



WORK IN PROGRESS

NO. 3

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THE REVOLUTIONARIES
HAVE BEEN CAPTURED,
YOUR MAJESTY.

HA, HA! WHEN DONALD'S
AT WORK, YOU'D BETTER
WATCH OUT, BANDITS!

YOU HAVE HELPED US
STOP THE REVOLUTION,
AND I WILL ALWAYS BE
GRATEFUL TO YOU. HOW
CAN I REPAY YOU?

I HOPE THEY
ASK FOR A
LOT OF MONEY.



Editorial:

WIP 3, like its predecessor, WIP 2 is published in the aftermath of the death of one of South Africa's leading progressive thinkers. In September last year South Africa and the world mourned the death in detention of Steve Biko: barely four months later, on January 8, Rick Turner was assassinated in the front room of his Durban home.

Both Steve and Rick were men of rare integrity and courage. Both were deeply and personally committed to far-reaching political and social change in the country of their birth. Both died for their beliefs, directly or indirectly at the hands of the system they abhorred and fought to change.

Those of us who share Rick Turner's beliefs must fight the sense of despair that the nightmare circumstances of his murder are designed to bring about. At the same time we must understand the conditions that have created the prevailing climate of violence in this country.

South Africa now shares with certain Latin American republics the reality of the death squad typical of authoritarian regimes in their attempts to eliminate ideological challenges to their leadership. Acts of right-wing terrorism have long been endemic in SA: it is widely known that the perpetrators of these crimes are seldom if ever brought to trial.

Since 1962 there have been at least 100 published incidents of this kind, not one of which has yet been solved by police.

In the press handling of Turner's shooting two main tendencies would appear to be at work. One is a conscious conspiracy (the smear campaign): the other an equally damning but less consciously calculated tendency.

In the Afrikaans press a conscious attempt was made to smear Turner with wild claims that the ANC was responsible. (Unquoted sources of information of course) Nor was the smearing confined to these Nationalist mouthpieces.

The English press, whether by default, ignorance, or the daily and routine pressure of finding immediate and politically accep-

table explanations of events in order to meet deadlines, fell into the same trap.

Because the two shootings (Turner and Mtshali) occurred within an hour of each other, in the same city, they were linked. The link was possibly made because both were perceived as 'political' shootings a reflection on the press' limited understanding of the situation and the shortcomings of its own ideological position.

Whatever the intention of running the two events together in this way, the effect on the reader is obvious. Most people reading the story will start drawing their own conclusions: the framework for interpretation has been laid. But, importantly, in the case of the English press, it has not been a conscious conspiracy to delude people. Which does not make it any less culpable, however. Only a little more subtle.

WIP 3 was produced in Cape Town, with a particular emphasis on issues of local salience such as squatters. Much of the other material relates to the courts, which we suggest are important as a replay of recent social history however limited. Court reports provide access to information that would otherwise pass unpublished. They also serve to fill in where the press leaves off (or what it

leaves out), or by the nature of reporting practices handles ahistorically, superficially, and discontinuously. Reporters are continually being reminded that they are not 'social historians'.

We print the article on squatters at the same time as one of Cape Town's largest remaining squatter communities fell to the bulldozers. The total destruction of the community proceeded in the face of negotiations with Transkei representatives and pleas to move the people 'humanely'. Nothing of course made the slightest difference to the way things turned out.

However, other major recent events are not reflected in the content of this issue of WIP. In a single week in early January when Amnesty International's report on torture in SA was released (banned by Government Gazette on January 27) two urgent applications came before Cape Town's supreme court to restrain security police from assaulting two 17-year-old detainees. What was unique in both cases was the fact that there was a witness (who was himself not a Section 6 detainee) to back up the assault allegations. This is apparently unprecedented, at least in Cape Town. One of the affidavits involved allegations of electric shock torture. The

S Africa accused of 'shock' tortures

By Denis Herberts



The symbol of Swaps

SOUTH AFRICA security police in Namibia are frequently using electric shock torture to extract "confessions" from black prisoners, according to a series of affidavits seen by The Sunday Times. The torture is allegedly taking place in the northern bastions of Ovamboland, where 40,000 South African troops are fighting guerrillas of the South-West Africa People's Organisation (Swaps).

In one affidavit, a pregnant black woman says she had a miscarriage after electric current was passed through her ear lobes while suspended by her wrists from iron bars on the wall.

Over the last 18 months there have been persistent reports of tortures by South African soldiers and security police, and the latest evidence suggests that electric shocks, far from being the work of individual sadists,

have become a common practice of white interrogators. The evidence shows that security police are closely collaborating with the South African troops in the bastions.

Last month 19 affidavits were handed to the court at Windhoek as supporting evidence of torture in an area it aims to stop a Swaps veteran being interrogated by the security police. According to affidavits, electric shocks were given to all but one man, and the events described covered a period from April 1976 to last November. The names included the following: The affidavit of Ntshali Shigwedha, aged 21, headman of Epwila Village.

He was arrested last March and taken to a darkened room at Okahavji, known to detainees simply as "the dark room." He denied collaborating or so to feed Swaps guerrillas but the

an iron bar was inserted behind his knees, and his ankles were tied together. In this "bar-like position," Shigwedha was suspended upside-down between two 44-gallon drums.

The headman continues: "A piece of cloth was put into my mouth and tied at the nape of the neck. A tub was placed under me and water poured all over me." Electric wires were attached to his temples and he was given shocks. "Words," he said, "are insufficient to describe the feeling of one's body being torn apart. . . . Every time the electricity was switched off, they would taunt me to admit that I had given help to Swaps guerrillas, which I continued to deny."

The wires were then attached to the "inside of my leg, next to my genitalia," and afterwards "under my armpits on either side of my chest." Afterwards, a member of Shigwedha's tribe retracted the allegation he had

made about the man, saying that the police had "beaten and shocked him at the moment that he was forced to say anything and that he had retracted the story in order to get himself out of trouble."

It was common knowledge in his village that the man was mentally retarded. Shigwedha said. A policeman then lashed Shigwedha a piece of wood, telling him to beat his false accuser. Though extremely sorry at the man "I had no strength left in my arm to wield the piece of wood in any effect and I was merely able to give him a few light blows." Shigwedha and two other tribal elders were released, but the police took the mentally retarded tribesman into custody. The affidavit of Rinda Shinkoh, aged 25, a nurse at the Catholic hospital in Windhoek.

She was arrested for being "a friend of the terrorists" and taken by road to the Okahavji military camp several hundred miles to the north. In the "dark room" at Okahavji she was hung up by her wrists and given electric shocks. She answered all questions which were put to her in the affirmative as I did not wish to be subjected to further treatment of this nature, even though my answers were untrue." Run her interrogators, still not satisfied, gave further shocks through her armpits, until she lost her consciousness.

The next day, "barracking severely," she was taken to "a white prison in military uniform who said he was a doctor." He told her, after an examination, that she had an infection. When she told the "doctor" that she had missed her periods for three months, and had a pain in her head, he prescribed aspirin and herbin, an antibiotic.

Three weeks later, weak from bleeding and an apparent miscarriage, Shinkoh was deposited on the main road nearby Okahavji. A local white police man suggested she ask Sam Nujoma (exiled leader of Swaps) to get her back to Windhoek.

A FURTHER three affidavits were sworn by students expelled last October from a college at Ongwediva, and later detained at the Okahavji military camp. Reinhold Ipanga says he was blindfolded by a white soldier

called Nortje and taken to a police station. Here, even before being questioned, he was given electric shock. On other occasions the shocks were in the region of the penis and at the back of the neck.

On being released without charge, the student was excused by Dr Johannes Winkler, who diagnosed third-degree burn injuries "probably caused by a burn of an electrical nature."

Johannes Kaunzinger, another witness, was arrested by the army in December 1976 and taken to Ovambo camps, where soldiers burnt him with electricity during interrogation. When handed over to the security police, wires were connected into his mouth and anus and into his penis before the current was switched on. Kaunzinger was held for another seven months before being released without charge.

The only one of the 19 witnesses to be charged after electric torture was a "tribesman pastor, Ntshali Shigwa, now serving five years for allegedly assisting terrorists. It is not known, however, whether the statement he made was used against him at his trial.

Despite the torture evidence, the Windhoek judges refused to make an order to behalf of the Swaps detainees in the hands of the security police.

Last November, Mr Justice Mathiassen Steyn, administrator general appointed by John Vorster, the South African prime minister, to oversee the independence negotiations in South Africa, denied that "swaps camps and the torture of detainees have become institutionalised in this territory and condoned even by the courts of law."

The latest court evidence comes at a time when five western governments, including Britain, are trying to pressure the South African government to end the apartheid system in South Africa and Swaps. It is hoped that the South African foreign minister P. W. Botha will agree to meet Swaps representatives in New York this month. Vorster is expected to go ahead with elections in March or April. Swaps fears that free elections are impossible while South African troops, working in close liaison with the security police, will surround Ovamboland, where nearly half the voters of Namibia live.

other application has had to be withdrawn after doctors testified to the 'good health' of the youth, and police denied assaulting detainees. 'The full story is not before the court,' said counsel for the boy's parents, who had found three broken teeth in the pocket of their son's trousers when they collected his laundry from Caledon Square where he is being held.

WIP IS INTENDED TO STIMULATE DISCUSSION AND PROVOKE CRITICISM AND DEBATE, THEREFORE THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS EDITION DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THE VIEWS OF THE EDITOR OR OF ANY SPECIFIC CONTRIBUTOR

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Correspondence:

RESPONSE TO "POVERTY OF AFRICANISM"

The last issue of WIP has an article in sharp contrast to the general high standard of the publication. Piece in mind is a destructive, facetious, unperceptive and misdirected product entitled "The poverty of Africanism." Written from a competitive, letter-than-thou stance, the article draws a number of unsubstantiated parallels besides several untenable assertions. The overall impression is that the author is not familiar with the topic nor its background. An inapplicable critique is fitted to a twisted and superficial account of Africanisation.

Discussing the contents of the issue, WIP's editorial states: "it is also suggested that certain of the responses to the current conjuncture are totally inadequate(eg.) the ideology of Africanisation".

