenging its present domination of economic discourse, it will also compel capital to weigh up short-term interests with the longer-term prospect of dealing and operating in a viable, vibrant and stable economy.

Finally, I have not tried to present a more detailed analysis of the link between reconstruction and socialism. This would require a more careful assessment of socialism itself in the light of recent experience. But the proposed policy framework I have outlined is based on the conviction that a link between reconstruction and socialism can, and indeed must, be forged. ★

TOWARDS A SOCIALIST ECONOMY – 2

This SACP Economics Forum paper considers the debates around redistribution and growth

Redistribution and growth

The relationship between redistribution and growth is one of the most important issues of economic policy for the immediate post-apartheid period. The acute poverty, inequality and economic stagnation deriving from a combination of apartheid and the post-World War II “growth path” have led the ANC, SACP and COSATU to call for policies to promote both redistribution and growth

The joint ANC-COSATU Workshop on Economic Policy held in Harare in April 1990 (at which the SACP made an input in its own right) can in many ways be regarded as laying the foundations for this common alliance perspective. At that workshop the slogan “Growth through Redistribution” was discussed, although it did not appear as such in the final document emanating from that workshop (ANC-COSATU, Harare 1, 1990).

“Growth through Redistribution” was intended to highlight a difference with approaches encapsulated in two potentially competing slo-

gans - “Redistribution through Growth” and “Redistribution with Growth”.

“Redistribution through Growth” sums up the approach broadly favoured by the present government and much of the business community. While it accepts (at least rhetorically) the need for redistribution, the approach maintains that no significant resources are currently available for redistribution. Growth is thus **FIRST** needed to create new resources, and it is these new resources, rather than existing wealth, that will be redistributed.

“Redistribution with Growth” was a slogan popular among social-democratically inclined development economists in the early 1970s. It sought to challenge what was seen by more conservative economists as a fundamental dichotomy between growth and redistribution. The more conservative approach maintained that policy makers could choose between redistribution and growth. But they could not have both. If they chose redistribution they



ALLIANCE POLITICS: There is broad agreement across the tripartite alliance that raising living standards will require growth

would have to sacrifice some growth and vice versa. The "Redistribution with Growth" school argued against seeing a simplistic trade-off between redistribution and growth. This school argued that it was possible to achieve growth along a path in which all would grow richer, but the living standards of the poor would improve relatively more rapidly and the gap between rich and poor would narrow. However, while the "Redistribution with Growth" school rejected a simplistic counter-posing of redistribution and growth, it still tended to see redistribution as a secondary consequence of growth rather than as something which could contribute to growth (Kaplinsky, 1991).

"Growth through Redistribution" was intended, in contrast to both these approaches, to indicate an approach in which redistribution would act as a spur to growth. And, more

particularly, it was an approach in which redistribution was seen as capable of placing the South African economy on a new growth path. Redistribution of income, of educational and training opportunities and of housing and infrastructural expenditure, in a context in which there was also a redistribution of political and shop floor power, would all become elements of a demand led spur to growth. It would be growth along a new path giving more emphasis to the basic needs of the majority. At the same time, budgetary policy, educational reform and policies in various other spheres would create the conditions for productive enterprises (private as well as state) to respond to this demand.

Although, as indicated above, the slogan as such did not appear in the Harare 1 Document, it was used in a Document adopted at another ANC Workshop held in Harare later the same

year (ANC, Harare 2, 1990). It was also included in documents adopted at COSATU's May 1991 "Economic Policy Conference" and for some time was considered to sum up the essence of the common ANC/SACP/COSATU perspective.

It did not, however, appear in the "Draft Resolution on ANC Economic Policy for National Conference", adopted at an ANC Department of Economic Policy National Workshop held in Johannesburg in May 1991 (ANC, 1991), nor in the recently-adopted *ANC Policy Guidelines*, May 31 1992. The reason for this was that a number of participants felt that it was little more than a faddish slogan, which misleadingly implied that there was one "royal road" to growth, whereas, in reality, promoting growth depended on a range of measures - including investment policies, and export strategy, and so on.

In itself, this need not be a source of major disagreement. All documents emanating from the alliance partners (including the latest SACP Manifesto) have stressed the need for export-oriented policies as an integral component of a growth strategy, and none have defended an inward looking, uni-dimensional approach.

A potentially more serious issue could arise as a result of the mounting pressure from international financial institutions and the South African business community to accept the fundamental proposition of the "Redistribution through Growth" school - that growth will have to take place before redistribution and that "premature" redistribution will harm growth.

An important example of this can be found in the International Monetary Fund's recent discussion document (IMF, 1991). The central conclusion of this document was cast in a relatively innocuous way - "redistribution policies alone will not be sufficient to ensure a

sustained overall improvement in living standards, but will need to be supported by policies aimed at placing the economy on a higher growth path..." (p.18). But the thrust of the report is to argue that there is little scope for redistribution until there is significant growth. Chapter 6 of the IMF report argues strongly against any increase in taxes or any other policies that would seriously involve redistributing resources from capital or wealthy whites. The scenarios developed in the report caution against any more than a half percent rise in real wages in a context of overall growth of 3,5%. And the only form of redistribution seriously contemplated in the short run is an equalisation of social expenditure in education, health and pensions at levels slightly above the present level paid to African recipients. This implies significant cuts not only for whites, but also for so-called coloured and asian beneficiaries.

These kinds of arguments have been put with increasing forcefulness to the ANC leadership. They were reiterated at the meeting of the World Economic Forum held in Davos in February.

Developing an SACP perspective

Sticking to the slogan "Growth through Redistribution" is less important than trying to hold the line in terms of the real content of several policies and propositions associated with it. This requires unpacking some of the issues at stake.

1. There is, in fact, already broad agreement across the tripartite alliance that raising living standards will require growth. The size of the South African economy is such that even if we had an egalitarian distribution of income, many of our people would still be living in poverty. South Africa's per capita Gross Domestic Product is around US \$2,500 - about one-tenth the average of the advanced, industrialised capi-

talist countries (OECD members). We cannot in such a situation hope to raise the living standards of our people without significant economic growth.

2. It can also be readily accepted that promoting growth will require a multi-pronged strategy. There is no "royal road" to growth. Growth will depend on investment, a successful export strategy, and so on. If the slogan "Growth through Redistribution" has been understood as implying an inward-oriented, single-measure strategy, this is not what is, in reality, needed.

3. Where there is a need to be more assertive is in relation to the proposition that there is no scope for any significant redistribution in the short run, and that policies aimed at promoting redistribution would be disastrous for growth. The pressure to substitute the slogan "Growth through Redistribution" with "Redistribution through Growth" aims at nothing less than abandoning attempts to bring about a demand led qualitative shift in the growth path, in favour of a neo-liberal, supply-side policy aimed at mere qualitative growth. Not only would this amount to abandoning efforts to run the orientation of the economy towards satisfying the basic needs of the majority, it would also, if any of the arguments about the structural crisis of the

present South African growth path have any substance, be unlikely to lead to sustainable growth.

That there will be constraints on redistribution imposed by the correlation of forces, internationally as well as domestically, cannot be denied. But we should not allow these to lead to an abandonment of policies seeking to pro-

mote demand led growth within a framework which aims at shifting the growth path. To some extent, the capacity of redistribution policies - housing programmes, etc. - to spur demand-led growth, is a technical question. Some of the research work being undertaken within the framework of the MERG and other projects may help to clarify the potential contribution such programmes could make to growth.

Ultimately, however, policies depend on political choices made between available options. We need to encourage a broader, frank democratic debate about constraints and options available within those constraints.

