

UMSEBENZI



Volume 6 Issue No. 4

VOICE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNIST PARTY

NO RETREAT NOW!

Fourteen years of mass onslaught since 1976 have forced the apartheid regime to the negotiating table.

But the struggle is far from over. With major change in the air, we must be vigilant against the danger of selling ourselves short, of retreating headlong into 'victory'.

We must ask ourselves: has our broad liberation alliance adequately adjusted, since February 2, to the new strategic situation?

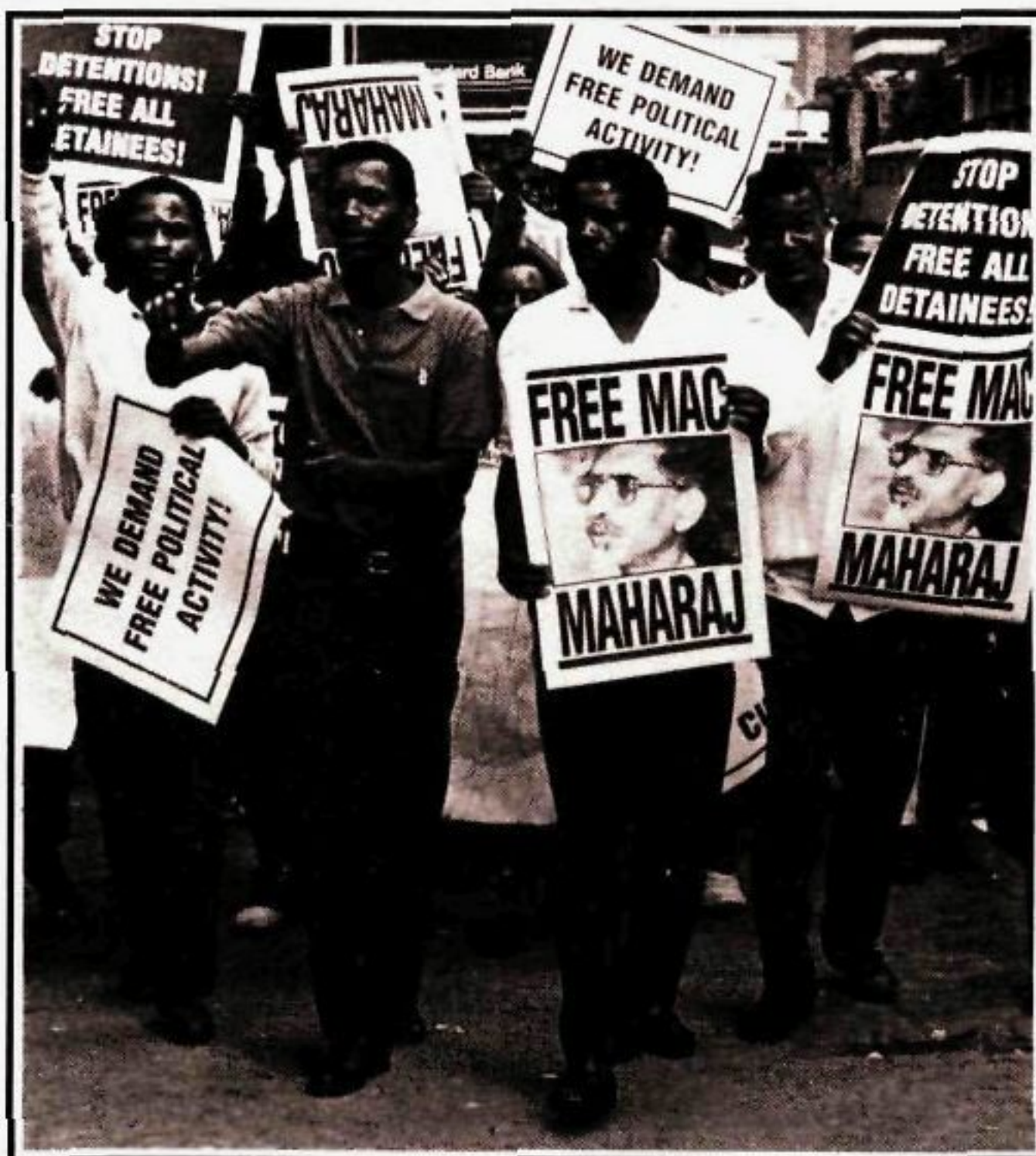
The government currently has three basic objectives with regard to the ANC, which it acknowledges as its principal adversary:

- To counter-balance the ANC with a host of alternative formations (Inkatha, PAC, etc)
- To smash its alliance with the SACP
- To change the character of the ANC by separating it from its only real source of strength - the masses.