In order to defend the policy of Africanisation, I will do what WIP does not do :

- (a) Outline the specific conjuncture that Africanisation was a response to.
 - (b) Look at what Africanisation is in contrast to the version printed in WIP (2).
 - (c) Its effectiveness. The article suggests "the flimsy foundations and tottering edifice of Africanism cannot bode well for its future", and the author says it is for the reader to evaluate whether Africanisation "is working".
- (a) What was the conjuncture?
The WIP article says that Africanisation "is partially a somewhat belated response to (b) (c).... the white radical's answer to skin lightening lotion". (my emphasis) It does not say what Africanisation is primarily a response to, though surely this is crucial to evaluate it.

So what was the context which gave rise to Africanisation? The ideology was a response to the crises of the white student left over the past three years. Quite obviously, it is not the response of a party or a mass movement of the total conjuncture - but rather the conjuncture as manifested in student politics.

Weakened and hindered by rightist students, the left - as everyone knows - found itself in directionless disarray. The outbreak of mass struggles and the polarisation of political contradictions changed and limited options and roles for student involvement. With issues far more stark, the left, as well as potential recruits became either fascist, academic or apathetic. A survey showed 75% of English graduates planning to leave.

Everybody knows all this, yet WIP's commentator makes no mention of it. Apparently, the changed student situation passed him/her by. The fact that this is ignored, hints, perhaps, at the non-involvement of the author. In the light of the above, it can hardly be said that Africanisation is a response to (b) (c).

(b) What is Africanisation?

The article says Africanisation "posits an African ontology - in other words a way of undertaking existence in the world which is unique to Africa." The author then asks whether the reality of one's existence is defined by one's geographical location. From here s/he moves on to discuss under headings "African unity?" and "The myth of Africa", the many modes of existence and cultures in Africa as a whole. But this is a straw target. Only a superficial and facile interpretation of Africanisation can see it as the naive Africanism the author criticises. Africanisation is not a sentimental attachment to an area of land and glorification of an undifferentiated people.

It is false to imply that Africanisation holds that one's life experience is determined by geography. Besides recognising the specificity of each social formation, it also draws attention to class determination. For example, instead of the dominant parallel drawn between hegemonic European ideology and the South African white middle class, Africanisation points out the other side of the immediate story: exploitation in peripheral capitalist societies. *The use of the African continent is to make just this point.*

Geography is important in a sense. For example, the sense of those who leave behind formal racism for a less colour conscious system of exploitation.

Africanisation is a call to relevance at home, to the problems of South Africa's racial capitalism. Africanisation is also a pointer to the strength of liberal ideology in all its forms, and hence emphasizing the need for alternatives. It directs concerned students to see realities outside their vision; realities which force them to be partisan. Africanisation focuses priorities on the urgency of under-development and absolute poverty and as such is a summons to involvement. Finally, Africanisation defines a role for students here and now, and not in Hyde Park, nor Anglo-American.

The WIP author has not only missed the real conditions which produced Africanisation, but totally misunderstands the role of a mobilising ideology. Such an ideology does not begin nor end just when one wishes. It has a determinate historical existence and expresses certain political needs and strengths. A hardline scientific programme is often inapplicable in such a situation. If one takes Africanisation literally to mean we must get back to good old Africa, that gun-shaped homogenous continent, then of course one can criticise it as inadequate to the demands of the conjuncture. Yet the writer of the article does not even relate Africanisation to the tactical requirements of the conjuncture. For her/him, it is basically an academic critique: philosophical and historical alone.

The treatment of (b)(c) in the article must be singled out in relation to the function of a mobilising ideology. "When organisations such as Inkatha or the Council of Ten take up the cause of (b)(c), it is clear that its end is nigh," states our author. This will not do at all.

Why should this be so? On the contrary, certain aspects of (b)(c) are "alive and well" and either boosting Inkatha or being detained by state apparatus. "In any case," he continues, it is well known that civil organisations and groups formed at the crest of radical black consciousness, have been gradually purging themselves of elements of black consciousness." No examples are given for those of us ignorant of this phenomenon. "Some (groups) assert that the role of (b)(c) is exhausted, and that a class-based ideology is far more important in S.A. today." Isn't this possibly wishful idealism, on the part of our author? The remark is unsubstantiated.

(c) Effectiveness of Africanisation

The author says the reader should answer this question. Here is an answer. At last year's (1977) Nusas congress, the biggest ever, Africanisation with one year behind it, was held to be a viable direction with a lot of potential. The theme for 1978 has been narrowed to "Education for an African future". The notion of "African future" shows that Africanisation's response to the conjuncture is to draw attention to aspects of the conjuncture itself and in this it is an achievement. The notion of "African future" and what it involves opens the way to examining the new prospects and goals of the new situation. That is "gross idealism".



The response published above to 'The poverty of Africanism' (WIP 2) is in many ways a sophisticated and useful piece of writing. It certainly takes the debate on Africanism or Africanisation considerably further than the original article, which was in many ways simplistic and superficial. However, the first piece did seek to introduce an ongoing debate on a controversial programme/ideology, and in those terms was useful and necessary.

What I want to do in this brief article is to take up a number of issues contained in the response, without seeking to attack or justify either the original piece, or the response it provoked.

The first general remark relates to the function of WIP, as I understand it. That function is to stimulate, and provide a forum for the formulation of those ideas. By its nature, then, it is likely to publish pieces which many do not agree with and which some find misdirected and destructive. This has obviously been the case with 'The poverty of Africanism' which has provoked a number of aggressive responses, both written and verbal.

To associate the publication as such with the conflicting views contained in it, is therefore a mistake, and I find it unfortunate that the response seems somehow to criticise the editors for publishing the initial Africanisation article. The editorial to WIP 2 suggests that certain responses to the current conjuncture which South Africa is in are inadequate, and includes Africanisation as one of those responses. That is not the same as stating that every aspect of the Africanisation programme is seen as retrogressive, or that the short article contained is a definitive statement on the matter. It is rather seen as the beginning of a debate on the ideology itself. Readers and contributors could perhaps bear that in mind, realising that unpopular, and often conflicting views, will be published in WIP - without those views being seen as definitive (Work in PROGRESS) or reflecting the views of the people producing WIP.

Having said that, it is now as well to turn to the response printed. The article suggests that Africanisation must be seen as a response to the specific conjuncture (one of crisis) in white student politics. This may well be the case, but it is surely not a dominant factor to be taken into account. After all, Africanisation must be assessed/ explored in its relation to the totality which is South Africa, and while specific organisational dynamics may be of secondary interest in explaining the emergence of the phenomenon, this is of limited use in assessing the import of Africanisation to the trends and dynamics which make up society. In other words, from the perspective of agents outside of 'student politics', the specific conjuncture of NUSAS or the SBCs is of secondary importance. Certainly it can be accepted that the white student left 'found itself in directionless disarray'. But within the totality of South Africa, was the response of Africanisation the most progressive response?

The writer is quite correct to point out that aspects of Africanisation are more complex than those put forward in the WIP 2 article. He/she suggests that Africanisation orientates people towards an understanding of the class formation of social classes in peripheral capitalist social formations, and its logical corollary, exploitation

and the forms it takes in Africa.

But this is surely the area in which the ideology is weakest. For it would seem to posit a form of nationalism which blurs class distinctions, while at the same time suggesting that the position of a society in the imperialist chain (i.e. a social formation's degree of 'peripheralisation') takes dominance over internal class formation. It seems as if the writer is suggesting that exploitation is in fact a relationship between countries, rather than dominantly predicated on an antagonistic class relation. This class relation is present, in its varying and specific forms, within all capitalist social formations, including those of the capitalist periphery.

Despite what the writer says, the ideology of Africanisation does not seem to orient people towards the class dynamics and conflicts of South African society, but rather towards the imperial relationship. Its very name implies that the problem

is identified as European (or American) hegemony - be this hegemony ideological, political or economic. There are of course factors in the dynamics which shape South Africa - but surely one must accept that the determinant (and most important) factors are the forms in which internal class conflict takes place.

Historically, the term Africanisation has related to the replacement of European state functionaries by Africans in the territories undergoing "decolonisation", i.e. legal/formal independence in Africa. As the study of these societies has shown, the call for Africanisation (be it in the Kenyan civil service, or Zambian copper mines) has not radically altered the social relations in those societies - precisely because of the class basis and interests of those 'Africans' who took over functions related to the production and reproduction of material life in African formations.

Thus, one could suggest that Africanisation has a serious inadequacy as an ideology, in that it tends to blur or confuse the class content of the social formation.

This seems to be accepted by the writer, where he/she calls the demand for a class-based 'ideology' wishful idealism. The existence of classes, and class conflict in capitalist society has nothing to do with ideas or wishing. It is a structural existence, based (though not totally determined by) the very structure of production, which is antagonistic. Ideology or analysis can take account of this existence to a greater or lesser extent, but this does not affect the reality. After all, one does assert the primacy of material existence - over consciousness unless one is an idealist.

What of the effectiveness of Africanisation as a mobilising ideology? Certainly one accepts that different conditions demand different responses, and that the reality of South Africa is changing in a radical manner at present. But does an ideology which does not take account of the internal class structure in South Africa in the current conjuncture serve a progressive role? And, even more pertinent, given the class basis of white students, is Africanisation an adequate mobilising ideology? White students in South Africa are members of the petty-bourgeoisie; serious analysis shows that the petty-bourgeoisie, of all fractions, is the most unstable, able to align itself with differing interests in different conjunctures. The

structure of the current South African conjuncture details a position where the state is increasingly becoming an exceptional state, i.e. showing a greater degree of autonomy from the interests of capital as a class than is 'normal' in capitalist society. This means that, even within the capitalist class (to say nothing of the dominated classes), opposition to the state is increasing. One has only to look at the actions and statements of groups like the chambers of commerce and industry, to see that the state is not reflecting the interests of capital directly enough. The nature of this conjuncture means that capital attempts to mobilise as many forces as possible to achieve a more conventional capitalist state in the society.

