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NEGOTIATIONS – A MASS VICTORY

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Negotiations – a mass-driven victory

Meeting through the night of November 17-18, the plenary session of the Multi-Party Negotiations finally adopted the transitional package that the ANC, SACP and allies have fought for these past three and a half years. Even *The Sunday Times*, no friend of the SACP, conceded that the package represented a score of 16 out of 16 for the bottom-line, strategic objectives of the alliance, as first proposed by Joe Slovo in the pages of *The African Communist*.

But as Joe Slovo himself is the first to admit (see his article in this issue), the breakthrough in the negotiations remains to be implemented. Implementation is the crucial challenge of the coming weeks and months.

In taking up this challenge, we must never forget how it is that we have got as far as we have in the negotiations. The critical breakthroughs have all been mass-driven.

When, in April last year, the regime deadlocked the CODESA negotiations it was pursuing a deliberate strategy. The regime knew that it was provoking a response from our side. It speculated that, after months of extended negotiations and low intensity warfare, the ANC-led alliance would not have the capacity to launch effective and sustained mass action. The regime also deliberately planned to turn the mass action against us, to blame our campaign for escalating violence (which would be deliberately fomented).



Even *The Sunday Times* conceded that the alliance scored top marks for the negotiations package



Mass action was critical to the breakthrough in national negotiations

The massacre at Boipatong on June 17 last year, precisely 24-hours after we had launched our mass action campaign, illustrated their strategy. Within hours of the massacre by Inkatha-aligned hostel-dwellers, with clear SAP complicity, official government spokespersons were blaming the mass action for the carnage. And on the day following, the NP announced the launch of its recruitment drive in the black areas.

But the strategy backfired. It was too crudely implemented. The regime had seriously overestimated the degree to which the majority of our people believed in the "integrity"

of the new-look De Klerk. The regime had also seriously underestimated the capacity of ordinary South Africans to organise themselves under ANC banners. Through June, July and early August 1992 millions and millions of South Africans participated in mass actions of all kinds. The liberal press, which initially predicted a lukewarm mass response, was stunned into silence in early August with huge city and town centre marches.

The same liberal press presented this period as one in which negotiations were suspended. In fact, while the central political negotiations

were, indeed, suspended, virtually every mass action involved one or another form of negotiation. In the most remote rural localities, where the township marched on the white dorp, it was not just a question of mass action. In every case, demonstrators carried not just national demands, but local demands. And in virtually every case they negotiated, often for the first time in history with the local power structures, around local demands. They demanded the right to use the local hall, or they called for the release of detained comrades, or they advanced and negotiated for socio-economic demands.

The negotiations process ceased being only a remote, constitutional affair.

After two and a half months of sustained rolling mass action, the critical turning point in the national negotiations was achieved with the Record of Understanding. Tail between its legs, the regime signed the Understanding. Although not all that was agreed upon has been implemented, the Record of Understanding was a water-shed.

Two critical and related things were formalised by this Record of Understanding. In the first place, the regime was compelled to acknowledge publicly that the negotiations process was (and is) essentially a bilateral issue. This, all along, has been the position of the alliance. While a range of parties have a place within the negotiations, the essence of the negotiations is between the two prime former combatants and ongo-

ing antagonists — the incumbent regime and the national liberation movement, embodied in the ANC-led alliance.

In turn, compelling the regime to swallow this reality achieved a second key objective. From the beginning of the negotiations process, the regime had calculated on building a centre-right non-racial coalition, of which the National Party and Inkatha would constitute the rump. Without Inkatha, the NP remains an overwhelmingly white formation. The signing of the Record of Understanding broke the back of this intended NP/IFP strategic alliance. While some kind of coalition may still be cobbled together, perhaps regionally, and perhaps after the elections, it will carry little conviction. It will be a lack-lustre affair, and everyone will know it.

The rolling mass action of June-August 1992 was, then, absolutely critical to the breakthrough in the national negotiations. We must never forget this.

Nothing, however, is permanent in politics. In the first months of this year, there were again signs of a rearguard action from within the NP cabinet to prolong the negotiations, to dump the centrality of bilaterals in favour of a "troika" (Mandela-De Klerk-Buthelezi), and to get heavy with the ANC-led alliance. These initiatives centred around Kobie Coetsee, Tertius Delport and HERNUS KRIEL. There were indications that this grouping was beginning to regain hegemony within cabinet.

Tragically, but factually, the as-

sassination of Chris Hani in April this year, and the overwhelming mass response swamped this tendency. The two largest stayaways in the history of our country in April introduced a new sense of urgency and purpose into the negotiations.

This, too, we must never forget.

In the coming months and years, the positions that our alliance wins in Transitional Executive Councils, in

the Constituent Assembly and in Parliament, in regional and local governments, all of these gains will only be made effective if they help to sustain and, above all, are themselves sustained by an organised mass base.

The masses of our country have driven the negotiations process. It is they who will continue to be the key to propelling the transition that lies ahead. ★

Party politics

The traditional parliamentary political party is taking strain in many parts of the world. In some cases it is in deep crisis.

In Japan the conservative Liberal Democratic Party, the ruling party since the end of the Second World War, has been engulfed in corruption scandals, and has recently lost power to breakaway factions. In Italy, the Christian Democratic and Social Democratic parties that have dominated government for decades, have been similarly enmeshed in gigantic corruption scandals. In the past 20 months in Italy more than 3000 politicians and business-people have been implicated in the web of corruption. Support for the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats has collapsed.

In the United States there is a major malaise around the existing two-party system, a large percentage of the electorate simply fails to vote, or wastes its vote on maverick candi-

dates like Ross Perot.

In Scandinavia, green-house for the most advanced social-democratic experiments in our century, social democratic parties, as in Britain and Australia, are drifting centre-wards and face growing popular disaffection.

The uncertainties of traditional political party formations is not confined to the advanced capitalist countries. Throughout most of Latin America there is a deep sense of popular alienation from the traditional ruling parties, dominated by corrupt elites. In Algeria and in Zambia, to name just two African countries, the national liberation movements that led their countries to independence, have become top-heavy bureaucracies, out of touch with the aspirations of their people, and largely rejected by them.

Increasingly, with more complex social formations, people are finding traditional parties largely irrelevant to

their concerns. Much popular energy and mobilisation is located in a wide variety of social movements, more or less alienated from traditional political parties.

It is important to note this generalised situation when turning inwards to look at the challenges facing Communist/Left parties in the 1990s. Our challenges are not just those relating to the collapse in eastern Europe.

In this issue of *The African Communist* we publish excerpts from debates going on within and around three different Communist Parties (the SACP, the Communist Party of the USA, and the French Communist Party). The interventions grapple, in their way, from within different national situations and political cultures, with the question of how to make Communist/Left formations adequate to the demands of the decade and the coming century.

As we go to press it is, perhaps, significant to note two important Left electoral victories in Italy and in eastern Germany. In nation-wide Italian local elections the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS), working in alliance with a range of social movements and other left groupings, swept the polls. PDS-backed candidates now control five main Italian cities, Rome, Naples, Venice, Genoa and Trieste. The PDS, the majority of whose members and leadership come from the former Italian Communist Party, is now the largest national political formation in Italy, and it has a real chance of winning national elections, which are likely in March next year.

In the east German state of Brandenburg, Chancellor Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats (CDU) have suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Social Democrats. Significantly, however, the CDU was beaten into third place by a resurgent PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism) in which the bulk of still active former East German communists is located.

No doubt, some of the votes going to the two PDSs, the Italian and the German, are protest votes, rather than a stabilised left constituency. But we cannot underrate the significance of these recent left electoral victories. The imperialists won the Cold War, but they have been singularly incapable of consolidating their victory, even within their own backyard. It is, perhaps, also significant that both PDSs have attempted to develop innovative organisational forms. Attempting to interrelate parliamentary struggles and sectoral struggles, combining the party political form and the mass movements, in flexible structures.

Clearly, there are no blueprints that we can mechanically import into South Africa. But clearly, also, a key challenge for any left formation going into the 21st century, is the critical challenge of combining (without collapsing) the struggle for governmental power and increasingly diverse social movements in civil society.

We shall certainly have to return to this debate, as it occurs locally and internationally, again and again.

★



Joe Slovo, on the right, addressing workers during a Cosatu demonstration at the World Trade Centre

The Negotiations Victory

A political overview

An assessment presented to the SACP Central Committee, 20th November, 1993, by the party chairperson, **Joe Slovo**

The negotiated package that was finally signed on the night of November 17-18 at Kempton Park is a famous victory. It represents both the culmination of decades of struggle and the starting-point of a new struggle. We must claim our victories, but, in the same breath, we must not forget that what has come out of Kempton Park so

far is only a mountain of paper. The critical question now is implementation.

In the first place, implementation relates to the Transitional Executive Council (TEC). The capacity of the TEC to assert its role is the key to a free election. Yet, notwithstanding the importance of the TEC, it is also extremely important to counter mis-

understandings about the TEC. The general perception in our broad constituency might be that the TEC is an alternative government. We must get across to our people that, until the elections themselves, all the key power remains in the hands of the De Klerk government. The TEC is a multi-party mechanism to assist in creating conditions for relatively free and fair elections, it is not a government. In short, we must ensure that the TEC is able to carry out its work effectively, without raising false expectations about it.

In attempting to implement the negotiated package and empower the TEC, we can expect a rear-guard counteraction from some forces, both within and outside of the state. These forces will attempt to clip the wings of the TEC. Non-cooperation, subverting and, as a last resort, attempts at insurgency may occur.

In general, we can expect a right-wing back-lash. Our approach must be that if they go beyond political mobilisation (a right we cannot deny them) we must ensure that they are crushed. We must not pussyfoot with the right if they choose the option of violence. But, at the same time, and within the bounds of our basic principles, we must (as a Sandinistan comrade recently and aptly put it) provide the right-wing with an option short of armed resistance. This involves dialogue and a strategy to divide them.

Our success in all these endeavours, in the general area of implementation, will depend on our capacity (as it has up till now) to

mount pressures from outside of the process. To take a recent example, the COSATU ultimatums on the lock-out clause and other issues. I don't here want to re-open the debate around misunderstandings within and conflicting signals from the tripartite alliance. Whatever the fumbling from our side, there cannot be the slightest doubt that the COSATU intervention, and the massive COSATU led demonstration outside the World Trade Centre, at the beginning of November, had a positive outcome on the negotiating process. The capacity for this kind of pressure will remain critical in the coming weeks, months and years.

Assessment of the negotiations process – some general remarks

1. The experience of the past three years proved that negotiations are a terrain of struggle which, at the end of the day, depend upon the balance of forces outside the process. It was the link between the negotiations and our mass struggle that played an absolutely key role. I am not saying that our mass struggle, and the link between it and negotiations, were always adequate. We sometimes substituted cliches for realities, for example in the last few months we have vaguely talked about "rolling mass action". But, despite these weaknesses, I have no doubt that the mass ferment at different times played a critical role in the negotiations.

The position of the ANC and its allies as the overwhelmingly dominant force became visible to all, and it became visible through action on the ground. For instance, the massive turnout and enthusiasm for comrade Mandela's visit to Natal showed to all, including the IFP, that the IFP is not what it tries to make itself out to be. The mass response in Natal to Mandela was the uninvited guest at the negotiating table in the days following. Even the NP was making the point that the IFP is not what it claims to be.

In the last few days, when the package was about to be wrapped up, there was complete demoralisation in the ranks of our opposition, they looked demoralised. Their hope of a cohesive alliance between the regime and the IFP had been defeated.

2. Another achievement was the way we succeeded in combining inclusiveness in the negotiations process with a special role for the two key players – the ANC and the government. In the last three days, the critical days, the ANC and government were making one recommendation after another, which were then taken to technical committees for referral to the Negotiating Council. This is an open secret, and without this bilateralism the process would not have been possible. All along, the SACP supported this perspective on the negotiations.

3. The negotiations set an example of transparency which, we hope, will



be carried forward in South African politics. As far as I know, there is no previous example, internationally, of negotiations of this kind being conducted in full view of the press and television. We should record the fact that this transparency was the direct result of an SACP initiative back in the first half of 1992.

4. The struggle for gender equality (a struggle which is not yet won) received an enormous boost both at the level of representation at the negotiations, and in the content of the settlement. We won the demand that of the two leading negotiators from each party, at least one should be a



woman. In regard to the content of the package, I believe we have made many important gains for gender equality. Again, as an SACP and as an ANC-alliance we can be proud of this achievement.

These are just a few of the general achievements. No doubt, some will ask whether we did not have other revolutionary alternatives? In a way, the answer is: yes. We could have gone on with a combination of armed struggle and political assault. And in the end, inevitably, after five, ten or fifteen years we would have won. But this victory in the future is speculative, and in speculating about its possibility we must never

There cannot be the slightest doubt that the Cosatu intervention and the massive Cosatu-led demonstration outside the World Trade Centre had a positive outcome on the negotiating process

forget that we engaged in negotiations with a revolutionary purpose. If we had continued with armed struggle, what kind of devastated country would we have inherited? We could have won the war, but we might have lost the revolution.

Some shortcomings

In claiming our victory, we must also honestly note our shortcomings in the process. There are many, which we must register. These include:

1. Shortcomings in ensuring the accountability of our negotiators to our structures. We have often discussed this problem within our party. There were ongoing difficulties in adequately reporting and discussing with our leading structures. This became more difficult with our rank-and-file cadres, and still more inadequate between the movement and the people as a whole. These shortcomings were especially damaging at particular moments, when people got information from an unsympathetic media whose dissemination of information we could not ourselves match.

2. The co-ordination within the al-

liance was certainly not always ideal.

3. The balance between negotiations and mass struggle was not always perfect. We were not always clear of what we were trying to achieve with mass action. Remember the debate about the "tap", our tendency to turn mass action on and off in a very instrumentalist way?

4. But, above all, we took too long to determine a clear and general strategic perspective for the negotiations. As a result, some of our positions looked like purely ad hoc responses to pressures from the other side, or like an ad hoc pursuit of compromise, just for the sake of compromise. Let me note three examples:

The Government of National Unity

4.1 The Government of National Unity (GNU), which is the main insecurity in the minds of people about whether we have gone too far. The question we must ask ourselves is whether the GNU is a compromise in the dirty meaning of the word, or is it in the interests of what we want to achieve?

I absolutely do not believe that the GNU is designed merely to give perks to the other side, or to suck them in. Nor do I believe its main purpose was simply to get a settlement. The main substance of the GNU is that it is in the interests of the revolution. We cannot dismiss

the thesis that what we will win with elections will be political office, not state power in the fullest sense. In order to transform political office into effective state power we need, and needed, to have a strategy that minimises the threat to the democratic transformation. The GNU can be a threat if it is used by the old group to threaten progress. But, on the other hand, it can ensure that when we get political office we will be able to use it in a framework which will minimise the threat of counter-revolution.

Reflecting on all of this, if I had my life over again, I would change the title of my paper "Negotiations - What room for compromise?" to "Negotiations - What is in the interests of the revolution?"

The regional question

4.2 Three or four years ago we did not have a regional policy. As with any other liberation movement, our focus was on the destruction of an oppressive state. It was only in the very recent period, once we had to begin to address ourselves, in earnest, to the question of how to govern this country, that we began to develop a regional policy. We moved away from what could have been interpreted as a policy of a completely and mechanically centralised system. This earlier, rather unelaborated position was, of course, hardly in line with our own concrete organisational experience. You just have to be in a national



The PAC's Benny Alexander in discussion with the government's Roelf Meyer. An important achievement was the way the negotiations succeeded in combining inclusiveness in the process with a special role for the two key players – the ANC and the government

SACP or ANC meeting to note how regions jealously (and correctly) guard their jurisdiction over those areas on which they are most informed and with which they are most connected. This intra-organisational experience surely applies more broadly? The people on the ground want, not just an abstract input into government, but they want a real feeling that they are actively engaged.

Here, too, we took far too long to theorise this, and our “concessions” on the regional question looked like ad hoc compromising.