On this last point, it is clear that since February 2 the revolutionary alliance has not found an adequate formula for linking mass struggle with what has become the main, potential cutting edge of transformation - the negotiating process.

Dialogue with the regime, technical discussions in joint working groups -

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BUILDING SELF-DEFENCE UNITS

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TRANSKEI RALLY • UMTATA INDEPENDENCE STADIUM • 28 OCTOBER

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these are essential aspects of the present process. The SACP fully accepts this, and leading members of our Party are involved in these activities in their ANC capacity.

But from the start of the process both the ANC and the SACP have made it clear that dialogue cannot be a substitute for mass organisation and mass struggle.

Let us not now lose sight of our original clear understanding.

Likewise, conferences on aspects of a "post-apartheid" South Africa are essential. But we cannot allow this kind of future-gazing to blind us to the real struggles on the ground today. We need to balance all the talk about "when we are in power", "when we have an ANC government", with solid strategic planning about how we are going to get there in the first place.

Many of our difficulties and shortcomings in the present are connected to the objective situation in which we find ourselves.

Both the Party and the ANC are emerging out of many years of illegality.

Combining our forces from different situations and experiences - exile, jail, the underground, the mass democratic movement - is a complex challenge. The regime knows this very well.

The regime and our other opponents are deliberately piling on the pressure for quick answers, for fast tactical adaptations.

And if the revolutionary alliance fails to respond rapidly, they say we are dragging our feet and are not serious about negotiations.

But if the leaders of our alliance do respond quickly, they are in danger of not consulting adequately, of not taking the broad masses of our people with them.

To overcome these difficulties we need to build strong, mass-based, democratic organisations.

And above all we must build a powerful ANC rooted in its branch structures.

But we cannot allow this organisation building to become a substitute for mass struggles, mass campaigning, mass mobilisation.

AGMs, national conferences, regional and branch launches, the election of office-bearers - all of these are absolutely essential organisational activities.

But they must not become our exclusive concern.

We must combine organisational work with mass campaigns.

The broad popular masses must not become mere spectators in the negotiating process. If they become spectators then our negotiating hand is drastically weakened.

For instance, in the economic debate our ANC-led alliance is besieged daily with the concerns and worries of the ruling class.

"If you nationalise you will lose foreign investment," they tell us. "If you utter the word socialism, domestic capital and managerial skills will disappear."

But what about the concerns of the oppressed majority?

These concerns must for us occupy prime place. And it is through active, militant struggles on the ground for housing, education and jobs that these mass demands will more clearly be heard in the present debates.

Do we trust De Klerk?

That is an irrelevant question. It is not De Klerk's attitude, but the pressure of our mass struggle that has plunged apartheid into crisis.

If we relieve that pressure now, then we will have ended the crisis without ending the oppression and exploitation of apartheid.

But how do we begin to give greater focus to mass struggles?

In the course of last month, the Transvaal suffered its own Bloody September. More than 1 000 people were slaughtered in a brutal and deliberate, cold-blooded campaign of destabilisation. More than 1 000 - that's the equivalent of 14 Sharpeville massacres!

And yet we failed to respond in a clear-cut, decisive way.

The lesson for the revolutionary alliance is that we must inspire the popular masses with a much greater sense of initiative on the ground. When state violence is orchestrated against them, the popular masses must not be looking over their shoulders, waiting uncertainly for national leadership. The sense of local, militant confidence that was so much a hall-mark of 1984-5 and of 1989 must not disappear.

But there is also a greater need than ever for clear national leadership. There are many existing mass campaigns. There are major land occupations occurring in rural areas. There are major working class struggles on the shop-floor, and there is the workers' charter campaign. There are civic and educational struggles.

But it is as if these struggles are isolated and unconnected to the main national political event - the negotiating process.

The revolutionary alliance needs to develop a coherent programme of mass action - a programme that links local struggles and existing campaigns to the negotiations process and to the debate about a future South Africa.

Above all, we must link the various sectoral struggles and the charter campaigns to our demand for a democratic constituent assembly.

Build a powerful, mass-based ANC! Strengthen the ANC-SACP-Cosatu alliance, at all levels, from the ground up.