Above all, we need to guard against a situation in which subtle shifts take place in economic policies, shifts that are not easily noted, but which, in reality, represent profound policy changes. ★

We need to guard against a situation in which subtle shifts take place in economic policies - shifts that are not easily noted, but which, in reality, represent profound policy changes

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TOWARDS A SOCIALIST ECONOMY – 3

JJ KUNENE looks at the economic role of the state in a democratic South Africa

Nationalisation and the role of the state

Against the backdrop of the present international crisis of socialism, the ever present anti-communist onslaught has become emboldened. There is near hysteria if the ANC, COSATU or the SACP make the slightest reference to public ownership or to state intervention in the economy as a way of redressing historical injustices. We are told that these key economic instruments for redistribution have been proved wrong by the crisis in eastern Europe. Nationalisation, we are told, is the policy of the communists, and communism has failed.

These kinds of arguments are false for a least two basic reasons. In the first place, nationalisation and other forms of state intervention in the economy are not in themselves policy objectives of socialism. They are instruments of economic policy making. And, in the second place, they are instruments that have been used (successfully and unsuccessfully) in both capitalist and socialist systems.

This is a very obvious point. But the fact that

its obviousness has escaped so many South Africans suggests that the real ideological assault is aimed, not at nationalisation as such, but at defending entrenched interests and privileges, against any attempt to redistribute.

Unfortunately, one major consequence of the ideological assault on the democratic movement has been a crisis of confidence among socialists and progressives in South Africa. This is reflected in the defensive and apologetic positions so often adopted in response to the attacks. In many instances, over-compensation has meant an alarming retreat from positions of principle.

The State and the economy

In the first place, it is necessary to demythologise the whole question of the role of states in the economy. All states, without exception, intervene in their respective economies. They use their political power to influence, invest, direct, redirect, control and apportion, to a greater or lesser extent, the national resources and the

national income. They do this in order to achieve specific economic policy objectives which might range from neo-liberal objectives, through social democratic objectives to socialist objectives.

There are a number of different economic instruments through which states intervene in the economy. For instance, taxation is used as a means of mobilising revenue for the state. The budget is used as a means of distributing this revenue. Taxation can also be used to provide incentives - for instance to encourage investments and job creation - or disincentives.

State public works programmes (for example the building of dams and roads) to create jobs and develop infrastructure is another example of state intervention in the economy.

State ownership of certain sectors (whether by nationalisation or not) is, therefore, only one of many possible forms of state involvement in the economy. And nationalisation of an existing private company is only one path to state ownership. Another is when the state actually creates a new, state-owned enterprise.

The angry noise about state economic intervention is therefore, often, highly dishonest. But what about the more specific issue of state ownership of enterprises? First let us deal with two common myths in this regard.

Two myths about state-ownership

Myth one: There is the common assumption that state ownership means a lower level of economic performance. In fact, the evidence for this is limited, because private and public enterprises rarely co-exist in equal circumstances. However, what is patently clear is that state interventions, including state ownership, has often been crucial to economic success in newly industrialised countries, including South Africa itself.

Moreover, we always need to be careful what we mean by "economic performance". If

profits to shareholders is the criterion of efficiency, then obviously private ownership is likely to be more efficient. But if social usefulness is the criterion then the private sector is often highly inefficient.

The private sector tends to base its planning on private returns, and often short-term returns. It is incapable of making useful social calculations of costs and benefits to the overall economy. This is why infrastructure and utilities (for example, transport, communications and electrification) are so often to be found in public ownership. Infrastructure and utilities like these bring economic benefits and empowerment that far exceed private returns.

Myth two: We are told that there is a necessary conflict between state ownership and intervention in the economy on the one hand, and the market on the other.

But consider our own South African realities. The vast majority of our people do not have, and have never had, access to the market because they are denied basic infrastructure and employment. The present regime's attempts to privatise state-owned land will mean that even more of our resources are monopolised by the big conglomerates, while the exclusion of millions of rural poor from the market will be perpetuated. An increased public sector could well have the effect of expanding, not limiting the market.

Likewise, it has often been argued that public sector investment is necessarily at the expense of the private sector. In the 1970s in South Africa public sector investment easily outstripped private sector investment. When public sector investment was curbed in the 1980s, the private sector did not make up the loss, in fact, it stagnated even more.

The national democratic state in SA

What kind of economic role should a national democratic state in South Africa play? Would

this role include nationalisation?

The answer to these questions must be guided by the following (not always easily reconciled) objectives:

- The first task in a national democratic phase is to meet the basic needs of the majority of the people;
- There must be a decisive shift in economic distribution, power and accountability;
- There must be a transformation of the present system, replacing it with an effective and popular administration with the powers and capacity to meet and respond to the people's needs and aspirations;
- The transition from apartheid should take place with the minimum economic destabilisation;
- The form and direction of a future economy should be determined democratically, and must allow for flexibility.

It is my conviction that to achieve these basic goals a future democratic state will have to intervene in the economy through public ownership, including nationalisation.

It must certainly be the sovereign right of a future democratic state to have at its disposal public ownership, nationalisation and any other economic policy instrument to attain its short and long-term policy objectives.

State ownership and nationalisation

In the short-term the case for state ownership will be stronger the more feeble the ability and the greater the unwillingness with which the private sector meets basic democratic policy goals.

There are at least three important areas where,

it seems to me, the case for some state ownership as an economic instrument would be desirable in the immediate national democratic phase:

1. Redistribution - as a means to meet basic needs and to stimulate growth. Meeting basic needs, whether through redistribution or public provision, is more than a matter of revenue and expenditure.

The state will have to intervene to ensure that a policy of redistribution is not sacrificed to other macro-economic constraints, but that the effects of such constraints are moderated and limited.

2. The effective management of the "dividend" that will result from the ending of apartheid. (Incidentally, our opponents have been telling us that there will be an insignificant "dividend". This is simply not the case, there are vast static advantages that will flow from the more effective use of resources, as well as more dynamic advantages to our economy that will flow from an end to apartheid). The role of the state will be crucial in identifying what alternative uses have to be guaranteed for the released resources, and the pace and effectiveness with which this can be achieved.

3. The provision of basic services both for the effective development of the economy and for improving the standards of living for the majority of our people. The provision of these services depends upon the transport system, housing, education, food and energy, the labour market, the financial system, ecological management, health and administration.

Apartheid is associated with the violent en-

ECONOMIC ROLE OF A NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC STATE

- To meet the basic needs of the majority
- To bring about a decisive shift in economic distribution, power and accountability
- The powers to meet the people's needs
- Minimum economic destabilisation
- The form of a future economy should be determined democratically, and be flexible

forcement of white privilege. Without fundamentally changing this bedrock for the provision of basic services, there is no guarantee that inequalities will be redressed or that there will be an effectively functioning economy.

Nationalisation has been mythologised. On

the one hand it has been treated as a demon, on the other as a panacea, a magic solution for all problems. We need to move away from mythologies, we need to treat nationalisation seriously as one possible economic instrument in the struggle to democratise our country. ★

TOWARDS A SOCIALIST ECONOMY – 4

BHEKI LANGA stresses the need for affirmative action which is guided by a class perspective

Affirmative action

During the present period of transition to a new democratic order the SACP more than ever is required to play its vital and special role - that is, in ensuring that the interests of the working class dominate this process. The current phase of change is fraught with various perspectives of change. It is vital that the Party advances and popularises its own perspectives. The distinguishing character and main content of these perspectives must be defined by the fundamental interests of the working people, particularly black workers.

We must advance a perspective of change that goes beyond the transfer of political power to the majority. Change must be seen as a thorough-going transformation of the material and spiritual conditions of the most oppressed and exploited section of our society, namely of black and particularly African workers. We must reject a conception of change based on the narrow interests of the ruling and other propertied classes.