What is likely to be the response of the petty bourgeoisie in this situation? As has been mentioned, the petty bourgeoisie, by nature of its unstable relationship to capitalist production and reproduction is the class fraction most able to align itself with either of the two great social classes of capital. In general, it tends to have its greatest presence, or effects, at the level of the ideological practice of society. There is accordingly an important task for those of the petty bourgeoisie who believe that posed by the dominant ideology - the exceptional state and all that implies, -or the more conventional, colour blind capitalist state. This is the attempt to influence the processes of ideological conflict. In other words the petty bourgeoisie are uniquely able to align themselves with dominant ideology, or attempt to alter the terms and parameters of ideological conflict (change the problematic). In this particular struggle, students are an important element. The nature of their internal debates, writings, seminars and campaigns have a certain effect on ideological struggle in society.

It would seem that Africanisation, as an ideology, is not well suited to the fulfillment of this role, in that its content does not relate itself to the varying options facing the different classes and class fractions in South Africa.

This is not to suggest that students and their ideologies (as embodied in student organisations) have any sort of primary role to play. But not only the processes of change, but the options perceived for the restructuring of society, are crucially linked to the forms of ideological conflict which form part of the total conflict of society.

With these few hasty remarks, I suggest that there is a more subtle and rigorous critique which can be levelled at the Africanisation ideology. This is not to deny the specific crises that the student left has faced, and will face in the future. Neither is it to deny that Africanisation is an honest and sincere attempt at responding to an increasingly difficult situation. However, discussion and analysis around that problem, and the willingness of organisations to subject their programmes/ideologies to an ongoing criticism in the light of an ever changing reality, are essential. Hopefully these schematic remarks will form some basis for a further encounter.

ANOTHER RESPONSE TO THE 'POVERTY OF AFRICANISM' ARTICLE IN WIP 2

Fundamentally the major flaw in the critique of Africanism published in WIP II is not its frivolity or ignorance, but its attempt to criticise a philosophy instead of a campaign. While it is important that people evaluate and criticise the strategies and thinking of groups like NUSAS (who specifically ran the campaign), such activity requires an analysis of the particular conjuncture within which such groups function, the interests they represent and how these groups are objectively situated vis a vis the state. Further, the understanding of the position, interests and inter-relationships of these groups must be located at the level on which these conflicts are acted out before any constructive discussion of a groups functioning becomes possible. Thus, NUSAS would do well not to be drawn into a debate until actually presented with a vigorous critique of its position and functioning.

As regards the sum total of confusions and comparisons which serve as the critique, some of the more glaring errors are obvious to anyone who has been exposed to NUSAS projects over the past year.

Firstly, Africanisation was a campaign and not a philosophy, and papers which were delivered in the course of the year, however pseudo-philosophical they may have been, can in no way be considered as an attempt at a coherent "Africanist" philosophy, in response to black consciousness or any other pressure. The bulk of the article's criticisms thus fell away and amounts to little more than academic slight-of-hand, and certainly does not deserve to be debated on its merits.

Contrary to the narrow and circular pseudo-philosophy attack in the article, Africanisation represented a strategy adopted by a student organisation because of the particular position in which it and its constituents found themselves. NUSAS in 1977 was recovering from a virtual collapse (the result of both internal and external factors) and required not only a strategy which would restore grassroots support but also have some appeal to students at probably their most serious juncture in S.A. history.

White students in 1977 felt both threatened and irrelevant in the face of the most serious confrontation between the state and blacks since Sharpeville. If any attempt was to be made to encourage white students to commit themselves to change and specifically to utilize the skills in a relevant manner, it had to begin at the basic level of severing links with the 1st World and impressing upon them their 3rd World position and the developmental issues that raised. So long as white students continued to see themselves and their futures in terms of western European and American standards (conceptions under-written by their educations and class position) they would remain irrelevant and bewildered and it was on this level that NUSAS had to launch its assault.

Africanisation then involved encouraging students to respond positively to their situation and commit themselves to S.A. as a member of the 3rd World and NUSAS projects revolved around contributing towards an understanding of that position, and based on that understanding committing the skills which students possess to some kind of relevant activity.

Briefings:

In response to the widespread interest in the liberation movements sweeping Africa, California Newsreel has established a Southern Africa Media Center. The idea behind the center is to bring together the most current audio-visual materials on Southern Africa so they can be easily available to church, labor and community activists, as well as educators. Newsreel has selected 7 16mm films including LAST GRAVE AT DIMBAZA, and one slide show, all of which highlight the important events in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola. A catalog is available without charge from California Newsreel, Southern Africa Media Center, 630 Natoma Street, San Francisco, CA 94103 (415) 621-6196.



GOVAN MBEKI (67) gaoled since 1964 on Robben Island, has been given an honorary doctorate in social sciences for a book written in gaol on sheets of toilet paper. One of the banned ANC leaders, he is serving a life sentence for sabotage. He is the author of another work: SA: The Peasant's Revolt, also written in prison and published in Britain.

The over-reporting of the views of dissidents and deviators and of the views of the non-White organisations and spokesmen has the further result that the cables to Reuters do not show that the White man is responsible for organising and maintaining an ordered society in South Africa and that he does this virtually alone, because no other race in South Africa is, at present, sufficiently advanced in civilisation to take equal responsibility with him. The reporting fails to portray the fact that the peace and order in South Africa is the White man's peace and the White man's order, providing security for all, and that, should the White man cease to maintain it, the non-White races would be at one another's throats and bloodshed and anarchy the order of the day.

From : Report of Commission of Enquiry into the Press, 1964.

Many of the young exiles had hopes of reaching America - finding a new life amid Black American culture - but instead have found that the United States is unsympathetic to their plight, and so for that matter is Western Europe....

The Soweto youths - usually clad in trendy if a little frayed and faded denim - can be seen any day in Gaborone lolling about the mall shopping area....The continual sight of the students is angering local Batswana who point out they have to work for a living, and are not given charity like the exiles....

What has really incensed the Botswana Government is the alleged 'arrogant and ungrateful' attitude of the students....

One reason why the students have turned down African offers of help is that, having already had a taste of Africa's instability, they look to Western countries for a secure future....

Don Knowler, Argus Africa News Service,
22/12/77

MATERIAL WITHDRAWN OWING TO THE BANNING OF
THE VOICE OF 7 JANUARY 1978

Booklet rejects Judge's probe

WINDHOUK - The Administrator-General, Mr Justice Steyn, has been drawn into an 11-year-old row over allegations of torture in South West Africa.

A claim by Justice Steyn that there was no "institutionalised torture" in the territory was rejected yesterday in a booklet published in Windhoek by a Catholic priest, Fr Helms Hunke, and Mr Justin Ellis, a worker at the Christian Centre and part-time correspondent for the BPC.

The 62-page booklet - titled *Torture - A Cancer in Our Society*, and

printed by Angrius - Printing at the Dohra Catholic Mission outside Windhoek - contains 13 sworn affidavits by people reported to have seen or suffered torture at the hands of the South African police.

There are also two sworn affidavits from medical practitioners who claim to have examined alleged victims of torture.

"If what is alleged in this paper is true, the present system of law and order which legitimises itself as Western, democratic and Christian, is just another form of concealed barbarism," the booklet states.

It claimed that institutionalised torture was proliferating in South West despite Judge Steyn's recent denial. The Administrator-General conceded, however, that there might be occasional assaults or acts of torture by individual policemen.

"Institutionalised torture means that this practice is not casual or occasional, but that it is a generalised practice," the booklet contends. "This is the case in this country for people arrested under the security laws, particularly the Terrorism Act."

Judge Steyn informed Fr Hunke, who had appealed to him recently to take action against torture, that his allegations had been extensively investigated and that there was no substance to his claims.

In his publication, however, Fr Hunke said: "If Judge Steyn's investigations were as thorough as he claims, he must surely have become aware of the interest of the churches in the matter."

"The churches were not requested to present him with evidence or views. One might also have hoped that arrangements would be made for an open judicial investigation."

"It would seem to us to be folly to hope for a peaceful solution in this country's politics while such a fundamental issue remains unresolved."

Judge Steyn refused to comment on the booklet yesterday, but said he might do so later - DDC.

DAILY DISPATCH
12/1/78

Courts:

CAPE TOWN

One morning in early December 1976, 15 Black schoolchildren were taken from their Cape Town homes by police. When they were finally brought to trial in April 1977, they were charged with public violence.

Of the original fifteen, only four stood in the dock at the start of the trial. Charges against the others had been withdrawn, and some of them had been 'persuaded' to give evidence for the state. But the state was unable to convict the four accused of public violence and they were acquitted.

When the time came for the state witnesses to testify, they told the court they had been forced to sign statements under police assault. One by one they entered and left the witness box without incriminating their friends in the dock.

Under cross-examination by the prosecutor :

Pros.: 'What is a 'comrade'?'

Witness : 'A comrade is a friend'.

Pros.: 'Who are the 'comrades'?'

Witness : 'We are all comrades'. (All the schoolchildren in the townships.)

As they left the court they were immediately re-arrested and charged with perjury because their evidence under oath in court did not tally with the statements they alleged they had been forced to sign under duress.

In May and June of 1977, ignored by Cape Town's daily newspapers three of these five perjury trials ran their course. All were defended. There were two acquittals.

The final two cases were covered by the Argus : in one, a Langa High School pupil, 19-year-old Philemon Masiya, was found guilty and fined R50 (or 50 days). An 18-year-old, Zanda Norman Fatyela, was also found guilty and fined.

An account of the fifth trial follows : evidence in all five trials was very similar, involving allegations of assault by the same policemen.

All cases are on appeal.

June 24 1977

A Cape Town magistrate ruled today that police had assaulted a 17-year-old youth while he was in custody last December.

The magistrate, Mr M S Knox, was passing judgement in the trial of the youth whom he found guilty on a charge of perjury. The youth, who may not be named, pleaded not guilty to the charge. He was sentenced to a R20 fine (or 30 days in prison with three months suspended for three years). The case is on appeal.

Only the boy's parents and court officials were present in a court cleared of all spectators. A senior policeman also tried (unsuccessfully) to clear the press from the in camera hearing. The youth, who underwent an intense lengthy cross-examination by the state prosecutor, Mr A P Theron, told the court what happened after his arrest on December 2 last year in connection with a public violence charge.

He gave detailed descriptions of how he had been coerced into signing a statement he had not made. Three policemen had beaten him with an iron bar, a baton and a sjambok and had punched him while he was forced to hop around the room on his haunches like a frog. He was also threatened with the notorious 'aeroplane treatment' if he did not sign, he said.