The civil service

4.3 Much the same can be said on this topic as well. We certainly have a policy of making the South African civil service look like South Africa's

people. But taking seriously the whole question of what we do with the existing civil service is not a sop to the other side. It is a question of fundamental importance to the very delicate post-election period. An intelligent handling of this area needs to take seriously the imperative of limiting dangers of counter-revolution and chaos that could ensue from just dumping existing civil servants in accordance with some mechanical policy.

Overview of the main categories of the agreement

Within a complex, multi-party negotiations process there is, inevitably, plenty of give and take in relation to

specific components. For instance, in the last days of the process there was horse-trading between the ANC-alliance and the DP, in which we amended the way in which the Constitutional Court is to be appointed in exchange for their support for a single ballot (that is, a single ballot on April 27 counting for both the regional and national lists).

But, looking at the result as a whole, I can say without hesitation that we got pretty much what we wanted.

■ The key question from the start was: Who writes the constitution? Our opponents wanted a "one-stage process", that is, for the constitution to be drawn up in the multi-party negotiations themselves. Our approach was for a "two-stage process", in which an elected Constituent Assembly would draw up the future constitution. This we have won. Apart from the constitutional principles (which we support), everything in the interim constitution can be rewritten by the democratically elected representatives of the people.

■ We have always stood for a united South Africa, our opponents hoped to weaken a future democratic state by imposing federalism. We have won a united South Africa, which does not exclude important decentralising measures. In all critical areas, however, the future democratic state will have overriding powers. If you look at the finance provisions of the whole dispensation you will see

that the purse-strings are firmly in the hands of the central government. In regard to the armed forces, at least on paper we have won the battle against their federalisation. This was touch and go in the last days and hours, and the issue very nearly caused a crisis. Although there are elements of decentralisation, in essence regional commissioners will be appointed by the national commissioner, in consultation with regional legislatures. The national police force (under the direction of the President) will also have the right to move in, where law and order requires. We have also won the case for the reincorporation of the TBVC states, at least on paper. Once more, translating all of this into actuality on the ground will require political will.

■ In regard to decision-making in the future executive, in the multi-party cabinet of national unity, we thought that this was going to be the final battle royal. The regime had been holding out for special majorities. In the end we won the principle of majority decision-making, taking into account the spirit of a government of national unity and effective government.

There are many other significant areas in which objectives were achieved, including:

■ Effective instruments for free and fair elections (including the Independent Electoral Commission and the Independent Media Commission);

■ Breaking the regime's monopoly

NEGOTIATIONS



The GNU is in the interests of the revolution... In order to transform political office into effective state power, we need to have a strategy that minimises the threat to the democratic transformation

over public media;

- A Land Restitution mechanism;
- Realistic deadlock breaking mechanisms in the event of the Constituent Assembly being unable to achieve the requisite two-thirds majority;
- A progressive language dispensation, overcoming the special and artificial privileges accorded to two languages.

In conclusion

Let me end where I began. Transforming this negotiations victory, this stack of papers, into an irreversible process of democratic change depends on vigilance and determination from our side. We need to be vigilant in regard to the SADF, the SAP and the right-wing. We need to ensure that the constitution-making body is dominated by

the liberation forces in such a way that the special percentages become irrelevant. There is no reason why we shouldn't achieve a two-thirds majority in the elections. Our job as the SACP in these elections is, obviously, to inject a working class bias into the campaign, ensuring that we are not all submerged in "patriotic" cotton-wool.

Looking back over the last three years, we've had weaknesses, we've had minor defeats, but, overall, we've achieved a really important victory for this stage. Translating this into an overall victory is the challenge that we now confront. ★

Central Committee discussion of Joe Slovo's presentation

The Central Committee discussed at some length Slovo's presentation. There was overwhelming support for the broad perspectives and analysis contained in it. The Central Committee congratulated the SACP negotiating team for the very significant (and widely acknowledged) role that it played in the process.

Among contributions made to the ensuing debate, were the following:

Charles Nqakula: The very real threat of a right back-lash means that the SACP and the Tripartite Alliance must, as a matter of urgency, conduct a thorough discussion on the threat and how best to counter it. Comrade JS has underlined our very significant negotiations victory, but because of the long duration of the negotiations and the fact that they have often been very remote, the victory is not so clear to our broad constituency. We must ensure that we popularise the gains.



Charles Nqakula

John Nkadimeng: Comrade JS is right to underline the problem that the flow of information between the SACP's negotiations think-tank and ordinary party members was often inadequate.

Raymond Suttner: JS is absolutely right to underline the massive victory we have scored at the negotiations. He fails, however, to mention that the past three years have also seen the transformation of our organisations, particularly the ANC. This transformation could have a serious, long-term impact. In particular, the negotiations have had a dissolving effect on mass organisation, a tendency for our constituency to become spectators.

If we conduct the coming election campaign in a narrow electoralist manner, the dissolution could be deepened. Whatever the victory, we should not underrate the strong sense of demoralisation in our organisations.



Raymond Suttner, John Nkadimeng and Essop Pahad

Jabu Moleketi: Suttner overstates the demoralisation in our ranks. While this might be present, there are many signs of a very different tendency, a rising positive feeling, particularly in our broader constituency. On the question of a Government National Unity (GNU), while it might be a factor for stabilising the democratic transition, it can also be hijacked by other class forces (including elements within our broad alliance ranks). Agrees with Nqakula's call for a systematic threat analysis of the right-wing threat.

Dennis Nkosi: We cannot sufficiently underline cde JS's point that, for the moment, the agreements relating to levelling the political playing field, are agreements on paper. In Natal there has been an intensification of violence from Inkatha, literally in the past days. Areas like Bambayi, in which solid progress had been made in resolving the conflict, have now suddenly flared up again.

Essop Pahad: The driving role of the ongoing ANC/government bilaterals (in which cde JS played a leading role) was certainly an important and positive factor. But we should not underestimate the irritation among some Patriotic Front allies that this bilateralism sometimes provoked. More sensitivity is required. On whether the interim constitution is "unitary with federal elements", isn't it better to shift away from this rather abstract debate? The real issue is how much centralisation and how much decentralisation is required for the thorough democratisation of SA. This is what counts, regardless of the abstract labels.

Brian Bunting: We have scored a major negotiations victory and the SACP has played an important role. My concern is that in the past three years the party's independent voice on key issues like the Reserve Bank, foreign investment and nationalisation has not always been sufficiently clear or loud. ★

In May, in the aftermath of Chris Hani's assassination and the mass response to this crime, the secretary of the SACP's Cape Town branch, Theo Molaba wrote a letter addressed to his branch. It was a letter of resignation from the SACP. Some weeks later, fellow branch

member, Fareed Abdullah, wrote a reply. Unfortunately this exchange of letters only came to the notice of *The African Communist* editorial board recently. In the interests of making this important debate accessible to a wider audience we publish the two letters here.

Letter of resignation

Cape Town
May 1993

Comrades, It is unfortunate that my resignation comes at a time when our Party has become more popular even to the political section of the working people. It is also unfortunate to coincide with that of renegades and opportunistic political bandits like Joe Matthews and co.

This resignation is not only a personal position but, I hope it is also a political position. Of course there is an element of bitterness, emotions and anger on my part, however this has not and does not cloud my political objectivity (soberness) or rather my subjective view about the trend which is gradually developing in the Party. These emotions are a human, rational and satisfied response to a certain set of conditions (as I perceive them). More essentially there is nothing absolute about my resigna-

tion, and reasons thereof.

Precisely because any political position, its correctness or truth, is a product of specific and particular conditions. Conditions, like matter, are inherently in constant motion. This makes any truth or correct position to be relative. In this regard, so is my resignation and reason thereof. If practice proves me to be wrong, I will unfailingly reconsider my position and go back to the trenches in the Party, a Marxist-Leninist Party.

My resignation must not be seen as a flight from reality, and more specifically from the challenges facing the Party, and the Alliance broadly — i.e. limited financial resources, building and sustaining branches, failure to concretely marry negotiations with the mass nature of the national liberation struggle, problems of lack of full-time leadership for the Party, anti-communist hysteria, and many others. Since I joined the Party together with my comrades we have

been more than willing to battle with these difficulties. In this struggle to root the Party in new conditions we have been guided by the fact that we make history under conditions we find ourselves in, not those we have chosen. This is a Marxian approach.

On the other hand, my resignation is over theory and practice: the gradual abandonment of Marxist-Leninist principles without enough theoretical formulations. In the first place, the abandonment of a PROLETARIAN ATTITUDE towards armed struggle, negotiations, the alliance and the role of the Party in the context of the alliance as an independent force.

In the second place, the failure to be true to the decisions in resolutions of the seventh and eighth Party congresses — our perspective on insurrection and its relation to negotiations in the struggle for the seizure of state power. This dialectical relationship has been completely undermined so that negotiations have become an end in themselves.

In the third place, the failure of our Party to criticise and contest with the ANC in public (I do not know if it happens behind closed doors). For instance, Mandela has made a number of statements which negate the national democratic revolution and socialist project, for instance that he and De Klerk “will save the South African economy”. He has said that the Party is a tiny minority and that the ANC will terminate the alliance after elections. All of these might have been individual positions of Mandela, but they do have a bearing

on the alliance, given his strategic portfolio. Why didn't the Party put its collective position to counter these anti-communist positions?

Finally and more importantly, the high dishonesty and lies which our leadership is guilty of. This has reached a disgusting proportion. To me the question of honesty is not negotiable, it is what makes a communist. It's a basic communist ethic and in this regard I think that our leadership has degenerated into a petty bourgeoisie aspiring to get into a bourgeois parliament at all cost. For instance, it has become increasingly clear that the leadership sees negotiations as the only terrain of struggle. So why not put this view openly and frankly, to be debated democratically? After the Bisho massacre what did we do to displace or permanently remove Gqozo? What happened to rolling mass action which was supposed to continue until we achieve national liberation? What happened to armed struggle (this is a critical component to successful insurrection)? What happened when comrades in Natal were caught by the SAP with arms caches? They did not even give a revolutionary perspective on the civil war in Natal. What has happened to the DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT? What have we learned from the fall of Allende in Chile, and the Paris Commune with regard to counter revolution?

Le Duan, Dmitrov, Trotsky and Lenin wrote extensively on the independence of the Party in the context of alliances and United Front politics.

Our eighth Party congress elaborated and reaffirmed the Marxist Leninist conception on the independence of the Party, i.e. a mass based, working class, critical and independent Party. Is the practice consistent with this? No, the Party is simply tailing the ANC. The Party is a sub-committee of the ANC's NEC/NWC.

To me, the last CC report was an occasion, not a cause for my resignation. It was so liberal, so moral, so completely devoid of class analysis and working class perspectives. In essence, it was insulting. This report to me represented a pattern which has evolved since our unbanning — i.e. a gradual but definite process of moving away from the revolutionary proletarian perspective. The report also reflected that the Party leadership does not want to “harm” the apartheid economy. For instance, it talks about being sensitive to working class interests when we embark on stay-aways, and that workers are reluctant to engage in those activities. To me this is a blue lie. When Chris Hani died our workers went out in their thousands to the streets without being called to stay away. Even on the day of the funeral, as far as I know, there was no definite call for a stay-away. There was talk about a few hours stoppage, but despite that our masses stayed away.

Anyway, how do you hope to win a pro-working class settlement, without organising and calling the workers onto the streets? Crippling the apartheid economy and making the apartheid structures unworkable is the only way. Any other approach

is REFORMISM. The CC report calls our people “demagogues” (endnote 1). This is repulsive and an unforgivable strategic error. Implicit in this statement is a direct attack on Harry Gwala, Winnie Mandela, Blade Nzimande and other militant sections of the popular classes. These “demagogues” are more in touch with the masses than the national leadership like Slovo who is a mere negotiator owning a Mercedes with a chauffeur (endnote 2).

In the night vigil (at Hani's funeral) all the regions were calling for revolutionary mass action/war, with the exception of one or two regions. The leadership is out of touch with these sentiments. Who are they representing? How can national ignore regions? Chris Hani's funeral was supposed to be a COMMUNIST occasion, which is not to negate the NDR, but it is precisely to reflect on its essence. NDR does not mean we must cease to be COMMUNISTS. It does not mean we must defend its multi-class nature at the expense of communism. It means that if the interests of the working class are at loggerheads with those of a powerful but small class in the NDR, we will opt for the former. This, to me, is consistent with the NDR.

This question is linked to forms of struggle. We may decide on certain forms of struggle for the sake of maintaining the “broadness”, the multi-class nature of the NDR. But when we come to an insurrectionary situation those strata will inevitably be alienated. This is a basic law of every revolution. When the masses



When Chris Hani died, workers took to the streets in their thousands

of our working people seize the moment, they will have nothing to lose from the status quo.

Given the nature of the ANC now, it will never support the insurrectionary approach. Is this sufficient reason why we should not pursue it? The ANC will not support it because of forces dominating it, but the SACP should pursue it because it is the path to power. Chris Hani's funeral was an occasion to prepare for insurrection, but our leadership failed. The demand for arms is not an emotional response, but a political response to low intensity warfare. It also shows the readiness to fight on the part of the masses.

I will not be a member of the

Communist Party that sees negotiations as the only option. I will not be a member of the Communist Party that fears a violent revolution/civil war. I won't be a member of the Communist Party that seeks to use the apartheid colonial state, that seeks to use the latter's institutions as an alternative to organs of people's power. Apartheid colonial institutions are a negation of working people's alternate structures.

For these reasons I render my resignation.

Theo Molaba,
Secretary Cape Town branch.

Editorial notes

1. As the report in question has not been published we believe readers might value a quotation from the section referred to here:

"2.1.4 Demagogic interventions

As a result of the dual character of the mass mood [following Chris Hani's assassination] (massive ANC support but with an undercurrent of frustration) a number of forces were encouraged or tempted to make demagogic interventions into the situation.

In particular, a notable feature of Wednesday 14th [of April] demonstrations, marches and rallies, was the small, parasitic but systematic presence of PAC elements in a great number of our events. In a number of cases, this presence was able, demagogically, to strike a certain popular chord among our own mass constituency.

There were also some populist interventions from our own ranks, in part the product of frustration with the initial leadership reactions noted above.

We need to assess the implications and motivations of these different demagogic interventions, and assess what measures we need to take to avoid a recurrence. But three general points need to be made:

- i. these interventions all failed to articulate a coherent alternative strategy to the one collectively offered by the ANC-led alliance, they failed to advance our struggle one inch;
- ii. they played directly into the hands of the political rescue mission for Dé

Klerk that is currently underway [the attempt to locate De Klerk in the middle-ground between an extremist right-wing and an extremist 'left'];

- iii. they gave the ultra-right [with slogans like "One settler, one bullet", or "Kill the farmer, kill the boer"] a perfect platform on which to mobilise and on which to occupy moral high ground.

But the chord struck by such interventions does underline that collectively the tripartite leadership needs (without being populist) to be more in touch with the aspirations and feelings of our mass constituency."

- 2. For the record, the party chairperson owns a VW Jetta and the "chauffeur" and his associates are MK bodyguards imposed under strict orders from the SACP and ANC on a reluctant Slovo

— *AC ed.* ★

A response to Theo Molaba's letter of resignation

Cape Town,
June 1993

I am probably in an excellent position to comment on Comrade Theo Molaba's letter of resignation. I have only met him once, and that too was for only a brief while. This frees me of judging the contents of the letter by association and by preconceived notions of Comrade Theo's politics or practice in the Party.

I have taken the letter more seriously after the branch meeting of 24/6/93, when I discovered that Theo represented a majority view in the branch, that many members, particularly (but not only) the students in the branch, described the same frustrations and criticisms of the Party as did Theo's letter.

This, as we are all aware, is not only a feature in our branch and Party, but in the entire movement. More specifically, a number of tendencies are clearly emerging within our movement.