Amongst other things, this means that the Party must be committed to a programme of affirmative action that goes beyond the promotion of blacks in the areas that are usually mentioned, like education and training, business enterprise and skills development. Given the serious historic imbalances created by apartheid, affirmative action in these areas remains one of the principal tasks of the national democratic revolution. But this is not enough. The Party must consistently highlight the class content of affirmative action, that is, it must go beyond positive discrimination in favour of the black community as a whole to a deliberate bias in favour of the most disadvantaged sections of this community.

We must avoid repeating the rather narrowly defined "Africanisation" processes that have characterised post-independence Africa. "Africanisation" typically saw the replacement of white colonial administrations by black neo-colonial (and mostly corrupt) regimes. Today,

decades after independence, because of the limited social programmes of most of these emergent governments, the social conditions of the urban and rural masses have hardly changed. In fact, they have generally deteriorated. Transformation or change has been limited to the upper classes and layers of African society. Abject poverty, disease, unemployment, homelessness remains the fate of the vast majority of the population.

The Party's approach to affirmative action must also highlight the condition of women in our society. We must be committed to effecting a radical programme of empowerment of women in all spheres.

It is crucial, also, that the Party promotes a particular approach to the form of affirmative action. The only way a meaningful programme of affirmative action can succeed is if there is a genuine democratisation of the political and economic processes in this country. The nature of the state and its role will be most important in effecting the necessary democratic transformation in the economy.

In other words, our perspective of a democratic state and its affirmative action policies must differ fundamentally from that of a "welfare state", in which the people are the mere consumers of state welfare goods and services. This kind of welfarism generates dependency and complacency and it has serious negative effects on the economy.

The Party must instead ensure that the people participate directly in state structures and exercise democratic control over the social welfare delivery system and genuinely shape the economic life of the country.

Of course, as most people acknowledge affirmative action must address the central issue of developing human resources (skills training and education). Human resource development should form a crucial element of industrial and economic policy. But again, in this regard, we need to be guided by qualitative rather than quantitative considerations. The solution of the education crisis and the

shortage of skills is not just a matter of building more schools and increasing access of blacks into educational and technical training institutions. This is necessary but not sufficient. The restructuring process must include a serious re-examination of the nature, content and quality of the curricula of these institutions. These curricula should answer the demands of the economy and the needs of society at various stages of development. For the immediate period there must be a shift from purely academic and degree-oriented university education to technical skills-oriented education.

Finally, these technical training programmes must themselves be linked to a wider programme of economic reconstruction, including, crucially, job creation. The training must be based on a realistic assessment of employment opportunities on the labour market and also on the growth potential of the economy.

We are inheriting huge racial inequalities, this is the legacy of apartheid. As part of an integral programme of reconstruction a democratic state will have to implement affirmative action programmes to ensure that blacks, and especially black workers and black women are given real opportunities to advance in all levels of the economy. ★

A democratic state will have to implement programmes to ensure that blacks, and especially black workers and black women, are given real opportunities to advance in all levels of the economy

Working class civil society

Why we need it, and how we get it

MZWANELE MAYEKISO, organising secretary for the Alexandra Civic Organisation, stresses the need for a working class analysis of the role and nature of civil society

The progressive forces of South Africa are on the move towards a strong, vibrant civil society. By 'civil society,' most people mean organisations that operate between the level of the state and the level of the individual and household.

The 'organs of civil society', which will be referred to extensively in this article, must be considered in the context of the base from which they emerge. Understanding this in both concrete and abstract terms requires *class analysis*. On the one hand, it is clear in South Africa that the most developed organs of civil society serve the bourgeoisie: their chambers of business, their wealthy Johannesburg northern suburbs ratepayers associations, their parent-teachers associations, their sports clubs, heritage foundations, cultural associations, and so forth.

For working-class people, on the other hand, the organs of civil society include civic associations, trade unions, the women's groups, youth groups, churches, burial societies, and other organisations, formal and informal, that

represent the interests of poor and working people.

Politically, the emergence of the civil society concept in progressive discourse, mainly since early 1990, is very important, and the terrain of discussion has not gone uncontested. Three positions are firming up:

- Blade Nzimande and Mpume Sikhosana, in *The African Communist* (no.128, 1st quarter 1992), attack the idea of civil society as bourgeois, highlighting its capacity for dividing progressive forces from the liberation movement, thus threatening the drive towards socialism.

- Steven Friedman, in *Politikon* (December 1991), attacks the idea of civil society as neo-conservative, highlighting its threat to the ability of the liberal state to provide 'representativeness, accountability and public contest to the vital areas of social life.'

- Mark Swilling, in *Work in Progress* (no.75, July/August 1991), defends a classless notion of civil society, and argues that it is the basis for

an 'associational socialism.'

From the perspective of the township civic associations, it is possible to advocate a fourth position: in favour of organs of *working-class civil society* which both serve the oft-discussed 'watchdog' function and provide the raw material and energy from which to construct socialist building blocks. This article tries to begin to define and defend the basis for this fourth position.

The implications of this debate go far into the future, where we must contemplate how a democratic state will relate to social movements and to the struggle for socialism. This is a time-honoured question, and looking first of all at some of the classical texts, especially of Gramsci, it becomes clear that there is no single conception about the class character of civil society. It is a concept that varies in its application according to the conditions that exist in particular settings. That is why many who advocate a strong working-class civil society in South Africa, do so in the knowledge that this is a unique time and requires a unique approach to politics.

But generalisations abound nevertheless. One of Nzimande and Sikhosana's basic points, raised again and again, is that there is a correspondence between advocates of civil society and advocates of liberal *social democracy*. It is a serious charge. But after even a quick glance it will be clear that underlying arguments for 'democratic socialism' (sometimes a label used to disguise social democracy) and for a strong working-class civil society are not the same. The latter is a far more radical conception because it puts material issues first and foremost.

Once some of these issues have been more fully addressed, it will be feasible for us to answer the questions posed to me in early May, at an SACP regional workshop on local government and the transition to socialism: Will a

strong working-class civil society weaken our first democratic state? Indeed, will a strong working-class civil society not weaken the movement towards a first democratic state? What is the watchdog conception of working-class civil society, and does it not imply distrust of the first democratic state? Most importantly, how does building working-class civil society pave the road for socialism?

What can be learned from the classics?

1. The first thing that emerges from the classical Marxist debates on civil society is that there is no uniform conception of the term. This runs counter to Nzimande and Sikhosana's theme that present-day advocates of civil society are distorting some stable and unambivalent conception to be found in the classics.

For instance, as the Gramscian scholar Quentin Hoare notes: 'In Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, civil society includes economic relations - and it is in this sense that the term is used by Marx, for example in *The Jewish Question*.' In other words, at least for the young Marx, civil society embraces both the economic base as well as aspects of the superstructure. In this usage the essential distinction is between the state on the one hand, and all other dimensions of social life (being civil society) on the other.

By contrast, Gramsci tends explicitly to locate civil society in the superstructure ('What we can do, for the moment, is to fix two major superstructural 'levels': the one that can be called 'civil society', that is the ensemble of organisms commonly called 'private', and that of 'political society' or 'the State''). (*Prison Notebooks*, p12). But Gramsci is not always consistent in this (see, for instance, Hoare's notes to the *Prison Notebooks* - p208).

2. The second thing that we can learn from the classics is that there is very little justification for Nzimande and Sikhosana's conflation of civil society and the state. When Marx uses

the term civil society he is explicitly drawing upon a long tradition which comes to him, in part from Hegel, where precisely the defining feature of civil society is that it is not the state. In the quotation from Gramsci above, state and civil society are distinguished as two distinct levels of the superstructure.