He told how a 'thick-set' policeman, Constable D Sibeko, had punched him in the mouth and cut his lip. Sibeko had also given him 10 strokes on the buttocks and had beaten him with an iron bar, a baton and a sjambok on several occasions.

Constable Sibeko was not called as a witness. The youth further alleged that Sergeant A G Rodriguez, described in court as a 'respected sergeant of 25 years experience', had knocked him onto the ground by punching him in the stomach while he was being forced to 'hop' around the room.

Sergeant Rodriguez and Sergeant J F Snyman (who the youth said had also hit him) both denied the allegations. The court accepted their evidence.

The youth had been charged with perjury as he left a Regional court last April after giving evidence in a public violence trial. What he said under oath in court differed from a statement he alleged he had been forced to sign after being assaulted by police.

Advocate Rob McDougall, defending the youth, criticised Sergeant Rodriguez's evidence. When asked why the youth, initially reluctant to make a statement, suddenly decided to do so eight days later, Rodriguez had said that that was 'in the nature of the Bantu'.

Mr McDougall, calling for an acquittal, said expert medical evidence backed up the youth's description of injuries received at the hands of the police. He said if the forced statement was taken as true by the court, that would be giving the police a 'licence to assault suspects'.

The magistrate accepted the youth was assaulted by police, but 'not sufficiently to make him unwilling' to sign the statement. He found him guilty on the charge of perjury.

CONFESSIONS AS EVIDENCE

One major political trial has emerged in recent months in Cape Town's courts. In an out-of-the-way regional court (specially constituted under the AG's instructions) in Malmesbury, a small country town, the township community has followed with interest a lengthy 'terrorism' trial. The Daily Press covered much of the (very lengthy) proceedings.

In this trial much of the defence argument has centred around the admissibility of the evidence of the 16 state witnesses, most of whom appeared in court while still in detention.

Another case, which has been in the courts on and off for over a year has also revolved around the admissibility of 'confessions' as evidence.

Under the new Criminal Procedure Act (see article in WIP 2), confessions made to a magistrate are presumed to have been freely made, unless otherwise shown. This is the reverse of what obtained before the act came into operation. Then, confessions had to be shown by the State to have been freely and voluntarily made - that there was no duress involved.

Here in the second case where four young Cape Town men were found guilty of arson, all alleged under oath that they had been threatened and subjected to various assaults (all reported in the press as the trial progressed) : the most bizarre of which allegedly took place when a policeman poured petrol on their heads and threatened to set it alight if they did not make satisfactory statements. All had spent seven months in prison before being released on bail.

Yet despite these allegations, the magistrate ruled that their confessions be admitted as evidence. He saw no reason to not accept police denials in the case. The four men, Charles Honigwachs (23), Noel Such (24), Eric Jacobs (23), and Joseph Julie (20) were found guilty of setting fire to a furniture factory and a timber yard, during last year's uprising. Jacobs was in addition found guilty of burning the house of a local resident.

In the build-up to sentence, the court was filled with relatives and friends of the men, and amid emotional scenes the magistrate delivered sentence : a total of 14 years, 5 of which would run concurrently. In fact, each man will serve 2 - 2½ years. All four are now out on bail, pending appeal.

It is interesting to note that the magistrate took care to commend particularly the policeman (Vermeulen), for his exemplary role in the case. 'He worked under stress during the trial' and emerged as a 'favourable' witness. His memory for detail so long after the event was also noted by the magistrate as a point in his favour.

This was the policeman who, in earlier evidence by the accused, had allegedly beaten, kicked and threatened each of them during their detention. On one occasion, Vermeulen allegedly had to be pulled off by another policeman when he went berserk attacking Such.



MALMESBURY

From January to November 1977, no less than 144 people were found guilty in political trials. A total of 898 years of imprisonment was meted out. Over 400 people faced charges in 95 security trials; out of these 198 were acquitted or had charges withdrawn and cases against 57 are proceeding (at time of writing). For the most part the trials involve alleged members of the banned ANC.

However, it is difficult to develop any kind of coherent analysis for one thing the background information in the trials is rarely easily accessible and for another, with 57 people awaiting judgment much of the comment one is tempted to make is sub judice.

It is also important to briefly mention the previous Malmesbury trial involving Christmas Tinto, to provide a glimpse to the patterns of political trials in the Cape.

Tinto was charged under the Internal Security Act and sentenced to seven years imprisonment. The State alleged that he planned to blow up both SANLAM and the Trust Bank. Calling for the maximum sentence of ten years, the State argued that 'the cancer of terrorism is well known to us and there is an outcry against it in the Western civilised world. It can ruin the economy. This speaks for itself.'

Elijah Loza, who died in detention in August last year, was repeatedly mentioned in the evidence.

At the moment the new Criminal Procedure Act is being implemented in the Malmesbury Regional Court in the trial of Mountain Qumbella (47) and Lunko Huma (26), both of Guguletu, who are said to have 'incited, instigated, commanded, aided, advised, encouraged or procured' others to train in South Africa or outside in such a way as to 'endanger law and order law and order in South Africa' (Terrorism Act) or which would somehow further the aims of any unlawful organisation in terms of the Unlawful Organisations Act of 1960 (Internal Security Act).

Malmesbury is about an hour's drive from Cape Town. This probably prohibits the majority of people who would like to attend the trial from coming.

Ben Kies, defending the men, stated the charges had been vague and that his requests for more details had been refused.

When the witnesses were due to appear, Vermaak (the prosecutor) made an appeal for the court to be cleared. The new Act states a court can be cleared if 'in the interests of the State' and it was on these grounds that the application was granted, although Vermaak's argument for clearing the court was that the witnesses 'may be killed' or assaulted when it was learnt they were giving state evidence.

Despite this order, a small group of people, consisting of family, a few clergymen and students returned every day, and were sent away from the courtyard to avoid their peering through the court windows. Then suddenly the court doors were opened to the public without explanation, and remained that way. Still, people were thrown out for coughing and, at one stage, laughing.

Almost all the witnesses had been detained in June under section 6 and treated to the usual section 6 solitary confinement. They were mainly young people, many of them students, who had allegedly been talked into fighting for their freedom by Huma and Qumbella in a series of meetings with them, together or separately, either at Qumbella's home or in the 'podok' of one of the students.

They had allegedly left for Mozambique in small groups, going via Transkei and Lesotho, where some collected false Lesotho passports. One group was found to be completely ignorant of Sotho by a border official, even though they were travelling on Lesotho passports. One said he had been persuaded to join the fighters after Huma told him the students were wasting their time 'fighting the whites with stones'.

One witness, Vumanekile Gqiba, 26, a computer programmer at the RAAB offices in Paarl had at first refused to make a statement. Later, he told the court, he was compelled to. Whilst in detention he had asked to see a doctor in Bellville, who thumped him on the chest a couple of times, swore at him and called him a 'skollie' and told him that he was shamming. Mr Kies asked Mr Gqiba why he had a 'permanently laconic' smile on his face. He replied that he was a changed person and that since his detention his memory had become severely affected. He did not know who the accused were in the trial before he came to court, nor did he know what the charges were.

Only one witness gave a clear account of being assaulted or tortured by the police: he said he had been subjected to a form of torture called 'flying', and demonstrated the outstretched position against the wall he had been made to stand in while repeatedly receiving electric shocks: the account created great impact in the courtroom, especially as it had apparently happened at Sanlam Centre, Port Elizabeth, the place in which Steve Biko had been held.

Among other witnesses for the State were parents from Langa and Guguletu who testified that their sons had 'disappeared' and had not been heard of since they were presumed to be in detention.

Qumbella, when he was finally called to give evidence, brought the point of forced statements into focus, saying he was told and not asked what had happened and had been promised his freedom if he gave the police's version of what happened in a written statement. Kies argued, after closing his case, that the State could not blindly accept section 6 detainees' accounts

as they had evidently been 'trying to satisfy someone outside court to regain their freedom, altogether a different proposition.'

But he did not have many contradictions in the state evidence to go on; and as Vermaak pointed out, the defence would have to dig up some solid reasons to prove the whole thing a conspiratorial fantasy. Much has been made by the State about publications allegedly given to the pupils by Huna and Qabella; these included Inkululeko (which, he said, was a Communist Party publication and hence irrelevant to the case), Sechaba (also irrelevant, being an overseas publication) and Umkhonto we Sizwe, which still had not been shown to the court.

Kies questioned the vital issue: what constitutes evidence in South African courts of law? Is it a senior policeman (as in this case), calling himself a literature expert and ploughing through editions of Sechaba to expose ANC policies? Is it uncorroborated accounts of death threats to one of the pupils if he did not go for training?

Judgment has been postponed to December 31.



The processes and trends at work in South African society are well illustrated in a brief and synoptic overview of the way the courts are responding to the massive (and ever increasing) 'Security' trials coming before them. According to figures released by the South African Institute of Race Relations, 144 people were convicted under security laws in the first eleven months of 1977. Sentences handed down amounted to a total of 898 years. Altogether, over 400 people faced charges in 95 security trials between January and November of this year.

Where accused were charged with furthering the aims of a banned organisation, the organisation most often referred to was the A.N.C. However, these figures do not include the current P.A.C. trial in Maritzburg, or the trial of the P.A.C. 18, set down for Bethal next year.

Clearly, the vast majority of these trials receive very little coverage from the Press, which seems to have deliberately overlooked certain trials, and given others such limited coverage as to render the court proceedings unintelligible. Below, we detail a few of the trials which have come to the attention of readers of WIP, and would appreciate further information on both these, and other trials. A few matters which do not directly relate to security charges are also mentioned for interest.

Readers of WIP 2 will recall the details given of the Maritzburg Terrorism Trial, where four accused initially pleaded guilty to charges in terms of the new Criminal Procedure Act, and subsequently, under the defence of new council, applied to change those pleas to not guilty. This case has been put forward as an interesting test of how the Criminal Procedure Act will be implemented in Security Trials.

The accused were Isaac Zimu, Veli Mthembu, Thembu Khumalo and Walter Mtshali, and their charges related to either taking steps to undergo military training, or inciting others to do so.