Notably, the tendency of "mili-

tants" represented by Gwala, Mokaba and Yengeni is gaining wider appeal amongst rank and file youth and it reaches out to broader layers in some regions. A second tendency, which has expressed dissatisfaction with the negotiations process and the strategy of the alliance, is in the advanced sections of the ANC YL and COSAS. (I would like to separate this latter sector from the former). A third, and probably more crucial development in this vein is shaping up in the unions. The latest NUMSA resolution to terminate the alliance once the ANC comes to power, represents the view that an ANC government, first, will have to be kept in check, and secondly, will not advance to full democracy and socialism.

All of these political tendencies point to a frustration and dissatisfaction with the negotiations period, and the lack of leadership – in their view – from the ANC and SACP. Other factors, such as the violence in the case of cde Gwala, have played a role in shaping a militant politics and a complete dissatisfaction on questions related to arming our forces.

There is another tendency which we would like to describe, which is as subtle as it is pervasive within the SACP. This tendency is made up of the followers of a dogmatic Marxism Leninism. It is this dogma which has resulted in an inability of the Party to articulate a new politics and a new role in the present period. In my opinion, this dogma was represented by the refusal of the Eighth Congress to adopt the slogan of democratic socialism and to build the programme

of the Party out of the broad science of Marxism instead of drawing on the narrowest conceptions of Leninism. Whilst the slogan itself is relatively unimportant, the refusal to accept it represented a dogmatic fixation with the one party state (ex-



Over the past three years, we have not seen the Party building the socialist components of the transformation

pressed as the disqualification of bourgeois parties); dictatorship of the proletariat; nationalisation (centralised planning); and insurrection.

This is a negative tendency and has, on occasion, had more to do with what is fashionable. This is also the food of the demagogues who made good use of it at the Eighth Congress and

thereafter.

Comrade Theo's letter falls into a fifth category. Those of our comrades who have not yet made up their minds about negotiations. Comrade Theo is still not sure whether we should be negotiating or building and preparing for the insurrection. All of us have at some time fallen into this category in the last three years. When the Inkathagate scandal broke, I remember arguing for a major offensive against Buthelezi and the regime. "Now is the time", I was saying, to break off the talks and mount an offensive. For Natalians (I was then based in Natal)

this had real meaning. The opportunity was lost!

For me, this is the nub of the matter. I want to deal with this dilemma — negotiations or insurrection — and offer a strategic perspective which binds these apparently contradictory strategies in a single paradigm. Then I want to point out the challenges facing the left elements in the SACP in the coming period.

Before doing this, I want to flag important criticisms that cde Theo has made of the Party and its leadership. The first, and most important in my opinion, is what Theo calls the "abandonment of the proletarian attitude". I would prefer to call this the inability (and even reluctance) to build a FIGHTING PARTY. This, for me is the essence of Leninism. A fighting party with a well co-ordinated nerve centre and a well oiled machinery which takes on and strikes blows on the ruling class at every turn. For instance, our Party should be building and mounting an offensive on the right-wing at the present moment. Especially as their show of force takes place so soon after this same right-wing murdered the best of our leaders - our general secretary - just under three months ago.

Cde Theo himself notes the failure of our leadership (and our Party as a whole) to drive the mass struggle after Inkathagate, Boipatong, Bisho. For this problem I cannot suggest a solution, and I am in agreement with the comrade resignee.

The second criticism, and this is partly linked to the first, is that of

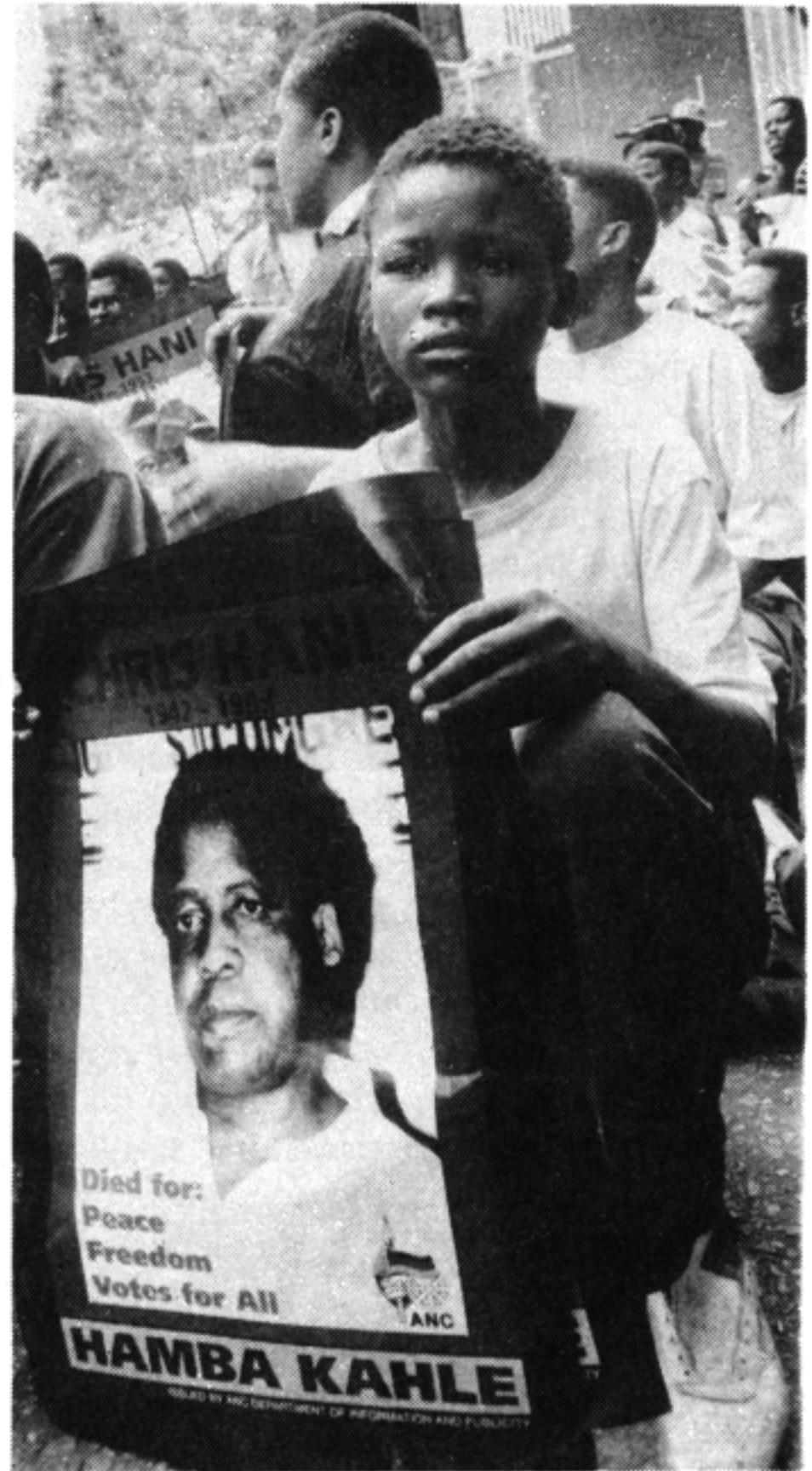
tailism. The Party is tailing behind the ANC. Or, as Theo puts it, "the Party is a sub-committee of the ANC's NEC/NWC".

I can understand the sentiment being expressed here, but it is more complex than that. Whilst on the one hand the Party's political and policy positions are always identical to those of the ANC, and always become public knowledge well after the ANC's; it can be argued that Party members play a crucial role in formulating ANC policy in the first place.

I'm not sure which is worse. If the latter is true, then there is very little to say about the views of these Party comrades who shape ANC policy. There is very little evidence of Marxist thinking or revolutionary politics to the ANC's policies, and it's more worrying that Party members are responsible for the this kind of politics.

Secondly, on this matter, is that the colonialism of a special type thesis predisposes us to tailism in the stage of the national democratic revolution. A crude reading of colonialism of a special type makes this tailism wholly compatible with our strategy and seemingly correct.

The SACP Central Committee Discussion Paper for our Strategy Conference (see AC, 2nd quarter, 1993) tries to answer this question by stating "socialism is not so much a separate entity from the national democratic revolution, as a crucial part of, or a stage in deepening and defending it...in the course of the national democratic revolution we con-



tinuously seek to create momentum towards socialism, capacity for socialism, and even elements of socialism."

This is a clear statement of the dynamic links between the struggle for national democracy and the struggle for democracy.

Cde Theo's criticism is still valid though. In our practice over the last three years we have not seen the Party building the socialist compo-

nents of the transformation. Although cde Theo's criticism is valid, it is poorly formulated and needs to be formulated more precisely.

Theo also raises other criticisms of the Party, particularly of the last CC report. I cannot deal with all these criticisms here.

Let me now make some criticisms of Theo's letter. The most important criticism is that Theo has not made up his mind on negotiations. Early in his letter he argues for a "proletarian attitude to negotiations", but later on he criticises the leadership for failing to "prepare for an insurrection" immediately after the assassination of cde Chris.

This kind of comment is wholly ahistorical. It is a complete misjudgment of the objective conditions, balance of forces, and the preparedness of our working class and youth to turn the regime's retreat into a rout.

I suspect that the dogmatism (that I described earlier in this letter) also had a part to play in this fascination with insurrection. Romanticism and youthfulness undoubtedly have a contributory role to play. Unfortunately, our strategy cannot be grounded on these finer qualities of the human personality.

Insurrections are not "good things", as a close friend of mine puts it. An insurrection is not fun. On numerous occasions, and on many more to come, insurrections have been and will be necessary. They should never be completely discounted in our strategies for building the Party and the mass struggle. But insurrection now in SA

would be a blood-bath, and it will be our blood that is spilt.

My second criticism is that the letter fails to acknowledge the extensive mass action that has taken place over the last three years, and particularly Theo does not credit the ANC leadership for organising the mass action, although he mentions this very mass action at least twice in his letter of resignation.

Nevertheless, cde Theo is putting his finger on a real problem. Whilst up to the end of 1992 we characterised negotiations as an "aspect of strategy", or more popularly "a terrain of struggle", I believe that this perspective has been eroded. As the negotiations process gained ground and occupied the time and energies of the centre, the other terrains of struggle assumed a marginal role in the transition. Millions of people participated in marches and stayaways, but this must be characterised as mass action and not mass struggle. It lacked any sense of challenging the power relations in our country.

The new strategic perspective that was adopted by the ANC NEC in December 1992 was the culmination of this trend, and a turning point for the movement. The new strategic perspective was governed by one central idea. This idea was that the most effective way to solve the South African question was to move as rapidly as possible to democratic elections. An ANC government would have the power to deal with the third force and violence. It would also deal with the right-wing, Inkatha and Mangope.

It would also have the power to begin the long march to social and economic reconstruction, and start to deliver some of the goods of the new SA. In short, move rapidly to an ANC government...even if some compromises are necessary!

As a movement we lack a strategic perspective in the current period which incorporates the role of mass struggle, or even mass action. All we have is a strategy for negotiations. I think it is a good strategy, and our negotiators are doing surprisingly well at the table - but it is only a strategy for negotiators.

A new strategic perspective needs to be developed for the transition.

The first element is a clearly defined role for the masses to relate to the negotiations process. I do not believe that every issue that deadlocks the negotiations should be taken to the streets, the effects of turning on and off the tap of mass action are well known. There are some occasions where the tap needs to be turned on full power. The two most important issues are the disarming of the right-wing and joint, effective control of the security forces.

The second plank of a new perspective must centre on the sectoral struggles, particularly health, education, housing and other important struggles. This must not be "left to the sectoral organisations", but must be driven from the centre of the ANC/SACP/COSATU alliance.

The third and most important plank in a revolutionary strategic perspective is to build dual power wherever power resides in this coun-

try, at local, regional and national levels. The organised sections of the masses must engage the points of power in society and demand and negotiate control over these institutions.

The negotiators in our ranks must not lose sight of the need to carry out the agreements that they have been able to win and to defend the gains made at the table. The demobilisation of mass organisation is going to cost us dearly in the coming months.

In conclusion, the challenge that we face is to build a clear strategic perspective and to champion our ideas within the Party and within the movement. To this end, I would like to suggest that the branch offer itself as a platform for the Theos of the world, guaranteeing the status of any majority position as a position of the branch to be championed in the region and nationally.

The challenge facing Theo and other comrades who agree with his criticisms is to come back into the Party and shape it, fighting for their positions in the Party, as Lenin did from April to October 1917.

Fareed Abdullah

SACP, Cape Town Central Branch

Editorial afterword

Comrade Theo Molaba has taken up the challenge issued to him in the last paragraph of cde Abdullah's letter. Molaba has withdrawn his resignation and is playing an active and, of course, critical role in the SACP. ★

The French Communist Party (PCF) is in the process of preparing for its 28th Congress early in 1994. A draft manifesto and draft amendments to the party's constitution (dropping, among other things, democratic centralism) has unleashed a wide debate within the party. Among the many



contributions to the debate one intervention, in particular, has caused some controversy. It is jointly signed by leading PCF personalities: Jean-Michel Catala, Roland Favaro, Charles Fiterman, Guy Hermier, Roger Martelli, Jack Ralite and Lucien Seve. We publish extracts from the intervention

Challenges of the new period

It is now four years since the French Communist Party (PCF) launched an appeal for the recasting of a modern communist identity. The reason was simple: in a France and in a world experiencing unprecedented changes, the challenges to communism occur within conditions radically different from those prevailing at the time of the birth of communist parties in the immediate aftermath of the October Revolution. Communists have to draw all the necessary conclusions for what they do and for what they are.

The PCF can make a major contribution to the renewal of a broad movement for social and human emancipation in our country. Without unilaterally initiating such a movement, the party can with others launch and sustain such a movement. With this strategic perspective, the party's own transformation can overcome many obstacles, and help to sustain many initiatives. Beyond a simple revision of our constitution, this implies the rejection of a large number of unwritten codes and practices, of a whole culture of organisation rooted in a vision which is thor-

oughly outdated, but which is, in practice, extremely tenacious. This is the vision of a vanguard instructing and directing the masses.

In this regard, the worst enemy of real change in the party is verbal window-dressing. The new draft constitution abandons the formula "democratic centralism", while carefully ensuring the continued dominance of the centre — for instance, by introducing into the constitution practices which, until now, were never constitutional requirements, like the single text as the basis for discussion at congress, or like the official list of candidates to be elected. There are other examples of conceptual duplicity, like the exaltation of diversity without making practically possible the free expression of differences, for instance, through the circulation of different proposals. Another example is the appeal to individual communists to consider themselves sovereign while concealing from them elementary information on the party's actual assets. This reign of window-dressing does more damage to the party than many hostile projects.

This whole area is absolutely crucial, and only political interventions which are free of all ambiguity can begin to redress the problem. For instance:

■ We must engage in an open critical reflection on the history of the parties of the Third International, and in particular of the PCF, and state in a clear manner what precisely was this "democratic centralism" that we are now abandoning — this

is an elementary requirement, but one which has notoriously not been met thus far.

■ We must put an end to the primacy of the leadership in the preparation and running of our congresses. Thus, amongst other things, we must end the monopoly of the majority point of view in determining the basis for debate, we must end the filtering of discussion and the selection of delegates and the compiling of official lists by the leadership.

■ We must put an end to the monarchical role of the general secretary, by limiting the duration that any one individual can occupy the position, to prevent the ossification of the full-time officials of the party.

■ We must promote by all means possible a pluralist democracy within the party, assuring complete freedom of expression and of initiative to members and structures...this includes the possibility of horizontal contacts between different party structures, full disclosure of information, and the taking into account of minority points of view.

Only a combination of measures of this kind is capable of transforming lip-service to the sovereignty of individual party members into a reality. Only such measures can root our political practice in the diversity of social experiences, and build the credibility of the communist struggle among the living forces of our country. ★

(The full text of this intervention was published in the PCF's daily newspaper and central organ, L'Humanite, October 29, 1993)

Crisis in the CPUSA

*Interview with
Charlene
Mitchell*



Charlene Mitchell is an African American. A former leading member of the Communist Party of the United States and CPUSA Presidential candidate, she is currently involved full-time with the Committees of Correspondence. She has also had a long association with the anti-apartheid solidarity struggle and other anti-racist struggles. In 1992 Charlene Mitchell visited South Africa with Angela Davis. In the course of 1992 the CPUSA suffered a major blow when Mitchell, Davis and numerous other leading members left the party. In this interview with *The African Communist* (conducted by Raymond Suttner on 23 July 1993), Mitchell traces the background to the crisis in the CPUSA.