It is true that Gramsci is not always consistent in this, and Nzimande and Sikhosana have managed to dig up at least one quotation where Gramsci baldly asserts that "in actual reality civil society and State are one and the same". (*Prison Notebooks*, p.160). But even this remark must be situated in its context. The context is a polemic with "Free Trade" liberalism whose ideas Gramsci says: "...are based on a theoretical error whose practical origin is not hard to identify; they are based on a distinction between political society and civil society, which is made into and presented as an organic one, whereas in fact it is merely methodological. Thus it is asserted that economic activity belongs to civil society, and that the State must not intervene to regulate it. But since in actual reality civil society and State are one and the same, it must be made clear that *laissez-faire* too is a form of State 'regulation', introduced and maintained by legislative and coercive means. It is a deliberate policy, conscious of its own ends, and not the spontaneous, automatic expression of economic facts." (p.160)

I am not sure that Gramsci's claim here that the distinction between civil society and state is "merely methodological" is either very clear, or very helpful. But what is helpful is his insistence that the distinction is not "organic". In other words, the state, civil society, and the

economic infrastructure are not three separate "organisms", they are moments or "levels" of a single "organism" (society). They are constantly interrelated within a dialectical whole.

This brings me to the third lesson we can draw from the classics.

3. Precisely because civil society interrelates dialectically with class divisions at the level of economic production, and with the

class state, it is itself a terrain of class contest and struggle. On this point at least the classics are consistent.

This point of view contrasts with the undialectical views of Nzimande and Sikhosana (who see civil society as necessarily a tool of the bourgeoisie); Friedman (who tends to see support for civil society as essentially neo-conservative); and Swilling (who tends to romanticise civil society into a class-free sphere of liberty).

A given civil society needs to be located within its particular conjuncture. In South Africa, as we have noted, it is the civil society of the bourgeoisie which is dominant. But this dominance is under challenge by the movement of South African workers and community residents - coordinated by their organs of working-class civil society - who struggle collectively for basic economic rights (housing, health-care, education, etc.). If "civil society and the state are one and the same" in South Africa, as Nzimande and Sikhosana imply, then how do we understand the brutal state violence directed precisely against our organs of working-class civil society?

Political and social in conflict?

What is at stake here is how strongly partisan political party programmes determine the ac-

There is no single conception about the class character of civil society. It is a concept that varies in its application according to the conditions that exist in particular settings

tions of organs of civil society. Friedman, in support of a future liberal democratic state "which is as inclusive as possible," makes the following argument: "To insist, as one civic strategist does, that civics cannot stand for local government office because this would 'bureaucratise' them is to collapse, as Lenin did, the State's political and administrative role into one." Ironically, Friedman also attacks the civics for being far too close to the Congress liberation movement tradition.

Let us clarify several points here, beginning with the last. We in the civics have our roots in the Congress tradition, and we are not shy to admit that. But even well before 2 February 1990, civics were establishing an independent political platform from which to operate so as to accommodate all township residents as non-party-political organs of civil society. Even in 1986 in Alexandra, engagement and negotiation with the enemy on development issues was beginning. This debate heated up after the Treason Trial acquittals in mid 1989. It is exactly this parting-of-the-ways on our independence from pure Congress politics that is causing increasing tension within the ANC.

The reason for this tension is clear, and understandable, even if it escapes the attention of liberals like Friedman. The ANC is back, and many, like Nzimande and Sikhosana, believe it is time for the ANC to take over what historically belongs to them (this is addressed further below). In this respect, Nzimande and Sikhosana condemn those who "throw their hands up in horror at what might seem to be a collapse of political and social life into one." (The "collapse" verb is well-chosen.) The social life of the organs of working-class civil society can very well interact with the political life of political parties like the ANC. But some principles must be considered if there is not to be a subsequent collapse of either political or social life.

For example, when a political party develops a programme that is in the interests of the organs of working-class civil society, that programme will be well-supported. Codesa negotiations for a transfer of power will be supported because they will alleviate some of the problems faced by black South Africans. That support takes the form, in one case, of Cosatu's pledge to engage in mass action if an interim government is not in place in June. Such independent support from working-class civil society is not aimed at unquestioning solidarity with the political parties at Codesa. It is instead a more principled solidarity that will be in effect whether it makes the Codesa negotiators happy or not.

For those progressive political parties that do not support Codesa, they do not get the support of working-class civil society on this issue. If those same parties, however, came up with programmes and campaigns that serve the interests of the independent organs of civil society, they will gain support. Nzimande and Sikhosana seem to think that there is only one "political life", whereas in reality there are many.

This brings us to one of the questions raised by Party cadres in early May: might the struggle for a strong civil society delay the actual achievement of democracy? One view is that we in the progressive forces are already fighting amongst ourselves, such that our push for democracy will be weakened in the end. But the opposite view is more convincing. The trade unions and civics are mass formations, able through mass action to force the regime to hasten the transfer of power in negotiations with political parties. If we didn't have the civics and trade unions, the regime would be dragging its feet even more than it is now.

There are complications in this relationship between political and social, but these can be understood through the principles of working-

class civil society. For example, the national Peace Accord is supported by the civics, even though they were not party to the Accord. However, the Local Dispute Resolution Centres are different, since they are local political structures and should be the meeting ground of local political parties (not civics) to settle political differences. By their nature, civics represent residents of a particular area, not any party-political ideology, and to be party to a dispute resolution process, especially at the local level, would be confusing. This is the position of the Civic Associations of the Southern Transvaal, and is firmly supported at the grassroots level. But it raises the issue of whether these principles of working-class civil society remain the same during and after the transition to democracy.

The role of civil society under apartheid and post-apartheid conditions

What role, then, should the civics and other organs of working-class civil society play during the transition? Nzimande and Sikhosana argue that "it is not appropriate to talk about 'organs of civil society' but such organs should be *organs of people's power* as the only organs that will ultimately guarantee a democracy." This is well and true. But we must go much further, because Nzimande and Sikhosana then confuse matters by drawing a distinction between organs of people's power and *social movements*. This is undialectical, in that it fails to understand the links between the two. This confusion allows Nzimande and Sikhosana to further argue that as organs of people's power civics must essentially fall away to become ANC branches, and be absorbed in the political struggle for democracy *only*.

To suggest that the building of democracy is a task for civil society and its organs is plain naivete of the nature of political struggle. In fact it is such a conceptualisation that has led to

the problematic practice that is beginning to emerge within the national liberation movement and the mass democratic movement, for example, that issues about services and development in townships are for civics, and 'political issues' are for political organisations and parties.

At their most provocative, Nzimande and Sikhosana claim, in *Mayibuye* (June 1991), that we who believe that "civics should take up issues of rent, electricity, roads, etc... fall squarely within the strategy to separate the ANC from its mass base."

This is an austere line of attack, which will foster unnecessary divisions between civics and political organisations, most importantly, the ANC. In Alexandra, one of the results of this is the decision by the ANC local to establish sub-branches which are equivalent to Area Committees of the Alexandra Civic Organisation. It has become a classic fight for turf. The implication for the non-party-political civic is to go into competition – for people's resources, time, energy and loyalty – with a political party. This is most unfortunate, but reflects directly upon the strategy that Nzimande and Sikhosana advocate.

Even if there was no competition with political parties, civics also experience divide-and-rule tactics from the state and capital. The state sometimes attempts to establish alternative civic structures. Capital views civics as a communist plot against their for-profit development interests. Facing this pressure, the spirit and militancy, and indeed even the very survival of the civics, are at stake.