After significant and interesting proceedings (see WIP 2), Justice Kriek refused the application of three of the accused to change their pleas to not guilty, and sentenced them to 16 years each. Leave to appeal against sentence and conviction was refused by the Judge.

The fourth accused, Walter Mtshali, who had previously been granted a separation of trials, was found by Justice Kriek to be mentally unfit to stand trial, and ordered to be held in prison pending certification by the State President. Mtshali had been held in solitary confinement in the hands of the security police for a lengthy period prior to his court appearance.

12 The other trial mentioned in WIP 2 which related to the new criminal procedure act was related to the Goch Street shootings of June 1977. In that trial Mondy Johannes Motloung and Solomon Mahlangu are charged under the Terrorism Act. Motloung has been sent for psychiatric observation. According to evidence placed before the Judge, Justice Theron Motloung has defective intellectual functioning and memory, which seem to be the result of a brain injury.

Both accused were kept under section 6 of the Terrorism Act from their time of arrest on June 12 until their first court appearance on August 24. The trial has now been postponed until February 13, 1978.

Other Trials :

Accused - Albert Skele
Found guilty in the Johannesburg Regional Court of photocopying Nelson Mandela's book 'No Easy Walk to Freedom'.
Sentence - R150 or 100 days.

Accused - Benjamin Phatolo, Mashikane Montyane, Kema Mabusela, Mashai Tema, found guilty in the Johannesburg Regional Court of holding an illegal march on October 26.
Sentence - R100 or 100 days, R40 or 40 days suspended.
Subsequently, Montyane was detained by the security police.

Accused - Samuel Malepane and John Moethudi
Charged under the Terrorism Act.
Both aged 21, and from Soweto. Claimed that the accused founded the South African Freedom Organisation (SAFO) which aimed to overthrow the government by violence and revolution. They are appearing before Justice le Roux in the Krugersdorp circuit court. Detainees brought as state witnesses have alleged torture and assaults by the security police. On 30 November, the Johannesburg press stopped reporting this trial. It is presumed that it will continue in the new year. Evidence has been led on the SSRC, and names of ex SSRC leaders have been mentioned on a few occasions.

Accused - Mosima Sexwale and 11 others.
This is possibly the most important trial going on in South Africa at present. The A.N.C. 12 are charged with furthering the aims of the A.N.C., and amongst the accused are both people alleged to be guerillas, and people alleged to be internal leaders of the A.N.C. within South Africa. The state had already closed its case when the presiding Judge, Justice Davidson, died. The state has decided to hold a fresh trial, and this begins in Pretoria on January 16, 1978.

Accused - Elliot Garsa (31).
Found guilty for possessing an extract from the African Communist
Sentence - 1 year. An appeal against sentence has been lodged.

Accused - Mountain Qumbella and Matthews Huna.
Charged in Malmesbury under the Terrorism Act with inciting others to undergo military training. One detainee brought as state witness has alleged torture. On 13/12, in the middle of Qumbella's defence evidence, the Johannesburg press stopped reporting the trial.

Accused - Winnie Mandela.
Yet again the state has brought Mrs Mandela to court, this time accused with breaking her banning order. The case continues in the Bloemfontein Regional Court on January 17 1978.

Accused - John Phala, John Thabo, Poen Mashinini, Bafana Nkosi, Philip Kosa.
After a lengthy trial in the Springs Circuit Court, before Justice de Villiers, all 5 accused were found guilty of Terrorism. The men were alleged to have operated bomb training schools in Soweto.
Sentences - Phala : 30 years
Thabo : 20 years
Musi : 5 years
Khoza : 15 years

Mashinini and Nkosi : 12 years each.
These extremely long and severe sentences were paid scant attention to by the Press. In fact, according to some records (not necessarily totally complete), only POST reported the sentences on November 30, 1977.

Accused - Thomas Masuku, Temba Nkosi, Richard Chauke. In another barely reported trial, these three men were found guilty under the Terrorism Act by Justice Theron, and sentenced to a total of 58 years jail. On 18/11, the Rand Daily Mail carried a story on the trial, and on 23/11, POST reported the sentences. Other than that, I have been unable to find any press details on this trial.

Accused - Victor Nkandi
Charged in Namibia with the murder of Elifas, sometime Chief Minister of Ovambo. Allegations of assault and torture have been made against the Security Policy by detainees and the accused.

Accused - Moses Jabu Milwazi (Mkwanzazi)?
Charged with recruiting people for military training. Trial begins in Rand Supreme Court on February 6, 1978.

Accused - Mdub e Mdingi
Found guilty in the Rand Supreme Court for Terrorism. Justice Coetzee sentenced him to 5 years. Charged with transporting people to the border for military training.

APPLICATION by Nduli and Ndhlovu
Both applicants were found guilty in Maritzburg under the Terrorism Act, and sentenced to 25 and 20 years respectively (State vs. Gwala and others). Both men alleged that they had been kidnapped from Swaziland by the Security Police, and denied the right of the court to try them.

The Appeal Court found that even if they had been kidnapped the Natal Supreme Court had the jurisdiction to try them. Justice Rumpff, Chief Justice of S.A., found that the application to be returned to Swaziland, and the denial of the jurisdiction of the court, would only have had merit if it was shown that the South African State had authorised the kidnappings.

Accused - Abdul Sayed

Charged under Terrorism Act in the Bloemfontein Regional Court. After two state witnesses refused to give evidence, the prosecutor 'ceased prosecution' and the accused was acquitted.

The two state witnesses are now being charged in the Bethal P.A.C. trial.

Accused - Bongani Ntsele and Themba Xulu

Charged in the Durban Regional Court under Terrorism Act.

Allegedly incited youths to undergo military training.

Found guilty and sentenced to 5 years each.

Accused - 29 journalists (28 black, one white) charged with holding a protest march in Johannesburg over the banning of the Union of Black Journalists, and the detention of journalists.

The case continues on February 22 next year.

Accused - Strike Dikgole, Robert Diphoko, Johannes Malotle,

Jacob Jonas, William Shuping, Stephen Letsie, Sunday Moreeng.

Standard 8, Free State pupils charged with Sabotage in Bloemfontein Regional Court.

The case is due to continue on December 7, but no Johannesburg newspaper has covered the proceedings.

Accused - Stanley Pule, Isaac Mhlekwa, Nogaga Gxekwa.

Charged under the Terrorism Act in the Maritzburg Supreme Court before Justice Hroexter.

Allegedly members of the P.A.C.

Hearing proceeds on January 16, 1978.

Accused - Zeph Mothopeng and 17 others.

Charged under Terrorism and furthering the aims of the P.A.C.

Includes a number of ex-Robben Island prisoners sentenced for P.A.C. activities. 86 co-conspirators, including Robert Sobukwe.

Some of the accused were in detention for over a year.

4 co-conspirators who were held by the Security Police died while in detention.

The accused are due to appear in court again in Bethal on January 9, when a trial date will be set.

Accused - Jarius Kgokeng

A section 10 detainee held at Modder Bee was called as a state witness in a Terrorism Trial, but gave evidence conflicting with the statement made as a section six detainee.

Sentenced in Pretoria to two years. There are, of course, numerous other trials which have taken place and are taking place.

The intensification of conflict in South Africa will increase.

There will be more trials, and heavier sentences.

Unfortunately, concerned white South Africans who wish to know what is happening in these trials - as it is one of the few mechanisms available to know what young and old blacks are thinking, and to have an insight into the support organisations do or do not enjoy in South Africa - are frustrated. The Press appears to give scant and inadequate coverage to the succession of trials and detentions.

WIP readers are requested to continually point out this deliberate suppression of news to editors (who are responsible) and to journalists (who are generally not).

WIP is also keen to provide in depth coverage of trials, and we ask readers to take the initiative in this regard, and become contributors. Trials can be followed up by talking to defence lawyers, maintaining contact with reporters, attending court, etc.

We should attempt to force some newspapers into covering what is happening in South Africa, even when liberal editors do not like admitting those occurrences and trends. We must point out that, in the final analysis, those editors and their papers will be judged for withholding important information from the people of South Africa. Coverage of the occasional sensational trial or inquest is not sufficient. If the press will not fulfil this function, then we must attempt to do it ourselves, through as many different avenues as possible.

MATERIAL WITHDRAWN OWING TO THE BANNING OF
THE VOICE OF 7 JANUARY 1978

Articles:

The death of Rick Turner in Durban last month is indubitably an immense loss to South Africa. But it is a political event which has again been misunderstood and misinterpreted by both the media and a number of 'liberal' organisations.

There are several important points which need to be raised and a number of lessons which can be drawn from his death.

It seems clear that the assassination was a political one. Well-organised and precise, it carries echoes of Argentinian and Chilean 'death squads'. And indeed, many have already mentioned the similarities.

What is a little surprising, though, is the fact that a number of 'liberal' organisations have made demands and comments which are both inadequate and anachronistic in the present political and social climate in South Africa.

Calls for police protection and the 'unbanning' of restricted people are slightly naive in the light of recent developments in the country. October 19 should have dispelled any liberal doubts about the 'humanitarian' and 'moderate' propensities of the SA government. Biko's death should have exploded the myth of SA's concern about its 'overseas image'.

It is not only in the context of what must be presumed to be a recent spate of right-wing terrorism that Turner's assassination should be seen, but in the wider context of developments in SA as a whole. There has been a remarkable increase in the number of political trials; violence against schoolchildren in the PE townships has certainly not waned; mass evictions of communities continue; hundreds of people have been detained and some have died in solitary confinement, in the last few months.

Basically, a 'civil rights' approach to Turner's death does not offer much in the way of direction.

It seems apparent that at this stage in our country's history, the government is certainly not on the verge of becoming more 'liberal'. The extent of popular resistance is reflected not only in the numerous political trials, but also in the marked increase in security legislation. We are sure that this session of Parliament will not prove our judgement erroneous.

The 'civil rights' group would do well to see the assassination of Turner in a wider context - pass laws, squatter evictions, forced labour, resistance and counter-resistance.

The same point was made after Biko's death. Liberal cries for a judicial inquiry were vociferous and frequent. The result was an inquest. *And now what? And where?*

The only way in which we can be truly progressive is to first understand the depth and nature of the struggle in SA. The historical realities are often overlooked.