The African Communist attempted also to interview a representative of the current leadership within the CPUSA, but we were told "it would be pointless".

AC: Comrade Charlene Mitchell, after many years as a leading CPUSA member you have left the party, along with others, including Herbert Aptheker, Angela Davis, Gill Green, Michael Myerson, to cite a few names that are familiar to me. Could you please give us some background to the crisis in the CPUSA?

CM: Well, of course we can't go back all the way into the history of the matter, it would be like trying to write a book about the Communist Party in the United States. But it is important to say that there were some very serious problems that developed with the changes in leadership in the Communist Party after the death of our party chair, Henry Winston.

Comrade Winston acted as a brake between the membership and the top leadership. When the top leadership got too top heavy, cde Winston would call a halt and insist, you know, that we have to discuss whatever was unresolved. I don't want to make out as if his death was THE only important thing, but it set in motion certain events...all of which related to the question of democracy within the Communist Party.

Directly related to the absence of inner party democracy was our inability as a party leadership to discuss and deal effectively with a number of critical strategic questions related to the approach to mass movements and the relationship with mass movements; the question of electoral

politics; the relationship of the class struggle to the question of the struggle for African-American equality; the question of the relationship to the working class itself and to its organisation, the trade union movement.

So, after the death of cde Winston a number of questions came to a head.

International developments also began to impact on our party. You will recall the change in leadership in the Soviet Union with Andropov, there were signs of a new openness. In our party ranks there was a general acceptance, a joyful acceptance of the direction in which it seemed Andropov was travelling. But the sense that now we could open a little more in our own party, also set off the question: Well if we can do this now, why should we have not done it before?

Questions began to emerge around some of our own policies, around the policies in the Soviet Union, and policies in the rest of the socialist world. But all of this discussion took place on a very low level, very quietly, but it was part of the whole background of the international discussion. The question of the two Germanys and whether there should be a single Germany was a hidden discussion. We never really got to discuss it openly within the leading party structures. When the Wall came down and Gorbachev made his point welcoming reunification it was felt, officially, that it was a betrayal of the socialist movement. But there had never been any real discussion about it, it was just la-

belled a betrayal.

You're saying that international events in the socialist world highlighted a lack of glasnost within the CPUSA, a failure to open up discussion on matters that were crucial to the party?

Exactly...

I gather cde Joe Slovo's pamphlet, "Has Socialism Failed?" was regarded as "unhelpful" by the top leadership...

Definitely it was regarded as unhelpful as far as some of our leadership was concerned. But it is that kind of an article, that kind of an opening up of discussion which made an important contribution. Whether one agreed or didn't agree, or agreed partially or not so much with comrade Slovo was no longer the question. The question was that he posed questions that deserved **discussion**. But instead of encouraging discussion, the top party leadership dismissed Slovo's views as anti-socialist, anti-marxist, anti marxist-leninist.

It was an essential discussion, but the top party leadership in the CPUSA tried to stifle it for as long as possible. So that by the time that this discussion opened broadly...I should say that Slovo's article was not circulated officially within the party, it was circulated circuitously you know, people xeroxed it all over the country and sent it, and so on. (Which is another way of not understanding today's modern communications, and modern technology, because the top leadership should have

known that it would have been transmitted across the country.)

But even this kind of debate was perhaps not the most central. Theoretical matters are important, but a party might have some time to get itself together and come back and discuss unresolved theoretical questions.

But at the same time that all this was going on, there was also discussion on two questions directly affecting the day-to-day existence of the party.

One had to do with the character of the US labour movement. Many of us argued that there were fresh winds blowing within the labour movement, and that our old concept of a left-centre coalition within the union movement was no longer a correct way of placing the issue. That there really was no centre any more within the trade union movement, that most of the rank and file and the good leadership was going towards the left. A coalition between the left and the centre could no longer be the main aim of the policy.

That was a discussion that only took place in trade union circles. It was not a main discussion within the party. But even if it had been, no-one would have challenged the old position, because to have challenged it would have been to be "anti-working class" leadership.

The other issue, closely related to the first, was the composition, the new composition of the working class in the US. In the midst of the scientific technological revolution, there has been the growth of what

we call the Rust Belt in mid-West (the Rust Belt meaning all of the industrial areas that have been shut down, like in Cleveland, Akron, Chicago, Gary, Indiana, just whole areas of the country). Now this Rust Belt had been the heart of industrial trade unionism in the US. And it was being shut down rapidly, with industries moving to other areas of the country. There has been an absolutely dramatic impact on trade unions. In the US today less than 15% of the work force is organised into trade unions.

Well, not to see that as being a major problem, and not to have a discussion about what you do about that, beyond the slogans of organising the unorganised, not to take note that something fundamental was taking place here, was a disaster. So, that's what I mean when I say that the shutting off of discussion on international questions reflected a more immediate shutting off in terms of our own questions in the United States.

Matters were coming to a head and the death of cde Winston was a blow to the party's ability to open up discussion. On several organisational questions, for example, he would do his best to get more openness into discussion.

For instance, when the demand was made that we tell the size of our membership...(the political bureau never knew how many members were in the party!! We never knew what the exact dues payments were!) When we asked the question, they would say we've recruited 500 mem-



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The PB never knew how many members were in the party!!

bers. Cde Winston would say: How many initiation fees do we have? We don't know. Well how do you mean you've recruited 500 members if you don't have 500 initiation fees?! That's not important, these people were all at a meeting and they said that they were interested in joining the party, therefore they must be in the party. I mean those kind of organisational problems, which represented the failure to keep, not only the membership, but even the leadership, abreast of what the problems were.

Hang on, at what level was this occurring? In other words, it's hard to understand, at the PB level someone makes a report as an organiser, or whatever..

...the organisational secretary...

...and the organisational secretary, cannot be held accountable for his/her job, did the organisational secretary fall under the general secretaryship..?

Well, yes, the general secretary of course was the highest, there was supposed to be, in our party, an equal relationship between the chair and general secretary. That was not



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**We recruited
 most when
 we were most
 active in the
 mass
 movement**

always the case, but ... the organisational secretary was responsible to the political bureau...

Yet there was no way of compelling the information from the individual?

No, the underlying thesis was that the less we knew the better we worked. And a lot of it was excused by invoking the McCarthy period, that our numbers were wanted by the enemy, and so on. So that was a major problem in terms of honesty. Most comrades felt that we had far more membership, and therefore that we could call on more resources than we could. To be able to call on 20 000 disciplined members is a lot more than being able to call on 3 000 not necessarily disciplined members! This kind of information must obviously impact directly on your own strategy. When we were asked by the party membership to be more evident in certain movements, we couldn't do it because we didn't have it to be there. But most of us didn't know why.

But we also couldn't do it because we didn't see the importance of it, of working in mass movements.

After the death of cde Winston building the party was everything, and if one did not build the party, one was not accomplishing anything at all. The question was not: **How** do you build the party? It was all more mechanical than that. The main question was to go out and ask people to join the party. Not what the party **did** to attract people to it. The idea was to have parlour meetings, living room meetings, or passive street corner meetings, or whatever. But our activity within the mass movement that would bring people to us was nothing. Yet, the times that we have recruited the most people and had the most impact was when we were most active in the mass movement, around the Angela Davis case, around work in the anti-Vietnam movement, you know, within the Peace Movement itself, this was the time that we had recruited more people than ever before.

So these were some of the real questions that were up for discussion. Now, the Stalin type organisational structure was very much in operation, not only in our party, all around the world. But in our party it was more one-man leadership that really began to take hold.

It took hold so firmly that we would not hear, the PB would not hear an outline of the report to the National Committee before the report was given. On the basis of, well, we've been discussing these things for a long time, so you people know what's going to be in the report!! But then it would be given as a collective report, and it was not a collective re-

port, and then after the report the age-old summary would be given, and the report and the summary would be adopted and that would be the line of the party. But there was never any real debate of that line. The debate was: how to carry out that line. The debate was: what didn't we do to carry out the last part of the line as summarised in the last National Committee meeting? You know, that kind of thing. And so this lack of democracy was undermining the party, because you can't have a structure that really works (unless, perhaps, it's an army) if people don't have some input into it.

When cde Winston died, and cde Gus Hall became chairperson, the general secretary's post was...

Was done away with..

So this was a structural reinforcement of this tendency as well..?

Yes, and then the other thing was that there was to be an executive of the PB. You have a PB that is the executive of the National Committee, and then you have an executive of the executive!

To an outsider, building socialism in the biggest industrial country of the world, connotes essentially a mass effort, even if the party is a small communist party, it's got to reach very, very far. From some of the examples you have given me, and other things I have read, in a sense the party leadership seems to have been very suspicious of broadening its ranks,

or broadening its influence in fact, because the reciprocal effect of broadening influence is that others try to influence you. In some ways it's almost a caricature of what we used to say small trotskyite groupings used to do, this attempt to close off from all influences, safeguard the purity of some vision...

James Steele, who was on the Political Bureau and who has now left the party, used to make a statement in the PB when things REALLY got tight, he would say, are we willing to be a small fish in a big pond, or do we want to be the biggest fish in a small pond? ... But that was exactly **the problem**. If we couldn't speak on a platform, we didn't take part in it. If we were not considered the vanguard, at least by ourselves, whether other people did or not, it was not worthwhile. So, for example, there is a small Socialist Scholars Conference organised regularly in the US. Rather than trying to take part in one of the workshops and so on, if we couldn't be one of the main panel speakers, we didn't do it.

The concept of the unique role, the historic role of the party, and the concept of vanguard role, was one



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To act as if we were not permanently the vanguard was unthinkable

that we HAD it, that we automatically had it. To in any way act as if we were not permanently the vanguard was unthinkable. So you can understand the problem that presented.

I understand that some of the tensions within the party have also related to the race question?

Yes, this was another issue that came to a head when the National Committee discussed replacing Henry Winston and Gus Hall became the national chair. Our party has always had a leadership of black and white, and we fought for that. I believe that if that kind of leadership is not seen, then it shows that there is not the same interest in this question.

Historically the African American question has been a very special question, central to all democratic struggles in our country. Gus Hall, giving the leadership, began to challenge the centrality of this issue. He argued that the class struggle was central and nothing else could be central.

I am not suggesting that all of a sudden there was racism in the party, or that some people were mean,

or anything like that. You had a situation where attention to certain questions that African American comrades felt were important, was downgraded.

We used to have a magazine, a party magazine, called *Black Liberation*. Gus Hall was opposed to the term "liberation", on the grounds that "liberation" was "tantamount to self-determination". He argued that liberation was for nations, it was an "inexact" term in the US situation. It was at that time that Angela argued that the concept "liberation" was a more total concept than just equality, that it meant that there was a whole cultural identity that had to be plugged for, that the African American movement **itself** was a movement and it brought through to African Americans the whole question of **freedom** and not just of formal equality (because that was the position of any administration, that we all needed equal opportunity, and that was as far as we needed to go.) But that was never won.

Could you provide some background to the formation of the Committees of Correspondence with which you are now associated?

At the party convention, as you might know, a number of party districts had been denied their full complement of delegates. It was also decided by the outgoing top leadership of the party that anybody who (like myself) had signed a document entitled "The Initiative to Renew and Unite the Party", could not be in par-



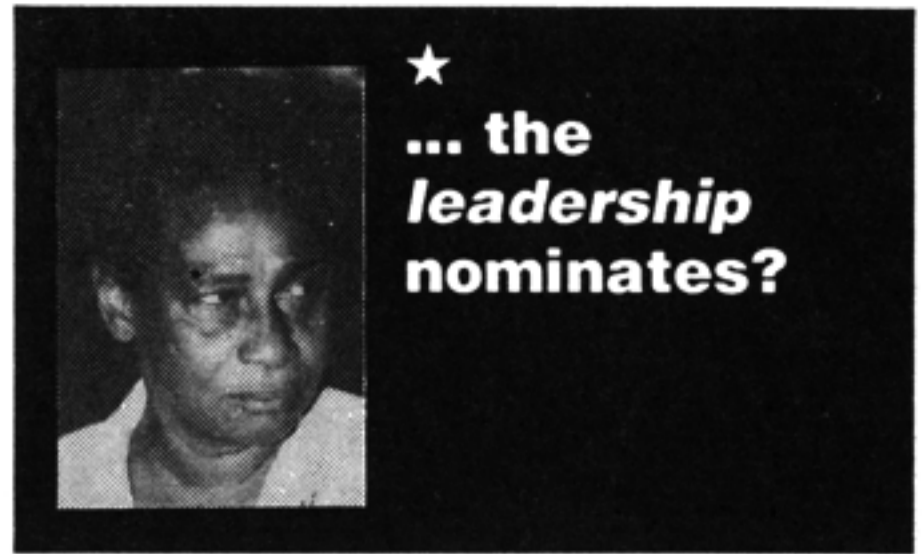
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**Our party
 has always
 had a
 leadership of
 black and
 white...**

ty leadership. As a result of that decision, a number of people who had heretofore been members of the CC were not nominated by the leadership to be part of the CC (National Committee, as we call it)...

The leadership nominates?

Yes, this is the "slate" system. And everytime I, along with most of the PB, had been part of this nominating system. But on this occasion we were excluded, although I was a delegate. So all of the leadership that had challenged the remaining leadership was denied. People like Herbert Aptheker, Franklin Alexander, Angela Davis, Danny Ruben, James Jackson, a good healthy part of the PB, were denied nomination. After the convention was over, we came together to assess what had happened at the convention. We agreed that we needed to find a way to keep together people who were so absolutely frustrated they would be leaving the party. And there would be other people who (like myself initially) would be staying on in the party, but didn't know what to do in the coming months. Then there were others who had not necessarily been in the party, but who were very close to the party, and whom we wanted to keep abreast. So we agreed to continue a network, to tell people what was going on in different parts of the country.

Herbert Aptheker made the proposal to call the network Committees of Correspondence, a name that goes back to 18th century



and the time of the American Revolution. So we held a meeting, I think it was in February of 1992, and agreed to call a meeting in the summer of 1992. At that point we thought we would have about 400 people at such a meeting, in the end there were 1300.

The Committees of Correspondence network is based around a newsletter, and our principle objective is to begin the patient task of rebuilding and reconnecting the left in the US. ★

Homelands – the regime's election strategy

With elections approaching, the NP regime has a clear strategy to destabilise ANC efforts in the bantustans. **Phillip Dexter**, a COSATU nominee for the ANC election list and outgoing NEHAWU general secretary, analyses the NP's schemes and proposes a counter-strategy.

The homelands or bantustans, as they are known, have been the focal point of much of the attention of the national liberation movement over the years. As dumping grounds for the victims of apartheid, these areas were the scenes of the worst poverty, and often the worst oppression.

Since the terminal decline of the apartheid system picked up pace, these areas have been hotly contested, by the NP regime (via its surrogates and puppets), and the ANC aligned Patriotic Front. In essence, these areas contain enough votes to drastically affect the outcome of the forthcoming elections, and the NP regime has devised a strategy to ensure it maintains control of those bantustans it already has within its camp, and to gain control of those it does not have a hold on. This will

not guarantee the NP votes, but will certainly limit those who would wish to vote for the ANC from exercising this right.

Central to this strategy are the state's various intelligence structures, through which it is continuing its past strategy of attempting to win the hearts and minds of certain groups of people, and using brute force where it does not succeed.

At the same time, the contradictions created by the terrible extremes of uneven development, the misuse and mismanagement of resources, blatant corruption, and the now intolerable living conditions of people, have made these areas extremely volatile.

This presents both opportunities and dangers for the ANC in the current phase of the NDR, and after the elections in April 1994.