The rebuttal to be expected is that very soon there will be a democratic state. What role for the civics, and civil society, at that point? The democratic forces within the ANC will put their feet firmly on the ground of the state, without doubt. But how long will they be able to stand, if other pressures – the National Party

and the Democratic Party, Inkatha, local capital, international finance capital (especially the World Bank and IMF), and others opposed to the working-class – push and pull the democrats away from ANC traditions?

The examples of Africa and elsewhere tell us that simply because nationalist organisations like the ANC are apparently progressive today, does not mean they will remain so. The fact that there are, within the ANC, numerous class forces is a reason in itself for strengthening independent organs of working-class civil society. Class struggle will continue into the post-apartheid era. The ANC will lead a so-called 'mixed economy,' and if that means supporting private property rights, then there will necessarily be conflict with the working-class.

On the other hand, an ANC government that in principle is strongly supportive of working-class interests will, in turn, need a strong working-class civil society to safeguard a progressive approach. The civics and unions will need to continually challenge capital's interests, to move as quickly as possible from a mixed economy to a socialist economy. If these conflicts heat up, what might then occur with the state and civil society?

Consider one scenario: Zimbabwe. After Mugabe came to power on a supposedly 'Marxist-Leninist' ticket, what happened? Within weeks trade unions were systematically smashed. More squatters were displaced in cities than under even the racist Smith regime, and fewer houses built for the working-class. The nationalists, even with their superficial socialist ideology, quickly proved capable of inheriting an oppressive state and using it

against the working-class. The problem in Zimbabwe is that it has taken a decade for comrades, spearheaded by peasant-based students, to begin to organise working-class organs of civil society to the point that they can contest issues with the Mugabe regime.

In what used to be the East Bloc, civil society remained in a situation that Gramsci called "primordial and gelatinous" even after liberation from the czar in 1917. Indeed any independent organs of the working-class were periodically and conclusively smashed by undemocratic Communist Party rulers. There was no opportunity for a strong and vibrant civil society capable of being a watchdog over the rise of the bureaucracy.

The point should now be clear. Working-class civil society can analyse – and give direction to – a state that rapidly becomes confused. If the movement within the ANC towards meeting basic needs

begins to fail, it is logical to expect that working-class organs will continue to press for programmes that meet those needs. This is the famous 'watchdog' function of working-class civil society.

The drive to socialism

Finally, the most important issues arise: how are we to use the notion of civil society to promote the transition to socialism? What is the role of mass-based working-class organs such as civics and unions, and other non-sectarian organisations where socialists are active? To answer these, given the objective conditions in South Africa, it is useful to first address the red herring concepts of 'democratic socialism' and 'associational socialism.'

The vast majority of SACP delegates to the

If the movement within the ANC towards meeting basic needs begins to fail, it is logical to expect that working-class organs will continue to press for programmes that meet those needs

December conference argued that 'socialism' is inherently democratic, and does not need any prefix or adjective. This is no Stalinist position, and to label it as such limits debates, and dissuades people from thinking carefully about the concept of socialism. Democratic socialism is not particularly helpful, for it implies that there has been socialism elsewhere, **whose problem was that it was not a democratic socialism.** In fact socialism has not yet been successfully implemented.

Next is the idea of associational socialism advanced by Swilling. The problem here is Swilling's studied avoidance of class categories. He is eloquent on the need for strong 'voluntary' and 'associational' organisations. But it is not at all clear that these are anything more than groupings of what he calls 'ordinary, everyday citizens.' Township civics are enormously different from the voluntary residents' and ratepayers' associations of Johannesburg's wealthy northern suburbs—and Swilling's woolly-headed thinking leaves the civic movement open to the attacks of Nzimande and Sikhosana that it is just a bourgeois distraction.

As the conflicts between Alexandra Civic Organisation and the ratepayers' associations of Sandton and Randburg demonstrate, the interests of the working class and the bourgeoisie are in complete opposition, and it therefore makes no sense to lump what we do in democratic, accountable township civic associations with what northern suburbs ratepayers' associations do. (It is true, however, that Swilling's mistake here is mainly a semantic one, in inventing fancy new words. He is correct on the main point he makes, which is that strengthening the civics must be a top priority for socialists.)

Where Swilling is also at fault is in describing the movement to socialism in terms of reforming capitalism. This is a view of social-

ism as simply a set of activities that take place in a pluralistic society to make capital nicer. There is no analysis of the underlying tendencies of capitalism, and this flaw prevents Swilling from embracing socialism in all its richness.

As a result, Swilling's 'socialist principles' are little more than simple liberal reforms, fine in their own right, but by no means socialist in content. They do not aim to change the *relations of production*, but merely to accommodate a shift in power towards the progressive forces. The difference between this and the politics of working-class civil society is worth considering in detail.

The socialist movement can get a toe-hold in even present-day South Africa through the non-profit, collective *developmental principles and community-controlled institutions* which we are establishing in Alexandra and many other townships. The irony is that Swilling is supporting this work, but clouds its importance with the empty, class-less rhetoric of 'associationalism.'

The move towards socialism is a move towards meeting the needs of poor and working-class people in our society. Those needs cannot be met by the normal functioning of the free market, as even supporters of capitalism like the Urban Foundation concede. The market allows only 10% of blacks to actually buy formal housing.

The more we try to reduce the power of the market by demanding 'affordable housing for all in Alexandra,' the more we are confronted with the need to set up an alternative to township capitalism. South African capitalism is just not delivering the goods, because by its exploitative nature it actually cannot successfully deliver the goods to the majority.

Instead, the move to socialism requires building a working-class movement around the basic needs that all human beings have a right to

expect. If the market cannot provide 2 million houses to those families who do not have them, then the R30 billion that it will cost to build those houses must be found outside the market. There arises then the role of the state, which, under a democratic political economy, has the obligation to find those resources and deliver them to the communities.

But then there arises the danger of bureaucracy and of its tendency to build public housing of the matchbox type (or worse, the 'self-help' site-and-service schemes of the Independent Development Trust).

To avoid that outcome, there is the progressive movement's call for 'a strong but slim state', that *on the one hand is capable of capturing resources from the capitalist sector, and on the other is slim enough to funnel those resources to community-based development institutions.*

Those development institutions, in turn, will only succeed if they *decommodify* the basic needs of people. They can do this by making it feasible for poor people to live on what is otherwise expensive land through a Land Trust, or to save their money with a People's Bank that lends on socialist principles of affordability (as just two examples).

What does working-class civil society mean here in relation to the state? It means empowered, class-conscious communities whose good

relations with a progressive democratic state will permit a redistribution of wealth that also leads to new social relations.

The examples used above are drawn from our community struggles, but there are strong parallels to progressive union struggles for worker control of the means of production. The first democratic state can protect the South African Clothing and Textile Workers' Union Zenzeleni co-operative in Natal, for example, by giving it protection from capitalist competition (through preference buying of Zenzeleni overalls for state workers, for example), and by nurturing a set of related co-operatives to supply, and to buy from Zenzeleni.

Community-based development institutions, and experiments in worker-management and -ownership, are the building blocks of a new mode of production, similar in their function to the petty bourgeois enterprises of the eighteenth century which arose in the decay of feudalism, to challenge and transform social relations.

In the conditions of France under Marie 'let them eat cake' Antoinette, the seeds of capitalism grew quickly. In the conditions of a 1990s Alexandra township, under a decaying capitalist society, the seeds of socialism will also grow, nurtured both by organs of working-class civil society and by the first democratic South African State. ★

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I am not convinced

PAT HORN offers a second response to Nzimande and Sikhosana's contribution on civil society

As one of the democratic socialist members of the SACP who was bitterly disappointed in the rejection of the concept of democratic socialism at our Party's 8th Congress, I wish to take issue with Blade Nzimande and Mpume Sikhosana's article, "Civil society and democracy" in *The African Communist*, no.128. Their article deserves a much fuller and more detailed response, but unfortunately time pressures force me to limit my response to a few of my main points.