Turner's death will not be the only one of its kind. If it is necessary for the ruling class, 'death squads' will become nearly as familiar as the 'pick-up' van.

We might not have reached that stage yet, but we must realise now that there are many who will make sacrifices in the struggle for justice in SA. There are many who already have.

Turner's death should have taught us this.

THE "SQUATTER PROBLEM"

The "squatter problem" is
 a housing problem, resulting from
 a population growth problem
 a rural-urban migration problem
 a poverty problem
 an artificial land-scarcity problem
 arising from
 a problem of uneven and contradictory development
 a mode of production which generated such contradictions
 and an economic crisis which intensifies them.....

Response to the "squatter problem" takes the form of
 liberal horror: "why can't they leave them alone?"
 Nationalist horror: "how did they get there at all?"
 and "why do they have to be moved in the middle of winter?"
 university delight: "lets write an article"
 "lets design a squatter camp"
 "lets teach them to knit"
 "lets give them some plastic"
 "lets take them some coffee"
 "lets take some photographs"
 and, possibly more cynically:
 "lets get R40 000 from the Urban
 Foundation and do some research....."

Notes on the "Squatter Problem"

My intention in writing this paper is to outline an alternative approach to the way in which the so-called squatter problem is at present conceived in certain circles. This is partially in response to the article on Environmental Planning and Social Control in WIP I, where an initial attempt was made to do this. What follows is an initial exploration of the problem, and I would welcome a response.

The 'squatter problem' as it is understood in South African liberal thinking is a problem of population growth rates, of urbanisation rates, or apartheid legislation, or of insufficient council housing. Solutions to the problem are conceived of in terms of the alleviation of these factors, through means which are suggested by the understanding of the problem. Family planning will curb population growth, influx control will reduce rural-urban migration, agricultural development will reduce rural impoverishment, removal of 'petty apartheid' will enable blacks to buy houses, removal of restrictions on Africans in the Western Cape will enable more houses to be built for black people, allocation of more funds for housing will increase the housing stock, research will develop more sophisticated 'solutions' to the problem.

The understanding of the problem and the solutions will arise from this understanding take place within a wholly bourgeois approach to the understanding of a social system - an approach which not only does not challenge the basic structure of that system, but which also seeks to ensure its continued existence by masking the real causes underlying these problems. If the causes can be obscured, the solutions which are adopted will be essentially palliative, and will in no way resolve the basic contradictions at the root of the 'problem'.

In attempting to understand the real nature of the squatter problem it is necessary for us to consider the contradictory nature of capitalism, and in particular, the contradictions between town and country, labour and capital, tenant and landlord, Constantia and Crossroads.

The contradiction between town and country arises at the most simple level from the fact that towns have historically been founded on the extraction and concentration of a social surplus product from the countryside. Some of this surplus may be reinvested in the countryside, but the need to accomplish primitive accumulation militates against the process being naturally and reciprocally beneficial. (In South Africa, this contradiction takes the form principally of contradiction between white metropolitan areas and black 'homelands').

The city can be seen to be the locus of the geographical concentration and circulation of this surplus, and develops, in industrial and capitalist societies, "according to the requirements of the circulation of capital and commodities, and according to the subordination of labour to capital." (Lamarche, 1976:85) The highly contradictory and uneven rate of development within the city relates to the contradiction between town and country, since what is at the root of both is the process of social appropriation of the product of labour. The spatial manifestation of this contradiction is mediated in the city by urban ground rent and property capital. Urban ground rent is characterised by "three dominant tendencies :

1. An opposition between the centre, where land prices are highest, and the periphery;
2. A growing separation between areas and housing reserved for the most affluent social strata and working-class housing areas;
3. A generalised dispersal of 'urban functions', scattered into areas which are geographically separate and increasingly specialised in function....." (Lojkin, 1976:138)

Not only are working-class and affluent residential areas segregated, there is a clear pattern of residential location for these groups, which reflects their access to resources. The rich groups have a wider choice in the location of residential activity because they can afford both higher land prices and higher transport costs, while the bid rent curve of the poor is characteristically steep. (Harvey, 1973) This means that the rich can always enforce their preferences over the poor, and are thus able to occupy areas which are "in free, wholesome country air" (Engels, 1967), or otherwise to their tastes. The poor are forced to live either close to the city centre, where rents are high but transport costs are low, or in far-flung 'dormitory suburbs', which surround industrial zones.

According to Lojkin, what characterises the capitalist city is "on the one hand the growing concentration of 'collective means of consumption' ... and on the other hand a particular mode of concentration of the totality of means of reproduction (of capital and labour power)." The system of anarchic free enterprise cannot of itself finance the provision of the collective means of consumption, which are not profitable. State intervention is necessary here, since such provision is essential to the reproduction of labour power.

Urban growth, resulting from the process of industrialisation, occurs at a faster rate than that of the provision of housing, which is critical for the reproduction of labour power⁺

The housing market recognises solvent demand as the only effective demand, in the absence of state intervention. An artificial urban land scarcity and a working-class housing crisis is created by the speculative activity of property capital but the principal reason for the lag in housing production is the low level of productivity of the process of housing production; this tends to perpetuate the shortage, postpones any solution and at the same time requires a high immediate profit on each operation.

State intervention becomes necessary to regulate the activities of property capital and of the building industry, because the necessary reproduction of labour power is hindered by the housing crisis. Council housing is one result of such intervention. The effect of this intervention is to resolve an immediate contradiction which cannot be resolved by the system of anarchic competition. This resolution is, however, no solution, since it does not resolve the contradictions underlying the housing crisis, but merely smoothes them over, while at the same time carrying them to a still higher level.

If the state does not come to the aid of capital, or does so inadequately, the result is the 'illegal' occupation of vacant urban land by those groups who require shelter and who have no other way of getting it. Settlements which result from this process usually have an extremely inadequate level of provision of shelter, roads, sewerage, drainage, street lighting, water, electricity, and recreational and community facilities; they suffer attacks from police, landowners, and, in South Africa, from the state itself in its attempts to enforce policies such as that relating to migrant black labour in the Western Cape.

This is the context in terms of which the 'squatter problem' must be seen, if the solutions which are developed are to have any real meaning. From the above discussion, it can be seen that the liberal position is that of prompting the state to intervene on behalf of capital,^{**} in order to remedy the worst excesses of the process of anarchic competition, and to ensure the reproduction of labour power, which has been jeopardised. This 'solution' to the problem is, however, no solution at all, as has been discussed above. Even if the state were able to ensure adequate housing provision, (however unlikely) the contradiction of which this problem is a symptom cannot, by definition, be resolved by the bourgeois state, which functions both to maintain the cohesion of the social formation as a whole, and to enforce the domination of the bourgeoisie.

Amanda Younge

Note

+ This discussion of the housing market is based largely on the chapter "Elements of Urban Structure" in Castells, op.cit., especially pages 152-156.

* This is not to suggest a 'conspiracy' theory; nor is it to suggest that capital in South Africa is in any way homogenous.

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Donald Woods fled the country to Lesotho on New Year's Day, leaving behind his R35 000 a year job, swimming pool, golf clubs and piano. Entertained with his family by the British High Commissioners in both Maseru and Lusaka (his next stop), not to mention dining with Kenneth Kaunda, Woods became the first refugee to hold a Lesotho UN passport, within 24 hours at that. His wife became Lesotho UN passport holder no 2.

Also within 24 hours, Woods was granted asylum in Britain, was bombarded with requests for interviews from scores of Western newspaper and TV journalists and was assured top treatment once he reached his destination.

For Woods, the future seems solid: his biography of Steve Biko is sure to be a highly lucrative undertaking. At the time of WIP 3 going to press, Woods had banqueted at the Savoy Hotel, London, where a bevy of Fleet Streeters bestowed on him the Editor of the Year award, and had made his grand debut at the UN.

In all the dramatic over-reportage of Woods, what remains forgotten is that he is ultimately just one of the many who cross the border illegally into neighbouring countries in some way or another and is certainly not the first to have crossed the Tele River into Lesotho, despite the mud.

But the similarities end here. No country has yet made a policy decision to accept refugees fleeing from oppression and tyranny in this country. Most refugees - thousands - are living in other Southern African countries unable to work or study and receiving minimal allowances from various organisations, such as the Botswana Council of Churches, despite the large sums of money being allocated for refugees by the UN.

Debates concerning whether or not Woods should have fled the country (deserting the sinking ship...) and suspicion surrounding his 'freedom passage' have all served to detract

from the root of the issue: while refugees, particularly those who are not aligned to the ANC or PAC, remain unsure about their future, countries are vacillating on their refugee policy and using the refugees as political bargaining tools.

The London Observer coined Woods's escape in bold headlines; 'no easy walk to freedom'... an anti-communist following in Mandela's footsteps? This must surely be seen as merely part of the attempt to side-step the issue of these refugees who have not yet acquired celebrity status.



WOMEN AND THE 'FOOD CRISIS' OF THE 1940's

INTRODUCTION

This article forms part of a larger piece of work on the origins of the Federation of South African Women (FSAW). It deals - incompletely - with one aspect of this, the politicising effects on women of the steeply rising cost of living and unpredictable food supply situation that characterised the war years in South Africa.

The FSAW was formed in 1954, based on the women members of the various concerned bodies of the 'Congress Alliance': the ANC, Congress of Democrats, Indian Congress, Coloured People's Organisation/Congress and some of the trade unions that later affiliated to form SACTU. It had two major aims - one, to bring about "the emancipation of women from the special disabilities suffered by them under laws, customs and conventions" and two, (seen as more urgent) to "participate in the struggles of the working and oppressed peoples for the removal of class and race discrimination and for full and equal citizen rights".(1) It thus allied itself unequivocally with the political struggle being waged by the Congress Alliance.

Its origins can be traced back at least as far as the establishment of the first Bantu Women's League, following a largely successful anti-pass campaign by black women in the O.F.S. in 1913/14. However, it was only during and after the 2nd World War that the move to establish a non-racial women's organisation gathered momentum. The Communist Party (CP) took the lead in encouraging this, though it was the revival of the ANC Women's League in 1943 that laid the basis for a potential mass membership organisation among women.