Conditions on the ground

A brief overview of the conditions of the homelands will give a better understanding of what causes this volatility.

■ Population Density and Land Distribution

There are large concentrations of people in these areas, putting a strain on the weak infrastructure, and stretching resources to the limit. Economic recession is thus felt more acutely in these regions. Bantustans make up only 14% of all the land in South Africa. The Transkei and Venda have 71 people per square kilometre living in these homelands, whilst in South Africa there are 28 people per square kilometre. In Ciskei the density is 97 people per square kilometre. Generally in South Africa most of the land is owned by white people. In addition, the land available to black people in the homelands is inferior, in all respects. Of South African available arable land, only 27% is in the Bantustans. African farmers are restricted to 13.3% of the total land in the country. (1)

■ Income and resources

The levels of income in these areas are considerably lower than in the rest of South Africa, for a number of reasons. In the first instance, these are largely rural areas, and thus have lower incomes and less in the form of assets and resources. Secondly, these areas still rely on the migrant

labour they can supply to the urban areas for some income, and thus are last in the line when it comes to income that is earned by workers. In 1990, 83% of African rural families in these homelands lived below the minimal living level (MLL), compared with 6% of families in the rural areas in South Africa. In the urban areas in the bantustans, 63% of African families were living below the MLL, while in South Africa the figure for the urban areas was 39%. This shows that in every respect those in the bantustans are worse off. (2)

■ Services and Infrastructure

It is well known that essential services such as health and education are of a poor standard in the bantustans. Schools and hospitals or clinics are inaccessible to large numbers of people, and it is not unusual for children to walk long distances to and from schools. If one compares spending on health services and South Africa and the homelands, these disparities are revealed. In 1990 in the Cape Province, R99-00 per person was spent on health. In the Transkei, in the same year, R25-00 was spent per person. In Natal it was R73-00 per person, while in next door Kwazulu it was R19-00. (3)

Roads and transport generally are in poor condition. There is little reliable public transport, except by companies owned privately, often by government officials. These are expensive, and services irregular. Since these areas are largely rural, or semi-rural, this is a severe problem.

Simply going shopping can be a major task.

■ Despotic rule

There is no doubt that some of the bantustan regimes, such as Kwazulu, Ciskei and Bophutastwana, are amongst the worst regimes in the world. Whilst the ANC in these regions is engaging these regimes and scoring many victories, not enough is being done to mobilise against these, both around the country and internationally.

In addition, even the PF homeland regimes are riddled with conservatives, racists and intelligence agents. These need to be identified and either neutralised or expelled. No end of problems are caused by such elements employing "spoiling" tactics, deliberately stirring up trouble where there is discontent, and even plotting, and attempting, to carry out coups. The effect of such forces is clearly felt in the limiting of the ANC alliance in its scope of operations in these areas.

Even those workers fortunate enough to have jobs are themselves discriminated against. In both the private and public sectors wages and conditions of service lag in the homelands. Wage levels as low as R38 per month have been reported, and while these are not the average, the fact that such low wages occur at all is a sign of the extent of the problems of poverty.

All of the above makes for an intolerable situation. Whilst these issues are not unique to the bantustans, the levels of poverty and these

other excesses make for some of the worst conditions in the country.

■ Public Service

In the civil service and public sector problems abound. Thousands of workers in the civil service do not have security of tenure, or pensions. Labour legislation and wages are not on par with the public service in South Africa, and in the reactionary homelands particularly, management practice is medieval in character. Workers who take any industrial action or even protest action are often dismissed and, whilst this was also the case in previous years in South Africa, legislation granting limited rights to take industrial action has been passed by Parliament. In South Africa in 1990 a general assistant earned R708-00 per month. In Bantustans it was below R584-00 per month. (4)

In particular, these disparities have been used to whip up anti-PF sentiments in the homelands under the control of such regimes. This has been the source of some tension, for example between NEHAWU and the PF governments. At the time of finalising this article, the South African regime had just successfully carried out a silent coup in Lebowa, effectively taking hold of that bantustan. Attempts have been made to overthrow the Transkei, Venda, Lebowa and KwaNdebele regimes on the back of industrial actions by civil servants. This does not mean that workers have acted in collaboration with reactionary forces, but rather that these forces have taken advantage

of, and even promoted discontent caused by very real grievances of the workers in the public sector. The classic case in this regard is the Ciskei, where the current dictator, Oupa Gqozo, came to power on the wave of action by civil servants.

■ **Bad Government**

The sad truth about the homelands is that even the more progressive regimes have problems around funding service provision. This is primarily caused by deliberate under-funding by the NP-regime, but is often exacerbated by corruption and by mismanagement of the already meagre resources. A further example of bad government has been the unwillingness of PF regimes to recognise trade unions, and to involve workers in the affairs of the government in a progressive manner. At times these regimes have been openly hostile to COSATU unions, reinforcing the belief of workers that the governments are only opportunistically claiming PF allegiance to ride on the popularity of the ANC.

COSAG and the regime's intelligence apparatus

Such contradictions are often successfully exploited by the intelligence community, and their right-wing allies. This is obviously not a new phenomenon, as the Ciskei case reveals. What is different is that these forces are now trying to destabilise the PF regimes. The state's involve-

ment in this is clearly indicated by the fact that where such coup attempts fail, as in Lebowa, more blatant means of regaining control are used, such as exploiting the financial crisis or alleged irregularities that exist, and sending in the government representatives to take control of the administration.

ANC Alliance

The ANC correctly identified these homelands as strategically important areas, and as early as the 1980s switched from simply attempting to make these areas ungovernable, to working at winning over the existing, or installing more progressive regimes. Where the ANC has failed, perhaps inevitably so, is in ensuring that the current PF regimes take on the character and identity of the ANC, and that they develop practices that are in line with the ANC's vision of the new South Africa. Similarly, the credentials and character of these regimes has been misjudged, as in the case of Gqozo in the Ciskei.

Obviously, the constraints placed on these regimes by the NP government, the lack of resources, the conservative civil servants in the administration, and most notably the contradiction of having any kind of relationship with these regimes, has influenced the content of the ANC's relationship with the bantustans. At the same time, not enough has been done to influence these regimes, to control the excesses in certain of

them, and to insist on certain basic standards from them as PF members.

1994 Election Campaign

Many of these factors will be of crucial importance in the election that is fast approaching. To ensure that hegemony is maintained and extended in the PF controlled and other homelands, and that the current situation does not deteriorate, the ANC has to develop a strategy to ensure the following:

- conditions are seen to improve in these homelands in the short term
- Contradictions relating to the PF regimes are limited and contained
- Grievances of public sector workers are dealt with, including basic trade union rights
- "Clean" government is practised by PF regimes

In view of the strategic importance of these areas a greater emphasis and priority has to be given to this problem. A failure to address this will see those regimes in the PF collapsing, or being overthrown. Those that survive stand a very good chance of alienating large sections of the population that are potential ANC voters.

Conclusions

Whilst it might be impossible to achieve all the goals of such a strategy prior to the democratic elections, it is important for the ANC to begin this process. This will ensure people

do feel that their plight is noticed, and sway those existing marginal voters. A failure to do something towards these ends will also mean that the future government will inherit severe problems in these areas, which by then it may be almost too late to address.

Most damaging of all is that the ANC will lose support if it does not come out clearly in terms of the local leaders it supports and allows onto the alliance election list. These individuals need to be instructed, in no uncertain terms, to clean up their act. As potential ANC government members that is the least that the alliance can ask.

Notes

1. These figures are given in the COSATU Education publication, *Our Political Economy, Understanding the Problems*. (COSATU March 1992), p.14 and 15.
2. As above, p.19.
3. As above, p.27.
4. *South African Labour Bulletin*, vol.16, no. 7, September/October 1992, p.48.

Skenjana 'Ike' Roji

An obituary

by Silumko Sokupa

On 25th September 1993, Skenjana "Ike" Roji, a dedicated soldier, activist of the ANC and national political education officer in the SACP, passed away.

Born on the 10 November 1952 at Kei Road in Kingwilliamstown, Skenjana came from a humble peasant family. But it is a family whose conviction about the inevitable success of the struggle gave Skenji moral and political support on the difficult political road he travelled.

Skenjana leaves a colourful political life behind. His political involvement started in the early 1970s, during the time of black consciousness. He was a student at Fort Hare in 1974, but was expelled in 1975 for political activism. Soon after he was elected general secretary of SASO. In 1976 he was detained without trial at Modderbee Prison.

He left the country in 1978 to join Umkhonto We Sizwe. As close friends, Skenjana, Ngwenduna Vanda, Linda Mti and I had discussed the matter and resolved to join MK.

Early in 1979 Skenji took the oath as a member of MK when we were visited in Lesotho by ANC secretary general, Alfred Nzo, Mzwayi Piliso and the late Cassius Make. In April, I think, of 1979 he joined the ranks of the Party.

Skenjana rose in the ranks of MK and the Party. By the mid-1980s he was our commissar in the Lesotho underground machinery. Two years at the Lenin School in Moscow, from 1980 to 1982, had sharpened his theoretical and organisational skills. That was one school.

We worked together in Lesotho in the same underground unit, commanded by the late comrade Chris Hani. And that was another school. You worked knowing that death could come any time. You had tasks to perform. This school said to one, yes the enemy is bombing Maseru, they are kidnapping comrades, they are carrying out night raids. But, this school also said to you, this is the by-product of the work we are doing. Our people are at war, they are



In his MK days...
The late SACP
political education
officer Skenjana Roji

attacking with arms, they are campaigning politically.

As a commissar and, later as political education officer, Skenjana always said that comrades must teach by example. He always spoke of the dialectical connection between theory and practice, theory must be translated into practice and practice must enrich theory. He did not only teach these things, he practised them. He was humble, simple, a good listener, he related well to people. He had the ability to impart with ease knowledge to other people. This is what made him a good teacher who won loyalty and commitment for our party.

He lived a short life. It was a short life of activity and purpose. Skenjana is one of the unsung heroes of our revolution. He will not be forgotten.

He is survived by his father, Stanley, his mother, Nongebisaya Nohombile, six sisters a brother, and his longstanding companion in arms, Thenjiwe Mthintso. ★

Tribute to Thenjiwe Mthintso

by Nomboniso Gasa

On Friday 1 October 1993, the South African Communist Party held a memorial service for comrade Skenjana "Isaac" Roji. It was in this memorial service that Thenjiwe Mthintso committed a scandal, broke a taboo and violated African tradition — for she chose the memorial service of her lover and comrade, Skenjana "Isaac" Roji to defend the choice they made years ago to "co-habit".

The notion of the family

Comrade Thenjiwe and Isaac chose years ago not to get married and to live together as lovers. This choice is not considered legitimate by the forces of 'public morality'. For this choice like many others, Thenji and Ike were penalised. 'Society' is very impatient, particularly with men who have made these choices.

The attitude of this society and the non-recognition of that relationship was reflected in the ANC-SACP-COSATU alliance pamphlet issued by



Thenjiwe Mthintso, SACP PB member and SACP alternative representative on the Transitional Executive Council

the SACP in which there was an obituary for cde Isaac, stating: "He is survived by mother, father, six sisters and one brother."

No mention of Thenjiwe with whom the deceased had chosen to live for all these years.

We were ashamed when we saw this silence on his life with her. A friend says he read the pamphlet and thought that there was something missing and felt that maybe it was a mention of Thenji?

He was not sure! He did not know, but something was wrong.

When Thenji came into the hall some of us felt like protecting her — "Oh if only she does not look at this pamphlet!" — but then how can you not look at the programme for the memorial service of your lover? Anyhow, we were desperate to protect her in the belief that what you

do not know cannot hurt you.

Thenjiwe takes up the battle

In the 80s the ANC had the clarion call to the South African people to turn every corner into a battlefield. When Thenji started to speak that day one was reminded of this call. Maybe South African feminists need to heed that call. Perhaps we are too careful about picking up and choosing our battles.

It may be we are too cautious about doing things that may alienate our people. Maybe we are too ready to "understand" that "our people are not ready".

Has this not sometimes meant that we have lost some very important battles without even engaging, without putting up any sort of fight?

For "strategic and tactical" reasons, understanding where "our people are", many a leading feminist in this country, if they were consulted before Thenji spoke, would have said: "Mmh, eh, mmh, for strategic reasons, sister, you should not take it up. "Eh, mh we should be careful so as not to shock our people". I am sure for reasons more convenient to us, we would have advised her not to speak, although we "agreed" with her.

However, Thenji spoke.

In fact, when she was asked to say a few words some of us thought, "Batho! as if the silence on her relationship with Ike was not enough! Now, in the middle of her mourning, she is being asked to ad-

dress a meeting. How can J.S [the chairperson] do this?"

She stood up! Without asking for advice she did it! The great "scandal", she spoke on the death bed of her lover! Something that has never happened on South African soil (if I am correct). A friend of mine says: such things you only read about in feminist novels! She chose that memorial service as the battle.

Unassumingly and with courage she stood up. She spoke with such clarity. She defended the choice she and Isaac made, she defended Isaac as a partner in that relationship, she defended herself and other people who have made such a choice. She asserted her right to be recognised as a woman who had lived, fought, laughed with, loved and nursed this man. With such clarity she challenged society, the SACP, ANC and COSATU.

Had she been silent, perhaps it would have been betrayal of Isaac and the choice they had made together. Having lived in that relationship she had to **speak**.

As a soldier she turned that hall into a battlefield. As a political educator she educated us.

We listened, shocked at first and tense for her. She spoke about how "society" does not recognise the right of individuals not to marry, how this society penalised those who exercise that choice, women in particular.

We listened with bitter-sweet feelings. We were sad that she has to fight this battle on that unfortunate day, on that unfortunate platform. We cried and empathised with her.

We were ashamed of our organisation, how can this happen? How can the party of all organisations, an organisation which is supposed to embody an emancipatory value system, have been silent?

We were overwhelmed in our admiration for her. We nodded our heads to indicate that we agreed with her. We looked at her with pride, sadness and joy. Go on sister, Go on! Kubo! In our eyes we had these expressions.

With our eyes we reassured her. With our hearts we touched her. With our tears we encouraged her to cry, for we were the women she was addressing herself to. We shared the pain. We are the women who have to fight this battle with you, in our organisations, in our country, and the world over.

A slogan resurrected

On that afternoon, Thenji resurrected an old feminist slogan, "the personal is political"

After she had defended the choice she had made with Isaac, she went on to look at the relationship she had with this man. She was loyal but not uncritical. She drew a connection between their personal life and their political beliefs — a lesson for all South African feminists, the left, and freedom-loving people in general.

As a feminist she empowered other women. The battles we are fighting in our personal lives are valid. Those after-supper arguments about who washes up are important.

True, women's emancipation and equality cannot be measured simply by who washes dishes, etc. But then again, if this area of work is not shared, it becomes very difficult to look at whether you are, in fact, involved in an equal relationship. How do you measure it, if there is no change in your everyday life?

What was important about this example was the fact that in most cases feminists steer away from it. There is so much inconsistency and unresolved business at this level. Instead of people admitting this, it is often reduced to a non-issue especially in left circles. It is often argued that you need to look at change in a broader sense to be involved in the process of change generally.

Unfortunately, so many of us, especially from oppressed communities become trapped here. The question is, how do you look at change broadly when you are so busy getting supper ready, catching up with the newspapers and AC's and Agendas? This does not leave you with quality time with your partner. Sharing household responsibilities makes it easier for everyone.

This is a very difficult struggle, it is one that has seen many feminists fall on the way. So many of us are inconsistent when it comes to this. For the sake of "peace" in the house many assertive women have let this battle fall aside and compromised themselves.

The fact that Thenjiwe referred to this was empowering to women. It was good also because we had our male comrades there, hopefully the

debate will continue from there. It was good also because, more often, leading women who have that crisis in their personal lives choose not to engage in the debate and sometimes repress others who do come out.

It was good also because that struggle about washing dishes is very central to our daily lives as feminists.

She integrated the application of our political principles into our personal lives. She looked at the question of being in touch with ourselves as a process in no way preventing us from being in touch with Lenin, Marx and Engels.