I do not have major problems with many of the points the authors make about civil society in response to Swilling and Glaser's work on it. For example, I agree fully with them that the state and political organisations have an important role to play in bringing about democracy, and that "the relationship between the state and 'organs of civil society' is not a dichotomous one but a dialectical one" (p.48).

However, I am not convinced that, having found problems with Glaser and Swilling's analysis of civil society and democracy, we have therefore to conclude that civil society is an inherently liberal or bourgeois concept, to be avoided at all costs by Marxists.

I am even less convinced that such a critique

leads to the inevitable conclusion that democratic socialism is a liberal or bourgeois concept. Having said "nor is the aim to evaluate the concept 'democratic socialism' as such" (p.39) Nzimande and Sikhosana proceed to do just that by placing a very negative value on that concept and making it clear that they regard it as a concept for which there is no place in Marxism. They make a distinction between the "building of socialist democracy (instead of 'democratic socialism')" (p.48) which seems very academic. Organisationally such a distinction would be more confusing than useful.

The alternative which they counterpose, that is the building of 'organs of people's power', is as unable to be the sole guarantee of democracy as is the building of 'organs of civil society'. The 'organs of people's power' would reflect the same class stratifications that exist among 'the people', whoever they are. 'The people' is a vague concept in itself, often a slogan, and it is never quite possible to know who it encompasses.

One assumes, because of the context in which it is used, that it includes all the most oppressed people as well as some other less oppressed people who are nevertheless com-

mitted to the struggles of the oppressed people. But it is not quite clear. Presumably it is a very inclusive concept, in which case, many of the relations of subordination or exploitation which exist in society also exist among 'the people' themselves. For example, some of 'the people' would be small-scale employers or employers of domestic workers, and therefore they would be exploiting the labour of others. The subordination of women which permeates our society from top to bottom also exists among 'the people'

Nzimande and Sikhosana say that "the conception of 'organs of people's power' expresses the unity of political and civic struggles in the era of the national democratic revolution" (p.50).

This treats 'the people' as a homogeneous mass, which masks the class dynamics and the relations of subordination among them. If the building of a socialist democracy were dependent only upon 'organs of people's power', then it seems that this democracy would apply in practice to some of 'the people', but not others.

Their critique of 'democratic socialism' within the SACP is actually a critique of Joe Slovo's paper "Has Socialism Failed?". I sincerely hope that the few ideas Slovo puts forward in that paper are not the sum total of

democratic socialist thinking within the SACP. Because in my view he did not take his critique far enough.

Our critique needs to go beyond the lack of democracy in the past practices of the Soviet Communist Party, and confront the lack of democracy in some of the past practices of our own Party (as Skenjana Roji suggests in his article, "Disregarding the lessons of history" in the same issue of *The African Communist*). Some of the concepts Slovo tentatively puts forward have also not been taken far enough, or as Nzimande and Sikhosana correctly point out, are used without any theoretical clarification. But instead of throwing them out, I think we should further refine and develop them to enrich our Marxist analysis of the conditions within which we find ourselves trying to build socialism today, taking into account the wealth of lessons from history which are now available to us.

Although the decision of the 8th Party Congress to reject the concept 'democratic socialism' indicates that democratic socialists are in the minority in the SACP today, I hope that there is enough democracy within the Party to allow us to debate this further and to explore all avenues in the hope of attaining either the socialist democracy or the democratic socialism which has meaning for all of us. ★

They said it...

DO THEY KNOW SOMETHING WE DON'T?

A top secret South African Defence Force strategy document is one of the many leaks to be published in the last month. According to *The Weekly Mail* (15/5/92), this particular SADF document was compiled in early 1991.

According to the document the "enemy" is:

- Higher command : South African Communist Party offices in Johannesburg.
- Lower command: ANC offices in Johannesburg and its regional offices."

Sitting here in the extremely modest SACP offices in Johannesburg, we are not sure whether to feel flattered or threatened.

On second thoughts, perhaps we should feel pleased. The enemy (the real enemy) has clearly got the most ill-informed intelligence gatherers.

CUBA

What isn't efficient, isn't socialist

'Only a socialist system and a united people could live through such a difficult period without hunger, without homelessness, without closing hospitals or schools, without cruel inequalities,' says Cuban government official CARLOS LAGE in this interview



INTERNATIONAL

After enduring a thirty year economic blockade by the United States, a blockade which still remains in place, the Cuban Revolution is now living through an even greater economic challenge. A small island with few natural resources it is highly dependent on its external economic relations. For the last thirty years these have been with the socialist countries in eastern Europe and especially with the USSR, within the framework of COMECON. Socialism has collapsed in these countries, and with it COMECON.

The following are extracts from an interview with Carlos Lage, a senior official in the Cuban government. The interview was first published in the Cuban youth journal, *Juventud Rebelde*.

After the latest events in 1991, what kind of situation are we in?

In the space of two years the nation saw its purchasing power abroad diminished by 50 percent with the disappearance of the socialist camp and the total elimination of the preferential sugar prices in this market, mainly in the USSR. Among the world's major sugar producers, Cuba is now the only one that is obliged to sell all of its production at world market

prices.

To this situation is added the fact that the major part of our industrial machinery developed in these 30 years of Revolution is of socialist origin, and that we used to conduct 85 percent of our trade with the USSR and eastern Europe. This means that the supply of raw materials, technology and spare parts, and the marketing of our products took place with countries that don't exist today. Or they exist and we no longer have any trade with them. Or it has lessened or deteriorated.

That is, a phenomenon is taking place in which the nation loses its buying power to this extent and in addition is forced to find supply markets, markets for its products and maintain its technology, in some cases adapting it and in others producing parts on its own, and even practically making new investments.

We were a member country of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) with a logic of development shaped by that context. That community of nations no longer exists, and now it is necessary to enter the world market and search for other sources of capital. This imposes a reorientation of the nation's strategic development lines, something which in some form was already being



done since the rectification process began, and to a greater extent since the difficulties in the USSR and the rest of the former socialist countries began to be observed.

The particular circumstances at this moment for our trade is that it must be conducted directly with each of the USSR's former republics. We have a 30-year historical relation with this market and this people that we don't want to interrupt, and in addition it would not be possible in the short term to replace the extent of the knowledge that our institutions have about this market.

It must be said that in all cases it is a case of world market conditions. It has not been possible with any of the countries which today make up the Commonwealth of Independent States to obtain a preferential price for our sugar. Nor are there trade agreements for the entire year with any of them.

What about transportation?

Before, that is until 1990, the USSR practically

took charge of this with reduced participation by our own fleet. Under the new conditions, freight shipping is included in trade conditions, or we do it with our ships, or we pay with foreign currency. On this alone the nation spent more than 150 million dollars in 1991.

If we think about what Fidel has explained that today according to the oil and sugar prices on the world market, with a ton of sugar we can barely buy 1,4 tons of oil. What is the situation with oil?

Calculating the current prices, the nation cannot hope to consume more than 6 million tons of oil. An economy that consumed 13 million tons in 1989, 10 million tons in 1990 and 8,6 million tons in 1991 will have to adapt to this level. That is, we have to get through 1992 with 6 million tons, perhaps less.

What does this level mean? Will more factories be closed down?