Forward to a democratic constituent assembly!

Go well, Son of Man

From the underground, four weeks before he died in a hail of bullets, Muzikayise Samuel Thusi ("Stanley Khumalo") wrote to the General Secretary of the SACP applying for membership of the Party. This is his story

MUZIKAYISE Samuel Thusi was born on June 15, 1952 in the Nkandla area of Natal.

His family was forced to move to Edendale a few years later.

He matriculated in Pietermaritzburg, and worked (amongst other things) for Sappi in the forests of New Hanover, and as a municipal bus driver in Pietermaritzburg.

A keen sportsman, he played soccer for Machibisa Fast Eleven and occasionally for Durban Bushbucks FC. This established him as a well-known and popular figure among the youth in the townships.

In 1980 he enrolled at the University of Zululand.

In highly repressive conditions, he established an underground unit, "Ojakalase", on the campus and was instrumental in forming an Azaso (Sansco) branch.

While at Ngoye, he earned his nickname, "Son of Man": Fellow class-mates remember how he fearlessly held off armed Inkatha assailants and saved many defenceless students during the notorious 1983 "Ngoye massacre".

Tireless organiser

In 1984 he was employed by the UDF as a rural organiser in the Natal Midlands.

An outstanding and tireless organiser, he was earmarked for elimination by the enemies of democracy.

But he evaded them and left the country in 1985.

He received military training in Angola and Cuba and returned to the country several times on MK mis-

sions.

Shortly after he returned again early this year, he clashed with a kombi-load of apartheid troops.

He shot his way out and survived to reach his destination, where he established "Comrade Johnny Makhatini Base" deep in a forest. Several comrades received training there.

On April 19, while on a mission to

Port Shepstone, comrade Muzi, Son of Man - also known, for his diligence, courage and high morale, as "Nsimbi kayigobi" - again clashed with apartheid forces and fell, fatally wounded.

**Hamba Kahle Son of Man!
Hamba Kahle Nsimbi kayigobi!
Qhawe lo Mgungundlovu!**

'Son of Man's' letter to the Party

Ozwathini
South Africa
17th March 1990

The General Secretary
SACP
Lusaka

Dear Cde Slovo,
Revolutionary greetings in the Year of United Action for a Democratic South Africa.

Re: Application For Membership

I hereby wish to apply for membership of SACP with effect from this year. I am an active member of ANC and MK inside South Africa under the IPC.

I am making this application because I fail to be a stand-looker at this crucial moment when imperialism thinks it is winning in its attempts to neutralise communist ideology. Hence the South African Regime is proudly announcing its unbanning of SACP among unbanned organisations.

We know that ANC and SACP had already been unbanned by the people. Even my being inside points out to it. In spite of all the slogans about SACP, I believe we should disseminate and impart Marxist-Leninist Philosophy to the people more than before.

The support of ANC and SACP inside is invigorating me. It is seen not in only urban areas but also in rural areas. Therefore, I strongly feel there is an urgent need for our people to be well-equipped with correct revolutionary theory. This will help to make people feel that National Democratic Revolution is not the end but the step forward to Socialist Revolution.

I hope my application will meet your favourable consideration.

*Yours in Struggle
Stanley Khumalo*



Honour to our martyrs!

The national Interim Leadership Group (ILG)

At the July launch rally a 24-person national ILG appointed by the Central Committee in consultation with the Party's internal underground structures, was announced.

This ILG will be the effective internal national leadership of the SACP until our next congress in July 1991.

At this congress there will be elections for our national leadership.

The national ILG is chaired by Raymond Mhlaba and includes, amongst others, all Central Committee members of our Party in the country, among them the General Secretary, Joe Slovo.

The ILG will meet not less than once every two months.

The ILG Working Group

To ensure that Party work continues without interruption, a working group of the ILG has also been formed.

This is made up of all ILG members in the Johannesburg headquarters region, although ILG members from other regions are fully entitled to attend working group meetings.

The working group meets not less than once every two weeks.

Building the Party



In the coming months we are charged with building a large, well-organised SACP. It must be a Party that lives up to its title: vanguard Marxist Party of the South African working class.

Our Party must be a powerful weapon in the hands of working people. Since the launch of the SACP as a legal political party on July 29 more than 10 000 applications for membership have been received from all over the country. The possibilities, tasks and duties are great.

ILG Secretariat

To ensure the day-to-day running of the Party head office, an ILG secretariat has also been appointed.