At the end of it all, we are left with ourselves and our consciences. There is need to balance the personal and political aspect of our lives. The two are an immutable parts of our identity.

She also dealt openly and honestly with Isaac's repressed nature. So many of us are like that: in the process of the revolution, dealing with battle trenches and detention, reading Althusser and Gramsci, we have tended to repress the emotional side of our being.

Dealing with the regime, prison and exile meant that we had to be strong in order to survive. We wanted no emotional attachments – that can be a sign of weakness. Once you are in the hands of the enemy, it can work against you.

This also has much to do with socialisation. Men are supposed to be strong and not show tender feelings, and so on. Women are supposed to be soft, gentle and tender. What is

often overlooked, when we talk about socialisation, is the fact that women are, in fact, not allowed to feel. Our duty is to please and serve men.

Also sometimes women in their struggle for equality have been trapped. When you are part of the struggle you have to be strong 'as men' in order to gain acceptance.

Time to be human

The time has come to drop our shields. To be human once again, to accept ourselves, to claim our space in the world by crying and laughing loud, enjoying life, loving and being loved and relaxing. Maybe we will find that when we have learnt to be honest and open to those closest to us, we will be more effective in our struggle. Perhaps the most powerful struggle is the one that comes from inside, untying the knots and resolving our hang ups.

"He was my MK commander, at one stage, and I was his MK commander at another stage", said Thenji. This is the beauty of Thenji and Ike's relationship. The commitment to the same ideals and to their choices.

Thenjiwe took the risk of being misunderstood and misrepresented. She said what had to be said, what needed to be said, in the most difficult of circumstances.

This is my tribute to you, sister. Thank you for doing it for us women and men in that hall. In doing it for yourself you did for us all. ★

Women's struggle, women's gains in Norway

by Liv Tørres

The tripartite alliance has just taken the important and progressive decision to ensure that at least one-third of those on the ANC election lists are women. This is a first for South Africa, and almost certainly a first for Africa. In Norway and in other Scandinavian countries there have been some two decades of experience of special, gender-sensitive quotas and other affirmative action measures. Liv Tørres, who works for the Norwegian Trade Union Centre for Social Science and Research, gives the background and assesses progress

Some people argue that sexism is part and parcel of apartheid. Others, like Albie Sachs say that it is rooted in patriarchy, one of the few deeply non-racial institutions in South Africa (Sachs 1990). Indeed, at least one writer has said that patriarchy is the only non-racial South African institution (Bazilli 1991).

Gender is a basic factor in the division of labour all across the world; in capitalist and socialist countries, in developed as well as in developing countries. Men's privileged status in production is argued for on the basis of women's role in reproduction. The logic of giving birth and therefore being committed, supposedly, to a lifetime of washing dishes and changing nappies is often unquestioned, even by women.

How do we address this gender inequality? Some say that strategies are needed for "raising" reproductive tasks and "motherhood" to the status and value of jobs in the productive sector. In my view, however, this should not be mistaken for a process leading to women's emancipation or

gender equality. The struggle for equality must be based upon a fight for equal access to jobs and status in production.

In Norway, women have struggled for both jobs and political positions, while also wanting to remain mothers and partners. We haven't got it all. However, comparatively speaking, seen in an international perspective, we have acquired unique experiences and made unique gains. A "silent revolution" has taken place in Norway, and in the other Nordic countries. It hasn't been a revolution of marches, or of big numbers, or hard weapons. It has been a transformation of the sexist nature of society, with women taking over positions which were earlier reserved for men. With what means? Where does it place women, and what do the men have left? This article focusses on affirmative action and the struggle for equality in Norway. The task of providing strategies for present and future struggles of South African women must be left to others.

State feminism

Feminists often claim that the private sphere of kinship and the family is the locus of women's oppression (Hernes 1987). As a result, a great deal of attention is devoted to this sphere in feminist writing. Some feminists, however, emphasise the free market's oppressive quest for cheap labour. State and market are rarely looked upon as problem solvers. Insofar as they are dealt

with, they tend to be described as impersonal and exploitative patriarchal institutions, resistant to reform.

In Nordic traditions of anti-sexist struggle, a more positive view of the state, as an instrument of popular will, has developed. The state is seen as an institution to be used to control the sources of social and economic inequality; namely the market and the family. In this context, "state feminism" was coined as a term in Norway to describe the specific national alliance between the state and feminist groups (Hernes 1987).

During the late 1960s and 70s increased emphasis was put upon the incorporation of women into the economy. Women entered the labour market to a large extent in response to a shortage of man (or women-) power in the public services, which the social democratic party in government wanted to enlarge as part of a general welfare-state concept. These development in women's employment were not at first, principally, a conscious strategy for the liberation of women developed by the party or the state. However, as women entered the

State and market are rarely looked upon as problem solvers

labour market, more attention had to be devoted to the conditions required for them to be able to work. The need for the state to facilitate these conditions became more apparent. Women became consumers and producers of public goods. They were consumers through their dependency upon the state to provide necessary services, like creches and hospital care. They were producers, insofar as they were taking over their

A society may well be non-sexist without actually being equal

own former domestic tasks (child-care, care of the aged, catering), but now on the state payroll.

Building a culture of equality

The Norwegian law on gender equality espouses non-sexism and prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender. Positive discrimination, aimed at eliminating inequality

is, on the other hand, legal. This provision obviously fosters affirmative action. This is critical, because a society may be well be non-sexist in a formal, constitutional way without actually being equal. The uniqueness of Norwegian law is that it says explicitly that there shall be equality between men and women. It states that women and men have the same rights and status and shall have the

same access to services in all sectors of the society. There is a legal obligation for gender equality to be entrenched and fought for by strategic interventions in employment, education, organisational life, politics, etc. Norwegian law has provisions to ensure that media, advertising, school curricula, and so on, function in ways that build a culture of equality, where women are not portrayed as different from men, and where gender is not connected with certain traditional roles. Advertisements illustrating women as sex-objects are illegal. There are institutions to ensure law enforcement and to handle complaints.

All corporative councils and structures are legally bound to have at least 40% representation of each sex. The law says such gender composition shall be strived for also in politically elected councils. Womens' representation in political bodies and parties has significantly increased as a result. Furthermore, gender issues are consciously spread and incorporated in all political and public work. In Norway we have deliberately avoided segregating womens' issues into a separate ministry, which would easily result in womens' interests remaining remote from political life and from the responsibility of other ministries. Each ministry in Norway, therefore, has responsibility for incorporating gender issues into its work and for developing a programme of action for gender equalisation.

Motherhood

Equality presupposes the freedom to choose equally, which is based upon freedom from prejudice, skew role patterns, attitudes and expectations. Much of the subsequent political mobilisation of women began initially in the 1970s in campaigns against the portrayal of women as sexual objects. There were large campaigns against pornography, escort agencies and prostitution.

Free abortion became an issue of major importance and it was won during the 70s in all Nordic countries. Achieving equality and escaping from the absolute domination of our reproductive roles meant having a real choice, and not only a formal choice as to whether we wanted to have children or stay at home. Medical care is free, which means that the availability of abortion is not a question of individual financial resources. The right to choose also implies having the facilities and real possibilities to say yes to children. Norway provides one of the longest maternity leaves in the world – 42 weeks with full wage compensation or 52 weeks with a 80% pay-out. In addition, the father must take off 4 weeks and he may take almost the whole period of leave.

Affirmative action

Legal rights are important, but not enough to ensure practical results and equal opportunities. Strategic interventions may be needed to remove inequalities.

First, women often choose not to

work. Public services like creches, education and health services were provided to give women a real opportunity to work. Public, as opposed to private solutions, were chosen to make the same standard of services equally available to all, irrespective of region, income and class. Whereas social services in most countries are restricted to people in the labour force, social services in Scandinavia are usually extended on a universal basis, regardless of employment. Furthermore, although being a controversial issue, the social democratic party has thus far been inclined to provide public services, instead of cash benefits which were looked upon as having the risk of "forcing" women back to the kitchen.

Secondly, a segregated labour market had to be transformed by affirmative action to help ensure that women and men increasingly occupy the same types of work. This challenge was approached from two sides. First, strategic intervention was needed to achieve equal representation of females and males in schools, thereby assuring equality at a later stage in the labour market. Secondly, recognising that men and women would still tend to choose different profes-

Norway provides one of the longest maternity leaves in the world

sions and education, and that there would still be discrimination in the labour market itself, affirmative action was needed also there. The concept of "positive discrimination" was introduced, of which there is both a "weak" and a "strong" version. Females, for instance, get priority entrance into schools and into jobs in sectors where women are underrep-

Women are of decisive importance for socialist and social democratic parties

resented at point of departure. The "weak" form refers to situations where women get priority if they have achievements and qualifications that are equal to their male counterparts. The "strong" version is where women get priority although having less qualifications than men. The latter is applied where women are heavily underrepresented in a sector,

or profession.

High schools admit students according to earlier achievements and gender. Recognising that women still tend to choose other professions, or tend to end up with less education than men, a rated system has now been introduced in high schools and universities. Schools get money refunded for each student they manage to get through the whole curriculum. In professions dominated by men, universities will get a 50% higher

amount per woman graduating. Furthermore, state loans are provided which give everyone real access to education, irrespective of gender, background and family income.

Positive discrimination in the labour market is applied principally in the public sector. It is more difficult to put in practice in the private sector. However, with approximately 35 % of the economically active working in the public sector, such provisions cover a substantial number of the workforce. The main agreement between the Confederation of Labour (LO) and the employers organisation covers provisions for affirmative action and quotas of representation in the private sector. So does the Work Environment Act, which covers the whole economically active population.

The legal provisions on gender equality are mostly concerned with womens' rights. In practice, however, positive gender discrimination also works to the advantage of men. Nursing, childcare and teaching are examples of sectors which are dominated by women where men now get the same kind of priority to jobs accorded to women in sectors like engineering, academic life, certain manufacturing industries.

Fourth, indirect discrimination against women in employment practices is confronted by legal provisions and agreements. It is illegal to apply for employees on the basis of gender, or in such a way that it serves as an indirect barrier to women. Working-hours and work-schedules cannot be advertised and

implemented in such a way that they serve as barriers to women. If a woman suspects that she is discriminated against on the basis of gender, she may easily bring the case to court or to the ombud for gender issues. The law states that a candidate who does not get a job is entitled to an explanation and employers carry a burden of proof in retrenchments and firing cases.

Norway was the first (1978), and still one of the few, countries to get an ombud for gender issues and equality. The ombud is state-appointed and will intervene in discriminatory practices of the media, advertising and in unfair labour practices on the basis of his/her own judgements and investigation. The rulings and decisions of the ombud have legal status. There is also a state-appointed council for gender equality. The purpose of both the council and the ombud is to ensure that the law on gender equality is enforced and followed. When it comes to unfair labour practices, workers and the union may take such cases to the Industrial Court. In practice, discrimination on the basis of gender is interpreted in a broad and strict sense by the Court system. Employers are often left with the burden to prove that employment or labour practices are not discriminatory.

Radical women – the new working class

When reproductive tasks were moved away from the home, women moved along. About 70% of women

in Nordic countries are economically active. Only 11% of Norwegian women identify themselves as housewives and three out of four married women with small children are working. At the same time, however, we have one of the most segregated work-forces in the world. At the turn of the 90's more than 50% of working women were employed by the public sector and a high number of them chose traditional jobs in "reproductive" services like health and education. A relatively high number of women work part-time.

Women have become of decisive importance for socialist and social-democratic parties. Socialist values and what we would traditionally define as working class consciousness is increasingly associated with women rather than with men, and with high education rather than with blue-collar work. Women in the Nordic countries have been mobilised through their varied ties to the state much as men were mobilised through the market (Hernes 1987). Radical left-wing values and support for state regulation and intervention in the market is explained by gender itself, and not only the fact that these women work in the public sector and thereby have specific interests to defend. This new "working class" is the future potential backbone of the labour movement and of socialist parties.

Norway was one of the first countries in the world with a female prime minister and certainly the first with nearly half the government being women. However, female politi-

cians generally do not raise issues substantially different from men or vote differently from their male counterparts. The outcome on politics has not been drastic change. Nonetheless, to a certain degree, female politicians focus more upon reproductive issues and the conditions required for combining work and the home-sphere. More significantly, perhaps, women politicians have had an enormous impact as role models for

Equal pay for equal work has to a large extent been put into practice

younger women's perceptions of future possibilities and hence on choices in education and careers. Differences in choice of education and in the labour market are slowly but surely being levelled out.

Power with a female voice

Most studies of gender focus upon the alienation and repression of

women, rather than on their power. Although still in small numbers, women are now represented in top positions in all spheres of Norwegian public life.

Most political parties are striving for equal gender representation in representative bodies, election lists and political bodies. In the early 80s female voters themselves staged a "coup" in elections for the municipal

councils by shifting women candidates upwards on the election lists, thereby increasing the number of women elected from approximately 10% to around 36%. Women make up nearly 40% of the elected deputies in political councils at the regional level and 36% of Parliament. The differences between men and women are being levelled out in the public sector and in political life. In economic life, however, the situation is different. Less than 5% of management in private companies is female. Unions are another bastion we haven't yet won. Although almost as many women as men are members of LO, women compose only about 20% of the representatives in executive boards and general councils in the labour movement. A far smaller proportion of national leadership is female.

The social construction of men's disadvantages?

The Norwegian struggle for women's rights reflects a careful balance between, on the one hand, a recognition that women have specific contributions, experiences and interests to defend and, on the other hand, the struggle to uproot such gender-specific experiences and interests.

Affirmative action has been controversial. Some argue that having women represented in political or economic positions "just because they are women" will have serious negative implications for the carrying out of important tasks and thus for the functioning of society at large.

However, although women sometimes may have had less qualifications for positions than men, they had enough qualifications. Women learnt through the process and proved their rights.

What do the men have left?

What do the men have left? Everything and even a bit more – but not the same! In certain areas men may have “lost” a bit. They may now be more affected by the increasing unemployment rate, than if women were not in the labour market. Some would also say that men have lost potential wage increases because of an enforced wage equality policy levelling out differences between men and women. Income differentials are relatively small between men and women in the Nordic countries. Equal pay for equal work, or for comparable work, has, to a relatively large extent, been put into practice. Men’s relative loss of wage-increases is, however, combined with a change from a family-structure based on one relatively high income to a family structure based upon two relatively smaller incomes. Parallel to women going out onto the labour market, men still perform far less of domestic duties in the home and with children than women (Flotten 1991). Men have got someone to share the economic burdens of family-maintenance, without taking over their equal share of domestic work. Although losing some of the patriarchal control and power over the family with women’s increased inde-

pendence, men have got the additional gains and stimuli of equal partnership.

What have women gained?

Despite the fact that gender issues in Nordic countries have been longer on the public and political agenda than in other countries, there are still clear role differences to be found. Women in Norway still tend to do the same jobs as before, but now on the state pay-roll. Women brought with them the tasks they earlier did at home out in the public sphere as producers of public services. There is still a fair amount of truth in the saying that where there are women, there is no power. So what have we achieved? Double, or triple work instead of liberation?

Generally, men have advantages in decision-making bodies: they more easily take the floor, chair meetings and influence decisions through experience and confidence. Nevertheless, through access to production and economic life, women in Norway have gained financial resources and independence. Through work, we have gained access to organisational life. Trade unions in Norway function as a learning area for women, building organisational

Why should we leave all the fun to men?

and political competence and skills (Raaum 1988).

It has taken us centuries of passive resistance and about 20 years of action and we still haven't reached the aim of equality. Some will say "show patience, things take time". An active conscious struggle gives results, but we also need time for culture and perceptions to change and for women to achieve the confidence and experience. However, with time alone and without continuous struggle, affirmative action and vigilance from women, we wouldn't have achieved anything.