It is possible that more will have to be closed down, but the country can live with six million

tons or less. An enormous organisational effort will have to be made in the economy, one which has been occurring for years but must be continued because it is very complex: to support the priorities that will allow the country to guarantee food and health care and not interrupt its development, with this minimum quantity of fuel and material resources.

The priorities, then, in the use of this small amount of fuel are, in the first place, to produce and deliver food to the population (our top priority) and guarantee the development programmes which are going to give the nation purchasing power.

Even so, the food programme doesn't free agriculture from a savings plan. A level of restricted fuel use and a minimum of fertilisers and chemical products have also been necessary there. That is why we are using oxen; today there are already more than 102 000 working or being trained, and there should be no less than 200 000. Fertilisers and pesticides are increasingly being produced through biological methods, sources of animal feed derived from sugar cane are being introduced, and agricultural workers are seeking a solution to every problem.

Given the country's current conditions how do you manage to distribute the little that arrives and ensure that everyone gets a share?

Any other country that suffered the economic blows Cuba has received in such a short period of time would have fallen apart. I believe that what the country has managed to accomplish during the special period is testimony to the strength of a genuinely socialist project.

During the last six months, the people have been given detailed explanations of the reasons for our difficulties, which are not due to errors on our part, but rather those of others. So the next logical question would be, why aren't we worse off?

And the answer is that only a socialist system and a united population could live through such a difficult period without hunger, without homelessness, without closing hospitals or schools, without cruel inequalities.

The traditional capitalist way of dealing with a situation like this is the supply and demand game of regulating prices which leads to unemployment, cuts in public spending, hospital, school and workplace closures, and price increases for basic and nonbasic commodities, putting them out of reach for the majority of the population.

In Yeltsin's Russia, for example, you have to pay between seven and ten roubles to buy a litre of milk, although the official price of a litre is 1,70; and the official price of a kilo of meat is 90 roubles, while a pensioner earns 350 roubles or less. In Cuba the fate of all pensioners is the responsibility of the state, and not a single one will be abandoned to his or her own fate.

This is to say that far from showing that socialism is to blame for everything, the special period has proved that only socialism can deal in a truly humane way with the difficulties that have arisen from the present circumstances and with the problems faced by the underdeveloped nations of today's world.

We are attempting to carry out an equitable distribution of what we have. This requires a great effort in terms of centralisation. But we are also struggling for rationalisation, organisation and conservation. We must also make a constant appeal to the patriotism and the revolutionary consciousness of every worker, the only "mechanism" capable of inspiring the initiative and the motivation to keep the country afloat in these exceptional circumstances.

All of this is the complete opposite of the so-called shock policies applied in the "new democracies" of Europe and in many countries of Latin America, which have caused tremendous

conflict when a considerable number of people are no longer able to consume. These policies have caused pain and hardship in many millions of homes around the world.

Now, what kind of society can resolve this situation without turning to shock therapy?

Ours, which is based on a system of sharing and on the understanding and co-operation of everyone.

The socialist formula for leaving this special period behind is a strategy of development, increased production, hard work, austerity and adjustments to the economy which the country needs to adapt to new conditions, without abandoning our socialist stance.

In what way?

One example is the space which we have opened up for the assimilation of foreign capital. When a foreign capital investment is started up here - and right now we are in the process of discussing hundreds of offers - we do not follow capitalist formulas. We are applying socialist formulas in order to exist in a capitalist world.

When we negotiated the Sol Palmeras Hotel venture - to give the most well-known example - we are not handing over the country, we are not changing the system of wealth distribution,

we are not taking rights away from the workers. In these cases we are adjusting our economy to something it needs in order to develop, which is foreign capital, the tourism market, and experience running hotels.

Would you say that in some ways this special period has helped us discover unknown strengths?

Obviously no one is happy about the special period, about its restrictions, but faced with this reality I think we should know how to take advantage of it. It has helped to limit squandering, strengthened the spirit of saving by creating a higher consciousness of resource control and a greater level of rationality in everything. More direct, less bureaucratic leadership strategies have been developed, a spirit of aid, of co-operation has emerged between factories and people, and the solidarity among us has multiplied. Virtues flourish in difficult times.

We cannot go back to wasting even in the best of circumstances. No matter what the circumstances, the state driver who is now learning to pick up other passengers heading towards the same destination must continue to do so.

The special period is making us realise with even greater speed a central lesson. What is not efficient is not socialist. ★

They said it...

HAMBA!

"As we meet here today the government has been enveloped in a wave of scandals. These include evidence of rampant corruption and their central involvement in the war against our people.

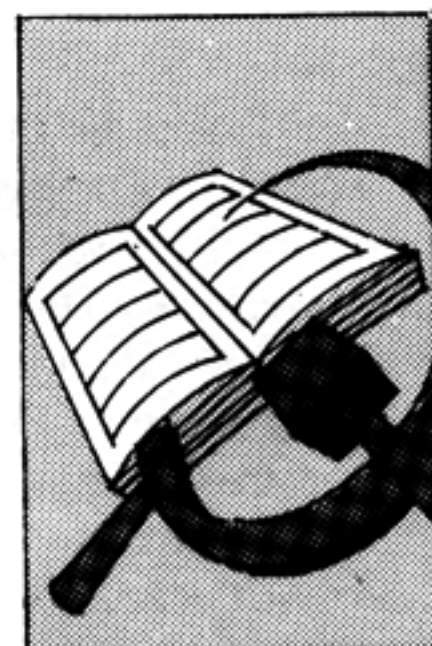
"This government has stumbled from the Trust Feed massacre to the Development Aid scandal; from the Shange release to the brutal assassination of Matthew Goniwe; from Infogate to Inkathagate.

"So many gates!

"Now is the time for the EXIT GATE."

- SACP general secretary, Chris Hani, at CODESA 2, 15 May 1992.

Indecent obsession



BOOK REVIEW

COMRADES AGAINST APARTHEID - THE ANC AND THE SACP IN EXILE, by Stephen Ellis and Tsepo Sechaba. James Currey, London & Indiana Press, Bloomington
Reviewed by GARTH STRACHAN

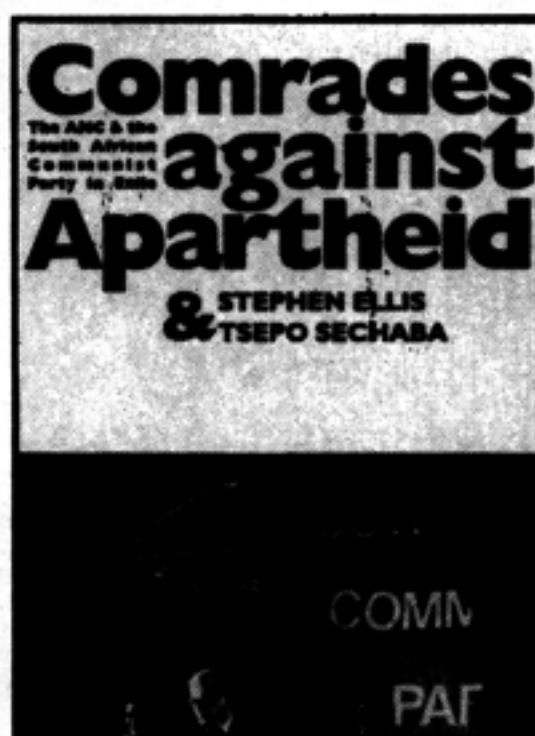
In a recent interview Stephen Ellis insisted that *Comrades Against Apartheid* was "not intended as a cheap shot at the ANC and SACP" but rather an attempt by the authors to "open up a field into which others could wade" (*South*, May 2, 1992).