The ILG secretariat has begun to form Party sub-committees dealing with finance, administration, press liaison, internal Party education and Party media.

Questions and answers about the SACP

There are a number of questions that are repeatedly asked by comrades:

The Party speaks of a membership of activists. But as a member of several other democratic organisations (a trade union, an ANC branch, a civic, etc.) how do I find time to be a Party activist?

While disciplined activism is the hall-mark of a good Party member, this activism will often be mainly devoted to other organisations. This is perfectly correct. A good Party member who is a trade union organiser is someone who, perhaps, devotes 90% of his or her time to the union. We hope that the Party will strengthen fraternal organisations, that the Party will develop skills and understanding and discipline. But we do not want to pull comrades out of their main-line activities.

I am a worker from a non-Cosatu trade union (a Nactu affiliate, an Uwusa union, etc.). Can I join the SACP?

Yes, absolutely. Any worker or other person who accepts our broad Party programme and constitution is welcome to join our ranks.

What about religious believers?

Again the answer is Yes. Even in the Party underground days there were outstanding Party members who were believers.

What about "ultra leftists", or those (like the so-called Marxist Worker Tendency) previously expelled from the ranks of the ANC?

Party membership

Who can be a member?

The SACP has dropped the old six-month probation period that we used in underground conditions. All those who apply to join, and who broadly accept the Party programme and constitution will become card-carrying members once they have been allocated into branches.

Obviously notorious police agents or criminals will be excluded.

Local comrades are generally best-placed to assess these issues.

Joining fee and subs

Our approach is that membership cards should not be handed out, and the joining fee should not be paid until applicants are located in branches which are beginning to be functional.

We do not wish to raise false expectations. And we do not want a paper membership.

The joining fee for all members is R2.

Monthly Party subs will be as follows:

- For unemployed workers, pensioners, other non-earners, and for those earning up to R699 a month - no subs.
- For those earning R700-R2 999 a month - a monthly sub of R2.
- For those earning R3 000 and more a month - the monthly sub will be at least 1% of their earnings.

Build the workers' vanguard!

Our Party encourages open, socialist debate and discussion. Those, whatever their past positions, who are prepared to accept collective Party discipline and to work within the scope of our broad programme must be welcomed into our ranks.

But our Party, like any other democratic organisation, cannot allow anti-democratic factions with their own separate discipline, to operate inside our structures.

Those who still continue to disrupt and undermine democratic organisations are not welcome in the Party. Secret factions which conspire, not against the regime but within our own structures, simply cannot be tolerated.

I am a woman worker and I feel that the Party is "too advanced" for me. Am I really "good enough" to join?

If the Party seems "too advanced" for women workers, then perhaps there is something wrong with the Party, and not with those asking the question.

As a disciplined vanguard organisation, the SACP has the potential to set a shining example on the question of non-sexism by encouraging and developing women, and particularly women workers, as political militants.

In these early days of recruitment and building, we must make a very conscious effort to draw large numbers of women into the Party.

The fact that the Party was only

able to announce two women on our 24-person national ILG is a sign of how much work we still have to do on this front.

What is expected of Party members?

The Party is based on the Marxist-Leninist principle of democratic centralism.

This means that all members must have the maximum possible opportunity to take part in the discussion and formulation of Party policy.

By the end of July 1991, the date of our next congress, all our leading structures from the national level down to the branch level must be fully elected.

At the same time, the Party is not a talk shop. Once democratic decisions have been arrived at, the minority is always subordinate to the majority.

To secure the unity and cohesion of the Party, members are obliged to defend the Party and its policies and to carry out its decisions.

Members who take an active part in fraternal organisations or who are engaged in other mass work have a duty to set an example of loyalty, hard work and zeal in the performance of their duties. They are obliged to carry out decisions of that organisation.

Finally, and above all, the SACP hopes to see in its ranks comrades who use their own initiative, who think and work things out for themselves.

How do we build regionally?

THE SACP is in the process of constituting regional ILGs in several centres. So far there is progress in the Transvaal, Eastern Cape, Border, Transkei, Western Cape and Natal. Most regions have either opened, or are about to open regional offices.

The Party has begun with these regions because they are key industrial areas, or because we have existing Party structures in place. But where there is local initiative on the ground, we can quickly move to launch other regional or sub-regional cores.

An immediate task of regional ILGs is the distribution, collection and processing of membership application forms. It is the regional ILGs that will have the responsibility of allocating Party applicants into branches.