Women in Norway don't work only for income or economic necessity. Work and status in the production sector give us self-fulfillment and resources we can use to influence decisions affecting our lives in other areas as women, workers, child-rearers and family-partners. Quoting Helga Hernes, female state secretary for Foreign Affairs; "why should we leave all the fun to men"? ★

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Ronnie Kasrils, SACP Political Bureau and ANC National Working Committee member has just published an autobiography, *Armed and Dangerous* (Struik). Already the work has received a great deal of media attention, both in South Africa and overseas. In Britain, there has been a third print-run within weeks of its appearance. We publish here a long excerpt from the chapter "Disneyland" on Kasrils' experiences in Swaziland in the mid-1980s.

The story begins at the time of the Nkomati Accord, with Kasrils, in disguise, having been tipped off at Maputo airport that he had best return on the same flight to Swaziland. ANC cadres were being expelled from Maputo.

"Disneyland"



Ronnie Kasrils

The plane climbed quickly and I looked back at the concrete city of Maputo with its spectacular coastline and harbour. Soon we were flying over the outlying townships and then the bushveld stretching towards the Lebombo mountains and the mini-state of Swaziland. I looked down at the Namaacha border-post thinking of the countless times I had jumped the fence with comrades who had since fallen in battle.

We were in Swazi airspace with twenty minutes or so flying time to Matsapa airport. I needed to have a good reason for immediately returning to Swaziland. I decided to say that on reaching Maputo I had received an urgent message that "my brother" in Manzini had been involved in a serious car crash after

dropping me off at the airport. It sounded a farcical reason to me but I could not come up with anything better.

The Swazi lowveld, with its dry bush and green stretch of irrigated cane fields, gave way to the hills and fertile valleys around the small town of Manzini. We landed at the airport and a handful of passengers alighted — the rest remaining on board for the onward flight to Lesotho.

A large lady in West African dress, was struggling to disembark with two young children. I decided to give her a hand, more for the sake of camouflage than courtesy. The same immigration official who had processed me out an hour before was handling the in-coming passengers. I handed him my passport muttering about the family tragedy that had unexpectedly brought me back to Swaziland.

He scarcely glanced at me as he began making calculations on a pad. He finally looked up and said:

“You can have thirty one days.”

Normally someone would fetch me from the airport. There had been no time to alert my contacts so I caught a taxi and drove into Manzini. The “hub” of Swaziland consists of a collection of stores along two main streets, with no buildings more than two-stories high; a number of churches and schools; a sports club and showground; a comfortable two-star hotel frequented by South African security police and a “no-star” hotel patronised by their informants; a police station, a clinic run by the Nazarenes and a population

of some 30,000 dispersed between outlying townships and some well-to-do suburbs. The latter housed a mixture of schoolteachers, aid workers and business people from abroad and an emergent Swazi middle strata. Near the Matsapa airport is a military base, a police school, an industrial area and a low-economy housing estate where a number of South African refugees had resided for years. It was constantly being raided for undercover ANC operatives and local gangsters and was called “Beirut” because of the number of gun-fights that had taken place there.

I alighted from my taxi outside the town centre and after pretending to go into a shop made the rest of my way on foot uphill to a house in a middle class area.

My soft knocking on a back door was answered by an ascetic, bearded figure with a distinctive accent from a certain part of the British Isles. His face lit up in a toothy grin:

“What happened? Didn’t the plane take off?” he asked.

My explanation intrigued him and he puckered up his face in distaste: “Samora’s going to learn the hard way not to trust the Boers, but has he any alternative?”

I had a safe car which was stowed in their garage and soon after dinner I was on the road to Mbabane, the Swazi capital fifty kilometres away.

The strip between the two towns is the busiest part of the Kingdom. It takes one past Matsapa, the University, the National Stadium, the

Parliamentary buildings (silent by day and night because of a Royal suspension), the Monarchs Palace and then along the Ezulweni Valley up a long, steep climb to the cool, damp heights of Mbabane. The Ezulweni is unbelievably beautiful and boasts a weird combination of glitzy hotels and seedy motels; a frenetic gambling arena with casino and one-armed bandits; raunchy strip shows, 'skin flicks' and hot mineral springs with something called a "cuddle puddle"; a game sanctuary and golf courses; riding schools and various resorts and chalets within mountain forests. It is an ideal area for discreet rendezvous: be these between white South African businessmen and Swazi prostitutes; Boer handlers and their covert agents; ANC commanders and underground operatives. We had a saying that after dark the only cars on the road were ANC and Boers. For those of us working undercover Swaziland was a capricious blend of beauty and the beast.

The Valley sparkled in bright sunlight by day and was dark, moody and frequently under heavy mist at night. The nineteen kilometre long hill winding up to Mbabane is extremely dangerous and boasts the record number of fatal accidents per kilometre in the Guinness Book of Records. This statistic is exacerbated by the heavy consumption of alcohol in the country especially by motorists on weekends.

Because of these features and the topsy-turvy power struggle within the ruling elite, Moses dubbed the

country "Disneyland" — a place of daydream and delusion which could suddenly transform into nightmare. I was always relieved to reach the summit into Mbabane, especially at night, and avoiding the town centre — marginally busier than Manzini — arrived at a second safe house.

Knocking at the door I knew I would be scrutinised through a spy-hole before it was opened.

"I thought you were leaving today?" a handsome, dark eyed individual of my age said on opening the door. It was Ebrahim Ismail who was the senior undercover operative on the political side in Swaziland. He worked closely with Zuma and myself. Our association went back to the 1960's when he had been arrested for sabotage and served fifteen years imprisonment on Robben Island. He had joined us in Maputo in 1981 and had been deployed in Swaziland after that. In fact I had helped him set-up his safe house and could claim to have taught him how to drive in Maputo and cook in Swaziland - skills he had not acquired before going to prison.

I reported to him about the deteriorating situation in Mozambique and we began considering the likely consequences for our network in Swaziland.

"The comrades in Maputo are expecting to be deported in large numbers to Lusaka, all except Zuma and a handful who we hope will be permitted to run an office", I reported. "Some comrades will try and remain undercover but the majority will attempt to slip into Swaziland with in-

structions to infiltrate home. Our structures here must get ready to receive them. We'll need to prepare for an influx of over two hundred armed combatants within the next fortnight."

Ebrahim's immediate response was about funds. "We're going to have to rent more houses and feed them. I hope Maputo will send us the money."

"We'll need to send a surfer to Maputo immediately and raise that and other questions. But let's meet the military commanders tomorrow." I suggested.

The commander of the Natal military machinery, as it was called, was Thami Zulu. His counterpart on the Transvaal side was an equally tall, erect and imposing individual named Siphwe Nyanda whose MK name was "Gebuzha".

We were meeting one morning in a safe house belonging to Gebuzha when one of his lieutenants, a quiet spoken, lanky individual called Jabu interrupted us. "Problems, problems" he muttered in undertones to Gebuzha. The latter's eyes opened wide and he intimated we needed to leave at once. At first I did not think the problem concerned us and that he was having to attend to something personally. But he grinned stiffly and said: "We've got to get out quick. Jabu's just got a tip-off that a raid's been planned on this address by the Swazi police."

Ebrahim and I left him to his packing whilst Jabu dropped us off

in town. Our car was parked at the Swazi Plaza, the main Mbabane shopping mall. We drove a couple of kilometres, past the Mbabane golf course, to his modest house in the suburb of Dalrich where Swazi speculators were putting up modern residences. There were no tarred roads here and the bush encroached up to the boundaries of the homes.

As I negotiated a corner I glimpsed a truckload of soldiers on the main road. As I drew Ebrahim's attention to this a second and then a third truck drove by. It looked as though the suburb was being surrounded and we decided to turn around and drive back to town. No sooner had I made a u-turn than we were stopped by a couple of men with rifles who materialised from the garden of one of the houses. They were in shirtsleeves and ties and demanded to know who we were and what we wanted.

I sensed they were Swazi special branch and looking suitably surprised and irate but not arrogant, replied:

"We're businessmen, looking for a house in Pine Valley, but who are you?"

"Police", was the curt answer, "Pine Valley's back up the main road".

"What's going on here?"

"You'll read about it in tomorrow's paper".

There certainly was a great deal going on. From the main road we could see the soldiers being deployed around the suburb. Back in town we spotted a number of police

cars whizzing about. We felt safe enough in our disguises and decided to take stock of the situation over a cup of coffee in a quiet restaurant from where we could alert various contacts by telephone. Ebrahim needed to see one of our main contacts personally and we decided he would see the individual who worked in an office nearby and meet up with me at the Swazi Plaza. As I walked towards the car I felt I was being followed. I continued walking in order to make sure.

The individual concerned was a young, well built black man, in casual clothing. I had noticed him sitting at a nearby table in the coffee bar and emerging immediately after I left. I came to a corner, turned left and then immediately crossed the road. There was quite a lot of traffic about which gave me the chance to look about in a natural way. Sure enough the young man was still behind me. I was going to have to determine whether this was coincidence or deliberate.

I went into a men's clothing shop and looked through a rack of jackets. Sure enough my friend had stopped outside and was even squinting into the shop to see what I was up to. On leaving the store I crossed the road and found he was sticking to me like glue. I needed to get back to my car and pick up Ebrahim and could not afford to waste much time. This was a situation that required some rough tactics.

I walked down a quiet street and turned a corner and waited. Sure enough my friend came sprinting

around the corner and almost collided into me. I hit him on the chest with a clenched fist.

"Pasop jong!" (Watch out, you!) I exclaimed in Afrikaans, "If you're trying to rob me you'll get a bullet next time!" I left him, uncertain and shaken on the corner, and walking swiftly away approached the Swazi Plaza.

Rushing up the hill towards town, panting heavily with excitement was Craig Williamson, the security policeman. I would have recognised him anywhere and at any time — the florid complexion, the narrow eyes, the corpulent frame. We had heard from our contacts that he was staying in a local hotel and had been coming to Swaziland on and off to set up a spy network. In fact we had his room bugged. There is an iron law of counter-surveillance never to look over your shoulder. I broke it for the first and only time that day. I looked back and Williamson was looking over his shoulder at me. On his part it was either first time recognition or he had been alerted to my presence and current disguise. Whatever my view of Williamson he was an opponent of strong nerve and ability. The sooner I linked up with Ebrahim and we cleared out of the area the better.

We stayed the night in Manzini. The next morning's "Times of Swaziland" had a sensational report of a raid by Swazi security forces on an ANC residence in Mbabane. Gunshots had been exchanged with the occupants who had managed to flee into the surrounding bush. Several ANC members had been rounded up. Speculation was that

these were trained MK cadres who were entering the country in large numbers from Mozambique. The house concerned was just a street away from Ebrahim's residence and we did not know it was being used by our operatives.

During the following weeks the "Disneyland" term coined by Moses lived up to its expressive, if at times tragic, flavour.

Within days a large group of MK combatants were intercepted crossing the border from Mozambique. A dozen were rounded up and detained at a police station at Simunye in the sugar cane area.

Within no time they had escaped and a massive hunt was underway to track them down in the cane fields.

"The Swazi Times" which normally reported cases of petty corruption, small town robberies and "muti" murders could scarcely keep pace with the dramatic events as a house in Manzini was placed under siege by the security forces. A policeman was shot through the head, possibly by mistake by one of his colleagues, as he approached to check on a report about suspicious occupants. When armoured cars were brought up the occupants decided to surrender. A couple of our comrades, however, decided to make a break for the bush and gunfire erupted leaving one of our people dead in his tracks.

We had issued orders that our people should not engage in gun battles with the Swazi security forces and fortunately these were the only

fatalities. Thami Zulu and I came under fire outside Mbabane when his car was recognised and Swazi police gave chase. A tyre was hit and Thami, remaining ice cool, manoeuvred the car off the road and into the bush. We jumped out with bullets whistling overhead and ran as swiftly as we could for a friend's house which was fortunately close by.

A big problem was finding safe venues for the meetings of our committee. In the early period a number of attempts were made and had to be abandoned because of sudden raids. We tried meeting at picnic spots or by parking-off in quiet forest tracks but the army and police were patrolling everywhere and we just could not manage an undisturbed meeting.

"Let's meet in a posh restaurant", I suggested. "We'll dress up to suit the occasion and choose somewhere secluded."

Moses recommended the Calabash Restaurant in the Ezulweni Valley. We booked a table in a quiet alcove and Thami and Gebuzha looked especially smart in well-fitting suits and ties. Ebrahim and I wore safari suits and we all wore spectacles as part of our disguises. Every time the waiter or wine steward came by I addressed my colleagues as doctors. We drew our meal out and managed to cover a lot of ground concerning the current emergency situation. We were able to linger over dessert and coffee and to give the meal an authentic finale I ordered brandies. Ebrahim, being of Muslim background ordered a coke

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instead and Thami and Gebuzha said they would have cokes as well as brandy. Little did I imagine that they meant brandy and coke.

The wine steward carefully poured three measures of the finest Cape KWV brandy into the appropriate balloon glasses and watched as I took an appreciative sip. His expression turned to horror as my colleagues, the "doctors" Thami and Gebuzha, filled their brandy glasses with coke, said "cheers", and knocked the mixture back. I had to explain to them how sacrilegious it was to mix coke with KWV or cognac as they sat back with mischievous smiles.

On another occasion we arranged for Gebuzha to pick Ebrahim and myself up at the Holiday Inn in the Ezulweni Valley. While Ebrahim and I waited we talked and sipped drinks by the poolside. I became aware that we had attracted interest when I noticed a couple of white males staring at us from the bar. They were mean looking types and when I looked a second time there were four such individuals visibly scowling at us. Just then one of Gebuzha's lieutenants, Peter Patel, arrived to tell us their car was outside.

"I think we've got problems", I said. "I think those guys are watching us, in fact they're doing it quite openly. I'm going to the gents. Follow me in a minute and see what they do."

I had the impression of eyes boring into the back of my head as I made my way to the cloakroom. Peter arrived in a state of excitement.

"You're right, two of them followed you and are outside the door. They were about to come in when I came by."

"Okay, let's get back to our table and discuss what to do", I replied.

We walked past the two men Peter had referred to and they promptly turned their backs on us. They were big, brawny types who looked as though they'd be happy in any rugby pack. "South African security branch for sure", I said as we sat down with Ebrahim.

A waiter came to our table and in an unctuous manner asked for our order. He smiled at us in an oily way and was back with our drinks within a minute.

We paid him and he stayed to pour each of the drinks out which was uncommon. Conscious of the group of heavies at the pub watching our every move, I said to my companions:

"Right, so we'll meet the others at the casino in two hours time". I nodded at the waiter, said "thank you" and repeated to Ebrahim and Peter: "At the casino in two hours". I was sure he had been asked to eavesdrop and hoped my deliberate reference to the casino would put the South Africans off our trail.

We finished the drinks and decided to leave in a group for Gebuzha's car. As we moved through the hotel foyer about six of the heavies began bearing down on us. There were several long lines of vehicles in the car park. Gebuzha's car and a back-up vehicle with bodyguards was a hundred metres away. One of our

adversaries was trying to cut us off. It looked as though a gun fight was imminent. I put my hand into my pocket and he backed away. They were still behind us, however, as we reached Gebuzha's car, but then they held back. Maybe they were considering organising their forces for a confrontation at the casino if indeed the waiter was in cahoots with them as I suspected? Probably they did not like the look of our boys in the two cars. One of our people aimed an AK47 rifle at them as we drove off and they ducked behind the shrubs.

Hysteria in Swaziland was at an all time high. On a daily basis the media carried news of yet more raids and arrests and implored the public to be on the watch for "itinerant males" arriving at strange hours at houses which were "quiet by day and came alive at night". Mug shots of Gebuzha, Thami and their lieutenants appeared on Television and we were having to change our disguises from month to month. The university, which was an ANC support base, was surrounded on several occasions and the students' residences, male and female, searched for fugitives.

The most sinister aspect of the situation was the interrogation of those captured. We estimated that over one hundred comrades had been rounded up and were being held in various police stations. They were being illegally removed in pairs by certain members of the Swazi security police, handcuffed and blindfolded, and taken to a secret destina-

tion for interrogation. They were given the impression that they were just a stone's throw from the South African border and if they failed to answer questions satisfactorily would be handed over "to the Boers".