In his introduction to the book, Ellis repeats the suggestion that his mission is to provide readers with information on a period of contemporary history about which very little is known and, apart from making some observations, the authors would "leave it to the readers to decide what they think".

Is *Comrades Against Apartheid* an honest attempt to begin documenting this history, or are the authors driven by other motives?

Stephen Ellis is an historian and one time editor of *Africa Confidential*, a newsletter whose coverage of the ANC and SACP is best characterised by its concentration on inner organisational conflict, personality clashes and *skandaal*.

Tsepo Sechaba is the pseudonym, readers



are told, for a former ANC and SACP cadre who "attended training courses outside and did underground work in several countries". What we are not told in the introduction is that Sechaba, real name Kenneth Mabandla (he was known as Kenny Rogers outside), is now studying in the United States, after having been relieved of his duties in the ANC and SACP for serious breaches of discipline, including misappropriation of funds.

Covering the period from the time of the formation of the CPSA in 1921 until the unbanning of the ANC and SACP in 1990, much of the book, and particularly the chapters dealing with the earlier history, appears to be culled from well known works on the subject. This provides a useful, though in parts highly debatable, historical summary. The period covered by the last three chapters, much of which co-incides with Ellis's tenure as editor of *Africa Confidential*, provides the meat of the book. It is the section on which Ellis's claim to be searching for information which will help

readers "to decide" must stand or fall.

These later chapters, which contain material not previously published, are largely unreferenced and unsourced. Asked as to why this was the case (in the same *South* interview referred to above) Ellis replied that he had to respect the confidentiality requested by his co-author and other informants and because ANC and SACP leaders would not grant him interviews which might have corroborated this account of events. That seems to be a noble concern. Unfortunately, since the authors show no similar restraint in making all kinds unsubstantiated allegations about individuals in exile, there is reason to doubt the sincerity of their concern.

Comrades Against Apartheid would score very well on an errors per page rating. Some of the anecdotes which add spice to the latter chapters stretch the imagination to the limit. For example, while in exile I personally witnessed the accidental wounding of one of our ANC comrades. In the book, this very episode has been inflated into a conspiracy of epic proportions:

"Some senior commanders were using the security crisis to purge the Umkhonto we Sizwe rank and file. One of those ordered into exile at the Malanje Farm was a man known as Wellington, a veteran of the 1967-8 Wankie Campaign. Wellington resisted the order to transfer whereupon a senior official, later to rise to one of the top positions in ANC Military Intelligence, was ordered to shoot him. Wellington was wounded, as soon as he had recovered he was bundled into a military transport plane and sent to Angola." (p.20)

The arrest of Pallo Jordan, described on the same page, is another example. The fact that

the deplorable incident did take place has been confirmed - the slant given to the incident is however crucial. The arrest took place according to the authors "because of a dispute with a CP member who was a senior official of (ANC) Security and Intelligence". Jordan was released, say the authors, because of the intervention of Oliver Tambo. Pallo Jordan has publicly disputed the implication that it was the SACP that detained him and the ANC that rescued him.

Jordan has pointed out that his release was due to the intervention of two senior members of the SACP - Joe Slovo and Ronnie Kasrils.

These two examples illustrate for me the central weakness of this book. First, much of the 'new' material appears to be based on gossip - with its inevitable part truths, embroidered accounts and pure invention.

Secondly, the repeated claim to be searching for the truth is seriously flawed by the authors' obsession with either twisting information or using inaccurate information

to fit a fashionable conspiracy theory. The gist of this theory appears to be that the SACP gained control of and manipulated the ANC, that the SACP imposed a particular strategic perspective on the ANC and that this perspective, rooted in an insistence on armed struggle, fundamentally damaged the ANC.

The numerous inaccuracies, debatable and sometimes contradictory interpretations and the desire to prove the hypothesis whatever the limits of intellectual licence required, spoil what is in parts a readable and informative account.

Ellis and Sechaba also fail to provide a theoretical framework for their account. Thus the relationship between apartheid and capital-



Pallo Jordan: Detained by ANC security

ism, the national democratic struggle and the foundations for the alliance between the SACP and the ANC are dealt with only in passing. Without suggesting a process of pristine purity the authors, in their efforts to prove their conspiracy theory, are blinded to the complexities, richness and mutually beneficial relationship between the ANC and SACP.

Notwithstanding these shortcomings, the book also raises a number of important questions and issues. Leaving aside the numerous achievements of the ANC and SACP, nobody would want to deny that many mistakes were made. Without coming to grips with the complexities of the exile experience (the hostile conditions, the hardship and sacrifice, the boredom, under-utilisation and frustration, the dislocation and sense of not belonging - and the effect that these had on the exile movement) Ellis and Sechaba have pointed to some of the mistakes.

Principal among these, it is suggested, was the exile movement's failure to balance the requirements of clandestine struggle with the need to build an inner organisational democratic process.

Secondly, that the liberation movement failed to come to grips with one of the Achilles heels of any exile movement - its separation from its

base and long lines of communication which made it vulnerable to a sophisticated and massive effort by Pretoria's security apparatus to sow confusion and cause disruption at every level of the exile structure. The response of the liberation movement, it is suggested, was to erect a security apparatus which was all powerful and unaccountable to political control.

There are questions which deserve serious attention not merely for the sake of historical enquiry. Perhaps the most important issue raised by the book, albeit indirectly, is the need for a process of documenting and unravelling this critical phase of our history.

Ellis ended his *South* interview by stating that "to the vast majority of South Africans, the SACP has not done anything wrong. It has a long history of struggle for multi-racialism (sic) and it has fought hardest against apartheid and it has never been in power to make the mistakes that power can

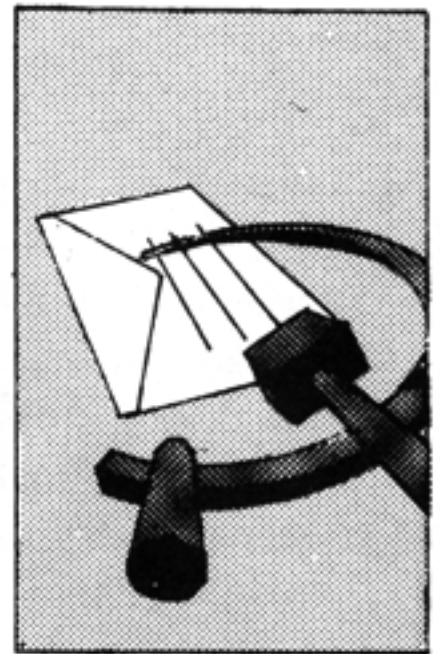
Comrades Against Apartheid would score very well on an errors per page rating. Some of the anecdotes which add spice to the latter chapters stretch the imagination to the limit

bring."

These achievements are real enough. Real enough, too, is the need to counter-balance the achievements with an honest and critical analysis of shortcomings.

Ellis and Sechaba have failed in this task. But perhaps they may have helped "open the field", even if driven by other motives. ★

Old scores?



LETTERS

Dear Comrade,

I was very interested to read the letter from Ray Alexander in *The African Communist*, no.128. My memories of Ray go back many decades now.

I stand back from no-one in my admiration for her loyalty to the cause of the working class and the liberation struggle.

But I remember Ray also as a Stalinist in whose eyes Stalin could do no wrong. We now know, as I knew in those long ago days, that

Stalin was actually the gravedigger of the Soviet Union and the international working class movement.

It is interesting that in paying tribute to the great leaders of the past Ray Alexander links confirmed Stalinists like Dimitrov and Thaelmann with a real communist like Lenin, and she leaves out Trotsky, who had been warning us against Stalinism for years.

Like her, I end: Long live socialism —
Herman van Gelderen, Cape Town.

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