Women were partly being caught up in the general striving on the political front that the war had stimulated. In addition, long term developments in their position in society were beginning to manifest themselves. Changes in their economic position, the accelerating rate of urbanisation among African women in particular, the decay of the traditional African family structure, were some of the pressures pushing women into a more assertive political stance. The campaign against the rising cost of living during the 1940's was one of a number of political campaigns that drew women, but one with a very specific wide appeal for them. Since the majority of women were preoccupied with domestic responsibilities - in the 1951 census only 23,7% of all women, fifteen years and older were returned as "economically active" (compared to 91,9% of men) - the 'Food Crisis' was a vital and immediate issue for a very broad range of women. It penetrated the isolation that surrounds women as housewives and helped channel their domestic concerns into political forms.

THE 'FOOD CRISIS' OF THE 1940's

The war years did not only mark an increase in the participation of women in the established political organisations already described (ANC, CP, Indian Congress). A wider range of women than were involved in these bodies, especially black housewives, became involved in protests and demonstrations over the rising cost of living and unsatisfactory food supply situation that the war provoked, women who otherwise would probably not have been exposed to any form of political organisation. In response to the pressures of rising costs and uncertain supply, organisations emerged in Johannesburg: the People's Food Council, and Cape Town, the Women's Food Committee -

to fight for relief, while sporadic signs of activity, without, apparently, a single co-ordinating body, could be seen in Durban as well. Closely involved in these developments were the CP and the National Liberation League (ELL) of Cape Town (2) in contributing to the general climate that made the establishment of the FSAW possible the so-called 'food crisis' was of special importance. Through the above organisations many black women, isolated as housewives or unorganised and lowly-paid workers (for instance domestic workers) were brought into contact with the political network being established among women in the 'national liberation movement', then in the process of coalescing in the main urban centres. Several of these women later became active in the FSAW, and Congress Movement e.g. Katy White, a domestic worker living in the Harfield Road Station area in Cape Town. The demonstrations, and deputations organised round the food situation were politicising experiences for those women who participated in them. They also high-lighted for the national liberation movement the potential for political activism that existed among women on issues directly affecting them. In many ways the Food Committees formed a function similar to that of the trade unions for women in industrial occupations. Numerous different sources detail the inflationary effects of the war in South Africa. According to Walsh, the cost of staple foods rose by 91% between 1939 and 1944, outstripping both cost of living allowances and increases in basic wages. (3) The following index of retail prices on all items (including food, rent, transport, clothing etc.) between 1936 and 1948 shows that the major jump in prices occurred after 1940.

Fig. 1 INDEX OF RETAIL PRICES, AVERAGE FOR THE UNION

(1938 = 100)		(b)					
1936	1938	1940	1942	1944	1946	1948	
94,3	100	103,4	117,3	128,8	134,1	147,8	

The rise in prices becomes even more significant when one notes that in the 10 years between 1928 and 1938, retail prices as a whole had actually dropped (from 106,9 in 1928 to 100 in 1938). The rise in food prices during the war years was even higher than that of the average of all items of consumption, moving from a base of 100 in 1938 to 156,8 in 1948. Basic food stuffs that become more expensive (the figures are the averages for 1938 and 1947) included rice (from 2,7d to 7,9d per lb.), tea (25,7d to 50,7d per lb.), (8,2d to 11,5d per lb.), eggs (21,7d to 37d per lb) and jam (5,5d to 17,3d per lb) (5).

The situation was further aggravated by dislocations in the marketing and supply system leading to periodic shortages of basic foods in the shops. Black marketeering contributed to the problems by causing artificial shortages and pushing up prices of food still further. One of the major demands of the Food Committees was for the government to introduce a system of rationing of basic foods. This was not done but in response to public pressure the government appointed a 'Director of Food Supplies and Distribution' and a system of mobile food vans was introduced. These vans sold limited quantities of food and groceries which were in short supply, at regular places in the suburbs and townships. It was out of the queues of women that formed to wait for the vans that the Women's Food Committees in Cape Town grew.

How serious these price rises were for the average working class family in South Africa becomes clear when one considers the level of black wages at the time. As Walsh points out, these wages, grossly inadequate to start with, were not keeping up with the cost of living.

In 1951 a cost of living study sponsored by the Institute of Race Relations compared the average income of a black urban family of five with its "essential minimum expenditure" requirements, in both 1944 and 1951, in the Witwatersrand Pretoria area. It found that with the exception of Pretoria where the disparity between essential expenditure and actual income had remained roughly on a par, the minimum level of essential expenditure (greater than income to begin with) had increased more than average wages had. In 1944 the gap between the two was already as follows:

Fig. 2 AVERAGE AFRICAN FAMILY INCOME AND ESSENTIAL MINIMUM EXPENDITURE, MONTHLY, 1944. (6)

	Income	Expenditure
Johannesburg	£9.18.1	£12.18.6
Pretoria	£9.6.4	£12.19.4
Reef Towns	£9.7.9	£11.0.11

This stark evidence of the extreme poverty in which urban Africans were living was not confined to the Rand only. In 1942, the Smit Committee, appointed to investigate "the social, health and economic conditions of urban natives" produced a report which covered the whole country. The report began by saying that what had impressed the committee "above all" had been the poverty of the "native community". Concerning nutrition standards it referred to "an appalling amount of malnutrition amongst urban natives both young and old" and cited a survey of African school children in Durban which found that over 40% were suffering from "clinical stages" of malnutrition.

Nor was this extreme situation confined only to Africans, as shown by a government report in The Economic and Social conditions of the racial groups in South Africa, produced in 1948. This provided statistics for Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg on the percentage of the different race groups living below the Poverty Line (PDL), in each city an income level that barely covers the most basic items necessary for human existence. In Cape Town (the figure they give is for 1938/39), some 55% of 'Coloured' and 5% of white households were found to be earning below this line. In Durban the comparable figures in 1943/44 were 70.6% of Indians, 38.2% of Coloureds, 24.8% of Africans and 5.2% of white families. For Johannesburg the report quoted from the non-European Bus Services Commission of 1944 to show that in 1940, 86.8% of 'Non-Europeans' were earning below the PDL. (8)

With poverty as acute and widespread as this, any increase in food prices or dislocation of the market would threaten not just an abstract 'standard of living' but the very survival of a large percentage of black households particularly when one bears in mind that the largest slice of black wages went on food (87% of the wage on average in Johannesburg). Black women, as mothers and those responsible for the catering for their families, could hardly ignore this 'food crisis'; its effects were so insistent and immediate. Price rises and food shortages directly threatened the health and stability of their families and impinged on their daily lives in such a way as to force them to look outside the home to the wider political and economic context in which they were located. Political organisations that took up the food question had a large appeal - political involvement here was not in contradiction to women's domestic roles but rather sprang from their vital domestic concerns.

THE PEOPLE'S FOOD COUNCIL

Some signs of organisation round the question of rising food prices had been seen already before the war. In 1935 the newspaper - Umsheni, carried a single brief article on a committee established in Durban by "various women's organisations" and the 'League against Fascism and War' to encourage "all housewives" to boycott firms engaged in war-profitteering. (9) Four years later in Cape Town, the prosecution of a local baker for selling his bread below the official price had occasioned a deputation to the Cape Town Mayor in protest. This was organised by the Consumer's Vigilance Council, a body - connected to both the National Liberation League and the Communist Party in Cape Town. (10) Several members of the deputation were to be involved in the Women's Food Committee a few years later, notably John Marley and Cissie Gool of the NLL and Ray Alexander and Sam Kahn of the CP. Already then these two organisations were active in this sphere.

The first indications of organised activity around the food question during the war came from Johannesburg in 1943. In November of that year the Guardian (which gave considerable coverage to the rising cost of living and its effects on black living standards during the war) carried a report on a public conference that had been called by the 'People's Food Council' in conjunction with the National Council of Women (NCW). This seems the first reported activity of the food Council. At the conference the chaotic food supply situation and profiteering by retailers was strongly condemned. (11)

Information on the origins of the People's Food Council is difficult to uncover. What is worth noting is that a few months before this conference, in August, an increase in the bus fare between Alexandra Township and Johannesburg had led to a massive and ultimately successful bus boycott by the Alexandra inhabitants. This boycott received much publicity and it is possible that its success prompted the formation of the Food Council to deal with the problem of rising costs in this other area - though at this stage this remains speculative. As in Cape Town the CP was linked to the Council - 1944 Hilda Watts (Hilda Bernstein), the communist candidate in the Johannesburg municipal elections, was described as being a "prominent member" of it.

That the NCW should participate with an organisation with such radical sponsorship is interesting. In part this was a sign of the times - after 1941 the military contribution of the USSR and the CP's whole hearted support for the Allied war effort had made the Party less suspect for the white establishment. Yet this co-operation also sprang from the common interest that most South African women had, as wives and mothers, in finding a solution to the food crisis.

The immediate problem of rising prices could unite women across class and race barriers because it affected them in a common area, their domestic responsibilities - responsibilities that were sex-typed as 'women's work'. In 1946 Mrs A E McCallum, Chairperson of the Housewife's League, reflected this when she described as a "noticeable feature" of the previous year the "close co-operation" that had existed between women's organisations "on all vital questions women are prepared to put aside pettiness and jealousy in order to work for the common good of all". (13)

It was because such common areas existed that the idea of an organisation that would embrace all women within a single framework, could take root in South Africa. As the subsequent history of the FSAW showed, however, domestic issues were not a sufficient basis of unity for white and black women. Nor could these issues be isolated from more overtly political questions. The divisions of class were compounded and reinforced by those of race, and through this limited base of unity an alliance of all women was possible only on specific issues. Other issues that touched black women in the 1940's, issues which were fundamentally linked to the structure of the state - passes and unionisation of black workers - the NCW offered no support. Its commitment to a greater equality for women and an improvement in the living standards of all did not go beyond its basic allegiance to the institutions of white South Africa. When the Food Committee began to look at these institutions more critically, the NCW parted company with it.