The SACP Branch

The Party branch will be the new basic Party unit. It is in the branch that we will be building communist cadres.

Party branches should be no smaller than 25 members (although in rural areas exceptions could be considered), and no larger than 50. For the purposes of cadre development, political discussion and ideological training, more than 50 members becomes unworkable.

Branches should meet once every two weeks. A register of attendance and a register of subs must be kept. A priority will be to build branches into unified, disciplined structures. Ideological training and discussion will be an important part of this process. But our branches are not just talk-shops, or class-rooms. Party branches must actively take up the concerns and campaigns of their communities.



Build a mass party!

AS THE SACP responds to the enormous demand for Party membership, our regional interim working groups, Party members and applicants are all grappling with an important strategic and organisational question. Do we build our branches on a work-place or residential basis?

It would obviously be wrong to adopt a mechanical either/or approach. A combined approach, in which we test, closely monitor and assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of each approach is required in the coming months.

But we still need to ask ourselves what emphasis to give in the immediate present.

In favour of residential branches

- The townships are where the working class exerts, in the most immediate way, its political leadership over the broader oppressed masses. Confining our structures to work-places would weaken the Party's broader influence. It could also encourage narrow economism, with Party branches focussing on narrow work-place issues, as opposed to the broader political concerns the township poses.

- Residential branches would enable us to organise not just the employed, but the unemployed (retrenched workers, youth, pensioners, etc).

- In the coming years there is the strong probability of non-racial, democratic elections - for a constituent assembly, for a new parliament, etc. These elections could well be based on some kind of residential constituency approach. If the Party has failed to organise adequately on a residential base, we may well greatly under-represent the voice of our particular political constituency within the electoral process.

- Generally speaking, residential branches should be easier to establish in terms of practical considerations. In work-place situations there are often problems of finding venues and convenient times to meet (with adjoining factories having different lunch hours, with shift workers with different hours, etc). This was a notable experience of the CPSA in the 1940s.

Work-place or residential branches?



THE PARTY ORGANISER Part One

- Comrades in a work-place Party branch could easily become targets for victimisation by bosses. We should not exaggerate our still very undeveloped Party's ability to defend such comrades in the face of victimisation.

- How do we prevent the Party work-place branch from becoming merely a caucus within the trade union? One partial answer is obviously to try to build cross-factory, cross-industrial sector Party branches in industrial zones - rather than in a single factory. Nevertheless the danger remains.

In favour of work-place branches

- The most important consideration is the broad strategic question. Our broad popular struggle has always battled to carry organised mass power from the townships into the laager of the white minority ruling bloc. Residentially based organisation always has the danger that our structures will confine themselves to localised issues (as enormously important as these are), and fail to address issues concerning the control over the more commanding heights - economic, ideological (the campuses, the media), and even the state repressive machinery (prisons, courts, police and army). The strategic value of an organised Party political presence (and not just a trade union or sectoral/professional presence) in at least some of these commanding heights should

not be underrated.

- What exactly does a township Party branch discuss and above all do that is markedly different from the local ANC branch? Are we not in danger of duplicating scarce resources by going for a residential approach?

- By cutting against the more common residential and sectoral approach to organisation, a work-place political branch can help dynamise and politicise untapped potentials. A Party branch in an industrial area can build a much more dynamic socialist consciousness among our key constituency - industrial workers, linking it directly to questions of control and ownership. Monthly lunch-hour forums in a canteen or local cafe, networks for Umsebenzi distribution, wall newspapers, etc all become possible.

So what do we do?

And what do you think?

These notes are a summary of points raised on this topic at a recent discussion by the interim Transvaal SACP working group. After much debate, the comrades in this forum decided:

1. That the balance of the argument is in favour of using the residential branch as the most basic organ of the Party.
2. But, there are certain specific situations where the work-place approach is the obvious direction to go. In particular the comrades mentioned campuses and mine compounds.
3. Even where Party members' basic unit is their residential branch, they must be encouraged wherever possible to form Communist Industrial Area/Factory Groups with special tasks for these areas.



of the comrades do experience problems with reading English.

We certainly need more translated material. But I'm more and more convinced that it's not just translation that is required. There is also the problem of understanding concepts - whether they are translated or not.

Concepts like "vanguard" or "democratic centralism" are not easy matters. It's one thing being able to recite a definition of them. It's another being able to concretise and relate them to comrades' daily experiences.