In fact the interrogation centre was a Swazi Army base on the old Tea-Road overlooking the Ezulweni Valley. The actual interrogators were indeed South African security, more than likely the heavy squad we had almost clashed with at the Holiday Inn. Swazi police would put the questions to our comrades but they wore ear-phones and were directed by the South Africans sitting behind glass partitions in a make-shift studio. This was a concession the Swazi Government was making to Pretoria. They could not afford the opprobrium of the OAU by handing our people over but were prepared to co-operate in this bizarre form of interrogation.

It took a couple of months for the security team to process all our cadres and then they were deported to Tanzania. The most zealous Swazi security officer was an individual called Shiba who carried out his tasks with great cruelty. He was gunned down from a moving car as he emerged from the police officers' club in Mbabane after attending a pre-Christmas luncheon in December, 1984.

Just after Christmas Gebuzha, who seemed to have as many lives as a cat, was almost captured in a raid on an Mbabane flat. His right-hand man, Jabu, was arrested as he was parking a car outside the build-

ing. Police broke down the door of the flat when the occupants refused to open it. Gebuzha, and a fellow comrade called Matau tried to escape via the balcony. Matau fell and broke both legs and several ribs. As he lay writhing in agony a bullet was fired through his knee. He was held in solitary confinement, after hospitalisation, and then deported to Lusaka. Gebuzha managed to climb onto the roof where he hid for a day and a night before getting away to safety and reorganising his machinery.

Despite the problems of survival we faced in Swaziland our structures managed to operate throughout the crisis of 1984. Whilst over one hundred comrades had been rounded up and deported to Tanzania we managed to infiltrate over 150 into South Africa.

By May, 1986, I was again in Swaziland. We had been painstakingly rebuilding our structures there and I was sent to encourage our commanders to step-up actions in response to the rising mass struggle at home. I had also been recruiting supporters in Europe to provide assistance, especially in terms of setting-up safe houses for our hard-pressed cadres, and wanted to check-up on the recent arrivals. I flew out with Zambia Airways using a new disguise and false documents. It was quite a thrill looking down at the Limpopo River, across which our guerrilla groups were operating into the northern Transvaal, and overflying South Africa.

No sooner was I back in

Swaziland than things started hotting-up.

Both MK's Transvaal and Natal machineries had been increasing their operations. Landmines had been laid in the militarised border zone of the northern Transvaal and also close to Swaziland. Durban had been dubbed "Bomb City" in the South African press because of the spate of explosions that rocked it. In one of these the deputy chief of the security police was killed. An attempted attack on the oil refinery resulted in a fierce shoot-out with four MK combatants who fought to the death. Thami Zulu's command had become especially active and had opened a guerrilla front across the Lebombo Mountains in the Ngwavuma area of north-east Natal. This area was in fact the direct responsibility of Kumalo Migwe (Mzala). Paul Dikaledi was handling the land mine operations whilst Ebrahim was in overall command of the political underground.

Thami Zulu, in his characteristically responsive manner, promised to step-up operations. Unfortunately the TV news soon reported that one of his couriers, a young Swazi student, had been arrested at the Golela border-post with Natal. The car she was driving had a secret compartment loaded with explosives. It looked to me as though the South Africans had prior information and suspicion fell on one of Thami's lieutenants but we could not be sure. Of additional concern was knowledge

the driver had of one of my longest-serving assistants, "Vincent", the schoolteacher from London, whom I had recently brought to Swaziland. I had brought him out to give special assistance to Ebrahim but decided that he should be withdrawn. When the Swazi police visited him a short time later to check on his passport and work permit it put our decision beyond dispute.

Then on the night of Saturday, 2nd June, two of our operatives and a young Swazi woman, were shot dead in a house outside Mbabane. They were Pansu Smith, Siphon Dlamini and Busi Majola. They were found by comrades on Monday morning lying in pools of blood. They had been shot at close range by weapons with silencers. The neighbours had not heard any gunfire. Apart from headwounds Busi, who was Pansu's girlfriend, had bullet holes through the palms of her hands from attempting to ward-off the gunshots. Three white men were seen going into the house on the Saturday night. They must have been let in by a fourth man, who was a contact of the comrades from South Africa, who had arrived in Swaziland for consultations with them that Saturday. When I heard how the comrades had first come to work with him, because he had a car and funds, I pointed out an old adage that had much relevance to our situation: "Beware of Greeks bearing false gifts".

The day before we made our gruesome discovery Ebrahim and I had been meeting a contact at a pic-

nic spot in the beautiful Pine Valley outside Mbabane. While the three of us talked by a sparkling stream a high performance red Mazda drew-up nearby.

Three white men emerged from the vehicle, with two of them making straight for the river close to where we sat. The first greeted us in a frenetic manner, bubbling and giggling, and asked whether it was safe to swim.

"Sure", I said. "Are you new here? Where are you from?"

"Peru", he answered, with an unmistakable Latin accent, and hurled himself, clothes and all, into the water.

"He's mad", the second individual commented, sitting down next to us. He was a lanky, big boned, evil looking character, with a Union Jack tattoo on his forearm. Like his friend he was under the influence of alcohol and maybe drugs.

"Where are you from?" he asked us in a flat, heavy voice.

Keeping my hand close to my pistol, tucked out of sight underneath my shirt, I replied pleasantly that we worked in Swaziland. "And what about you?", I added, "From your accent and your fine tattoo I would guess you're an Ulsterman?"

"Proud of it", he replied, "but I had to leave quite a few years ago. Been working in Rhodesia and then I came to South Africa..." He looked back at the third man, who was off-loading a crate of beer from the boot of the car, and lowering his voice added: "You can say I'm on police work".

The third man arrived and was clearly keen to avoid interacting with us. The Ulsterman lumbered to his feet and with a bowed head and respectful air assisted the latter carry the beer down to the stream. We heard the Ulsterman ask if there was any dagga left for a smoke and the so-called Peruvian was told to swim over to where they were sitting down.

The third man was clearly a South African and from appearances and the deferential attitude shown to him I judged him to very possibly be a security branch man and most probably the "handler" of the other two. He was in his mid-thirties, dressed in a casually smart way, had a neatly trimmed moustache, a controlled air about him and reminded me of "Magnum" the popular TV investigator.

Our meeting occurred on the Sunday, the day after the slaying of our three comrades, and the day before we were alerted to their deaths and the sighting of the three white males outside the victims' house. When I received the report I instantly, almost intuitively, thought of the three men at the picnic spot. The alcohol and drug binge was what we knew about the "spacing out" of the hit-squads after such an operation. Had the South African handler been taking the two killers out to unwind after the operation the night before? Were they still around and waiting to strike again? Was the "Peruvian" more likely a Portuguese mercenary from the

former colonies?

I discussed this with Moses on the Monday morning and we decided to go out and investigate. We left his home just before noon, aiming to check every drinking spot between Manzini and Mbabane.

We were on the lookout for the red Mazda and aiming to cover a score of possible venues on the fifty kilometre trip. I felt sure that if the trio had remained in Swaziland we would have a good chance of spotting them.

We drove past three possible venues in Manzini itself and one restaurant at Matsapa. At the foot of the Ezulweni Valley, before the posh hotels and restaurants, there is a dirt road branching off to an hotel by the Mantenga Falls. We had a quick look at the car park but there was no sight of the red Mazda. As we were driving back to the main road it materialised around a bend heading for the hotel. Sure enough "Magnum" was at the wheel, the Ulsterman was at his side and a third figure, probably the "Peruvian" was in the back seat.

"That's em", I told Moses, turning the car about as soon as they were out of sight. When we reached the hotel the red Mazda was in the car park. We decided Moses would go in alone since they would recognise me from the picnic spot and might get suspicious.

I parked out of sight and waited. After some time the three drove by in the Mazda and Moses joined me. We followed their dust trail to the main road and saw them turn left up



Kasrils (centre) with MK colleagues

the Valley.

“Christ!” Moses exclaimed, “what a wild bunch. I came across them at the hotel bar. You’re dead right about the big Irishman, what an evil character. What foul mouths he and that smaller fellow have. Everything was ‘eff’ this and ‘eff’ that. The smaller guy was definitely doped to the eyeballs and has a Portuguese accent alright. You could’ve cut the atmosphere with a knife in there. They were insulting the black staff who were petrified.”

“What about Magnum?” I enquired.

“Hardly opened his mouth. They refer to him as ‘Jannie’ so he’s a Boer

alright. He just kept paying for the drinks. Definitely the handler.”

The Mazda sped past the Holiday Inn complex of hotels and began climbing the long hill up to Mbabane. It soon pulled off, however, driving into a motel. We knew there was a bar in the place and hung back giving the trio enough time to get inside. There was no sight of the Mazda outside the bar, however, so I drove slowly around the complex, scanning the rows of motel rooms for it. We spotted it outside one of the rooms with its doors open. I parked in an adjacent row and we could see the Irishman and Peruvian flopped out on their

beds. "Magnum" walked out to the car, closed the doors, and went back into the next door room.

"Sitting ducks", Moses muttered, with a nod and a wink. He was all for taking them out then and there.

"No. I'll have to speak to the command here", I answered, "This is their turf."

At a meeting that night with Thami, Gebuzha, Ebrahim and a comrade called Thomas who was in charge of intelligence, I gave a report about the three men and we discussed what to do. Thomas had a great deal of information about enemy hit-squads in Swaziland and was able to confirm that the team responsible for the Mbabane slayings was still believed to be in the country. What was more there was a suggestion that British and Portuguese hit-men were involved. He had a contact working at the motel who would be able to carry out some checks on the men for us. I put forward Moses's line and argued that we should prepare to eliminate the trio.

"We can't be sure that they're the same men who murdered Pansu, Siphon and Busi on Saturday night," I began, "but they certainly fit into the category of hit-squad. We know the ring is closing in on us here and that the enemy is ready to strike. If we hit first we destabilise and intimidate them. We know that they find it difficult to absorb casualties. We've got this trio in our sights but before we know it they'll be gone. If it's possible to obtain some confirmation about their activities we should act. If we can't we should seize them and

question them about what they've been up to and their intentions."

In war it is necessary to act when the opportunity presents itself. We waited for several days whilst the contact at the hotel obtained bits and pieces of information all reinforcing the strong suspicions we had of the trio. Most damning was a reported meeting they had with a known South African agent. When Thami and a heavily armed group finally broke into their motel room it was discovered that they had vanished.

It was several years later when the scandal of government hit-squads was publicised in South Africa that I recognised "Magnum", a sadistic murderer by all accounts, from a newspaper photograph. ★

'Tonight we've got Up My Alley with us'

Liberation Chabalala. The world of Alex La Guma, edited by Andre Odendaal and Roger Field, Mayibuye Books, UWC, Bellville.

“**A**t about eleven o'clock at night a car, loaded with Security Branch men raced after us, hooted and forced us to a halt at the side of the road...Torches flashed on to the back seat. There were a few brown paper packets and a number of collection boxes. Hands tore at the brown paper, and a voice said triumphantly, 'Ah, dis die economic boycott.' The detectives seemed very excited.

“We were then each allocated to a police car, and wedged in by detectives drove in convoy along the dark and silent roads to the Philippi police-station... A security man came in carrying the packets of leaflets and said to his man: 'Count'.

'All of them?' asked a surprised detective. 'One by one?'

'One by one.'



The young Alex la Guma

They counted the leaflets on their fingers. Somewhere in the background another detective said: "Tonight we've got Up My Alley with us."

After many years in exile, not all of our comrades made it back home. One outstanding figure left behind was Alex La Guma. He lies buried in Cuba, where he died in 1985.

La Guma, author of a number of fictional works (*A Walk in the Night*, *And a Threefold Cord*, *The Stone Country*, *The Fog in the Season's End* and *The Time of the Butcherbird*) was a major figure in the African literary renaissance of the 1960s and 70s. He was deeply admired by his contemporaries, including the Nigerian, Wole Soyinka and the Kenyan, Ngugi was Thiong'o.

He was born and bred in District 6, Cape Town. La Guma's father, Jimmy, was one-time assistant general secretary (to Clements Kadalie) of the ICU, and a prominent (if at times controversial) member of the Communist Party of South Africa. Alex, himself, joined the Young Communist League in 1947, and became a member of District 20 of the Communist Party the following year.

Alex La Guma remained a committed communist for the rest of his adult life. In 1956 he was one of the 156 members of the Congress Alliance put on treason trial. After years of harassment and of detentions and one attempted assassination, he went into exile in 1966.

The present collection of writings and cartoons by La Guma is from the period just before he became a

celebrated novelist. The material is culled from his contributions to the Congress-aligned newspaper, *New Age*, and especially from his weekly column, "Up My Alley". Between 1956 and 1962 he wrote some 250 Up My Alley columns.

This collection is fascinating for many reasons. In the first place, the articles give us an insight into events of the period viewed from a perspective that shuttles between District 6 kerbside wisdom and communist internationalism.

"So you want to be a spaceman, huh?... (he writes after the Soviet's have launched the first ever manned space-flight)... Well, boetie, you'll have to become a Springbok first... According to 'an Afrikaner's' description of Yuri Gagarin reported in *Die Burger* he looked as handsome as a Springbok centre!"

As the editors point out, in an extensive and insightful introduction, La Guma needs, in part, to be located with the pioneering generation of *Drum* writers – Bloke Modisane and Can Themba. They were were writing at the same time and, like La Guma, they were cutting their teeth in journalism. Also, like the *Drum* writers, La Guma is clearly influenced stylistically by the tough-talking, wrong-side of the tracks world of a Damon Runyon, and of Hollywood B-grade movies:

"We had a week off from the Treason Trial so yours truly decided to do the town. You can't see enough of this burg... I hit Chinatown..."

But unlike the *Drum* writers, La

Guma always anchors himself in a consistent Congress-aligned politics, the first clause of the above extract is typical. Politics frames and qualifies his walks into the underworld. The tension between the two doesn't always work. But at its best (and it often is at its best), the tension makes electricity.

Related precisely to this is what I believe to be the most fascinating aspect of the collection for our contemporary South African situation. The Up My Alley columns are part and parcel of an attempt (to use 1990s South African jargon) to build a left hegemonic project, to connect a socialist perspective with popular culture, for socialism to become popular culture.

In this regard, the columns need to be located within the broader tradition of the New Age itself. New Age began its life as The Guardian newspaper, appearing weekly for 25 years under that name. After being banned it became Clarion, the People's World, Advance, New Age and finally Spark.

From its inception, Communist Party members were central to the newspaper, and in the 1950s it had a major impact. As Odendaal and Field write in their introduction:

"the newspaper played an important role in building the Congress movement in the 1950s, laying the basis for the present formal ANC/SACP alliance which was cemented in the 1960s...By the mid-1950s it had become the semi-official mouthpiece of the ANC, the 'weekly heartbeat' of the liberation move-

ment. According to Pinnock, the ANC relied heavily on the skills, finances, and media of the party and its members as it transformed itself from a 'disparate organisation (geographically compartmentalised and without funds or a newspaper)' into the 'single fighting force' it had become by the end of the 1950s."

The challenges facing the left in our country in coming years will, obviously, not be identical to those in the late 1950s (when the secretly relaunched SACP had not even yet publicly announced its existence).

But the fundamental challenge, of anchoring and deepening a left project within popular culture, surely remains.

"A friend of mine whose name is Gladstone was strolling in town the other day when a European character behind him called, 'Say Jim, wait a minute.'

Gladstone just keeps on going and this other character keeps on hey-Jimming behind him. So Gladstone turns around and says: 'You talking to me?'

'Sure, Jim,' this character says. 'Where is Plein Street?'

'How d'you know my name is Jim?'

'Why, I just guessed.'

'Well,' says Gladstone, 'You just guess where Plein Street is.'

I suspect there is much we can learn and relearn from the weekly column of the young Alex La Guma. And now, thanks to Mayibuye Books, as the security cop in Philippi police station put it, we can have: "Up My Alley with us". ★

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