While it seems that the People's Food Council continued to operate in the next few years, the vigour and scale of its operations are not known. In May 1947 the Guardian carried another small article that showed that agitation on the Rand about the food situation had not yet died. A deputation, chosen to represent the women of Kliptown near Johannesburg, had placed before the City Council a demand that rationing of food stuffs be introduced as well as complaints about the way the Food Vans were operating. The report did not refer explicitly to the People's Food Council although the presence of Josie Mpana in the deputation shows that the CP, if not the Food Council itself was represented in the protest. (14) Interestingly, this deputation came very soon after the Transvaal All Women's Union, in which Mpana was so prominent, had been formed. (15)

By the late 1940's the overlapping of organisations and their leadership was becoming increasingly marked among radical women's groups.

WOMEN'S FOOD COMMITTEE

When one comes to look at the Women's Food Committee in Cape Town the material is more substantial. This could mean that it was a more active body than the Johannesburg group, but it could also be a mere reflection of the fact that the Guardian, the major source of information, was based in Cape Town. By 1945/46, the Guardian was reporting numerous manifestations of discontent among Cape Town women about the food situation.

In September 1945 it carried a brief reference in the Women's Column to a new campaign that would be starting "soon" to fight against the rising cost of living, but did not elaborate upon this. (16) In mid-January 1946 the 'food crisis' was its main front page story. This story described the militant mood that was developing, with reports of angry women raiding abattoirs in search of meat. It is not, however, clear whether this was also organised by the Women's Food Committee or not. The first explicit reference to such a committee came a few months later. In April 1946 the Guardian carried an article describing the make-up and aims of the committee, as told by an anonymous woman member to John Marley (of the NLL).

"Recognising our troubles and facing up to them practically, we organised a Women's Food Committee. At first it was difficult due to the fact that most of us had so little experience of organisation other than running a house which in itself is excellent training ground". (19)

As she described it, the Committee had grown out of the food queues that formed at each mobile food van. Each queue elected a 'queue committee' to maintain order and ensure "fair deals" - any disorder it was felt could lead to the withdrawal of the vans - these committees in turn elected a representative to a General Committee which represented all the food queues. At that point 12 food queues were represented on the General Committee and a chairwoman and secretary had been chosen. In 1947 the chairwoman was a Mrs G Anthony and the secretary, Hetty McLeod. McLeod later married Reggie September who by 1956 was secretary of the South African Coloured People's Organisation (SACPO). She was herself a signatory to the letter of invitation to the FSAW's conference in 1934. Her role in the Food Committee would appear to have been more important than that of Anthony.

The Women's Food Committee was thus clearly a grassroots organisation. In 1947 the Guardian described it as "a working class organisation springing from the housewives who stood in the food queues". (20) However, although it certainly was the product of a widespread mood of dissatisfaction among black housewives and was thoroughly representative of them, it seems clear that there was both prompting and advice from existing political organisations. The two organisations most frequently mentioned in connection with it were the CP and NLL, two bodies whose membership and activities frequently overlapped in Cape Town. They provided speakers at many of the public meetings and spokesmen for the several deputations the Committee arranged to meet with various officials. The one person who seems to have been most closely involved in the Committee on a day and day level was John Marley of the NLL. According to Katy White, it was actually his idea to start it, in conjunction with Hetty McLeod.

The Women's Food Committee grew rapidly till by the end of 1947 it claimed to represent 59 queues scattered throughout the Cape Peninsula. (22) From all accounts it was a vigorous body. In early 1947 it organised a conference at which 200 delegates representing not only the food-queues but also trade unions, the CP and some churches, agreed to organise a demonstration on the 1st of May outside Parliament.

The immediate issue seems to have been a threat to withdraw the food vans. (23) This demonstration drew "thousands" of Cape Town housewives to a meeting on the Grand Parade carrying banners - "we fight for food" - they marched through the streets while a small deputation which included Sam Kahn and Joey Fourie of the CP, meet with the Minister of Finance, J Hofmeyr. (24) Hofmeyr agreed to meet a further deputation and the following week 12 women, representing the Food Committee plus the Durban Housewives League, the Food and Canning Workers' Union and the Sweet Workers Union met with him. At this meeting they handed over a petition signed by 7000 women in favour of keeping the food vans until an adequate system of rationing could be introduced. Rationing was dismissed as impracticable, but Hofmeyr promised that the food vans would continue to operate. (25)

Another area of activity for the Food Committee at this time was organising so-called 'food raids' against merchants suspected of hoarding food-stuffs. Large numbers of women with members of the Committee acting as "marshalls", would descend on these individual merchants and attempt to pressurise them into unlocking their store-rooms and selling their stock. The Guardian carried several reports on such raids which seem to have been generally effective.

By encouraging such organisation and demonstrations, the food crisis of the 1940's had a definite politicising effect on black women. Already in 1946 the Food Committee in Cape Town was showing signs of shifting its focus from the food situation to wider political issues. Quoted by the Guardian in June 1946 was :

"Today we fight for food, tomorrow for the vote and then for freedom for all". (27)

By 1948 the question of the vote had moved to the fore-front. Thus Mrs Anthony, chairwoman of the Committee in January 1948, said :

"The vote is a weapon we must have so that we can safeguard the future of our children We women have to deal with the everyday things of life. We have to worry about managing with our husband's pay envelope, about keeping the cost of living down, about getting enough bread for our children and seeing that they go to school. We want to put people in Parliament who understand our problems and will fight in our interests". (28)

The Committee had come to see its actual political powerlessness in its demands. At that point, before the Nationalists had come to power and when 'Coloured's' had not yet been disenfranchised in the Cape, the political future was still seen by these women in terms of sharing in the institutions of white supremacy - that these could be induced to broaden their base to include other race groups too.

In pursuit of these goals, a decision was made in July 1948 by the Food Committee to form a 'Non-European Women's League' to fight for the vote for all black women. The food issue and the franchise were described as inseparable - "whoever controlled the key of the food cupboard controlled the food" and the key was the vote. (29) Unfortunately no follow-up to this decision was reported. It would seem that this league went the way of those earlier unsuccessful attempts to establish a black women's suffrage league which had been sponsored by Cissie Gool and the ELL in the late 1930's. (30) (Whether Cissie Gool had any involvement in this late proposal would be interesting to know - the chances are high that she did). The enfranchisement of black women was not a political goal that could be achieved in isolation from the wider struggle for full political and social rights in South Africa, a struggle which by the end of the 1940's was becoming more clearly defined as irreconcilable with the institutions of white supremacy (such as Parliament). A Non-European Women's Suffrage league was too narrow a base on which to mobilise black women. The absorption of many of the leaders of this league and the Food Committee in general into the PSAW and Congress Movement in the early 1950's showed that this realisation was beginning to permeate the consciousness of politically active black women.

By the early 1950's the Women's Food Committee itself was more or less defunct. The last specific reference to it in the 'Guardian' comes in January 1950 when there was a small reference to it organising a demonstration against the "serious shortage of meat and rising cost of living." (31) By 1953 when the food crisis had eased off and the food supply situation was more stable, its functions had been transformed into a 'Christmas Club' - an organisation that offered differently priced Christmas food hampers at wholesale prices to members paying a weekly subscription throughout the year. (32) However, the issue of rising prices was still an important mobilising one for women. In August 1953 the threat of an increase in the price of bread reactivated the Food Committee network in Cape Town. With Ray Alexander playing a leading role, a delegation of women was organised to meet with the Minister of Finance, Havenga, to protest the price increase. At least three of the women, apart from Alexander, had been closely involved in the old Food Committee. (Gladys Smith, Katie White and Dora Tamana). (33) This protest Alexander herself has singled out as a very important one in promoting the idea of a national women's organisation (the PSAW) amongst Cape Town women, an idea which by that stage had already been raised in Port Elizabeth and was under discussion in the major urban centres. The bread issue, she says, was significant because it vitally affected women as mothers, and made the women's movement "imperative".

In the Women's Food Committee and People's Food Council the beginnings of the growth of political consciousness among politically isolated and inarticulate women can be seen. The starting point was an issue that directly affected them to which they could easily relate increased prices and shortages of basic foods. In organising to protest against this, they came up against their actual political importance in society and began to look more critically at the wider context in which both this and the food crisis itself were operating. One wants to know more about these incipient consumers' organisations, the nature of their membership, what links were being forged between African and 'Coloured' women within them, the relationship between leadership and general membership, how decisions were made and carried out.

It is a fascinating and revealing area of organisation by women that has much to tell us about their position in society and how they themselves viewed that. It is part of our forgotten and obscured past that needs to be rescued before it is too late.

NOTES

- 1 FSAW : Report of the first National Conference of Women, 1954.
- 2 The NLL had been founded in 1935 in Cape Town which, despite its title, remained the centre of its activity. T. Kins and C. Carter in their collection of documents, From Protest to Challenge, describe it as formed by "Coloured radicals who were not Marxists but who aspired to lead a national liberation movement of non whites". (vol. 2, p. 108) Cissy Gool was president, with other of her and her husband's family prominent.
- 3 P. Walshe : The Rise of African Nationalism, p. 302.
- 4 Union statistics for 50 years, H - 23.
- 5 Ibid, H - 22, H - 16, H - 17, H - 18.
- 6 E. Nix : The Cost of Living (SAIRR, 1951)
- 7 Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Social, Health and Economic conditions of Urban Natives (1942) p. 1 - 5.
- 8 Social and Economic Planning Council : The economic and social conditions of the racial groups in South Africa. (UG 53-45) The report explained the relatively low level of Durban Africans living below the PDL as a result of the exclusion of most African families from the Durban Metropolitan area proper. Most African workers were therefore classed as "single workers", disguising the dependence of families on their wages.
- 9 Umsebenzi, 21/9/35.
- 10 Guardian, 13/1/39
- 11 Ibid, 18/11/43
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid, 21/3/46
- 14 Josie Mpana, wife of Edwin Mofutsunyana of the CP, was one of the first black women to join the CP c. 1928. Her political career stretched over many years. Throughout she was a strong champion of women's emancipation, helping to found both the Transvaal All Women's Union (see footnote 15) and the FSAW.
- 15 The Transvaal All Women's Union was formed in March 1947 after an International Women's Day Meeting (March 8th) in Johannesburg. CP women - J. Mpana, H. Watts - were the main instigators. In aims it foreshadowed the later FSAW, though never managing to establish itself on a national basis. Its leaders later became absorbed by FSAW.

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