Which brings me to another point. Our experience has been that reading circles definitely needs some kind of tutor to give guidance from week to week.

The tutor doesn't necessarily have to participate in the actual weekly discussion, but he or she needs to be around to suggest further reading, to explain difficulties, and just give general guidance.

In some respects, the original call to launch Umsebenzi reading circles was a stop-gap measure immediately after February 2. The Party realised that it would take months to get branches going, and yet there was enormous popular enthusiasm for joining the Party.

Do you think that our emerging SACP branches will now replace the reading circles?

No. I'm sure most, in fact probably all, our reading circle comrades will now be joining Party branches. And I'm sure that the branches, in their own political education work, will be able to apply some of the lessons learnt in the reading circles. But reading circles shouldn't now fall away.

Umsebenzi hopes to publish a regular column on reading circles. We invite comrades involved in this work to write to us, so that we can share our experiences, difficulties and lessons.

Umsebenzi

Reading Circles

IMMEDIATELY after the February 2 unbanning of our Party, Umsebenzi called on comrades to take the initiative to form Umsebenzi Reading Circles.

In response reading circles have been established in numerous places. We spoke to Murray Michel who assisted the formation of a number among Cosatu workers in the Western Cape Town.

What lessons and general experiences with these reading circles can you share with us?

I think the first thing is to make sure that there is a definite programme of reading. The group needs to set specific objectives for itself. A reading circle that just stumbles around with a series of ad hoc readings quickly loses direction and a sense of purpose.

Secondly, and related to the same point, a given reading circle should not necessarily aim to keep going indefinitely. Again, it's best to set out a particular task, and a time (let's say three months) to complete it.

Frankly, we weren't that very clear exactly what the original call for Umsebenzi reading circles meant.

Were we expected to read only, or mainly Umsebenzi? Was the idea that we should collectively work through one issue of Umsebenzi at a time?

We quickly abandoned that idea. Instead, in the circles I've been involved with, we've focussed on The Path to Power, and then linked a section from the programme to articles in Umsebenzi.

We've also used related articles from other journals as well - Mayibuye, South African Labour Bulletin, Work in Progress, etc.

Do you take a chapter of The Path to Power for each session?

No, no. That's far too much. We do about a third to a half of a chapter at a time, plus, as I've said supporting materials.

Is language a problem?

Well, it obviously varies according to the group. We've been working with politicised shop stewards. Some

Our Party Programme and the new situation

"WE ARE convinced that the situation has within it the seeds of a sudden transformation."

These words, the second-last sentence of our Party programme, *The Path to Power*, have proved themselves true.

It is just 18 months since our Party adopted a new programme, but the situation in our country and the world has changed significantly. At the 8th Party Congress in July 1991 we will have to change the Party programme to reflect the new opportunities that have opened up and to outline the new strategies and tactics that will take us to our goal of a socialist South Africa. In this series *Umsebenzi* will look at *The Path to Power* critically.

Not a bible

The programme is not a bible which cannot be criticised.

It was adopted at the 7th Congress after a thorough debate and discussion by all units of the SACP. And the same process must happen when we adopt a new programme. The aim of this series is to help comrades take part in that discussion.

What has happened, since *The Path to Power* was adopted, to necessitate a new programme, or at least a heavily revised one?

- The political situation in South Africa has been transformed. The ANC has been unbanned and is widely seen as our future government. Our Party is emerging from 40 years of underground struggle. It is an important part of the revolutionary alliance. The SACP is widely respected as the political vanguard of the South African working class. We now face the challenge of building a mass, legal Party that will ensure a transition to socialism in a democratic South Africa.

- Our country stands at the crossroads. The possibility now exists of a

The Path to Power Discussion Series

peaceful transfer of power to the people. But this process is not assured. The regime is still a powerful enemy of our people. Every day the objective conditions for decisive mass action are maturing.

We need to be clear on what methods of struggle will involve the masses in ensuring that power will be transferred.

- The world situation is changing. Stalinist socialism has been overthrown in eastern Europe. In the USSR perestroika is creating a new form of democratic socialism. Our Party needs to rid itself of all traces of Stalinism which still exist in our theory and in the Party programme. We also need to work out how the destruction of the world socialist system affects the world revolutionary process.

In adopting a new programme we should not just throw away the old programme. The core of the old programme - the chapters which analyse Colonialism of a Special Type, the National Democratic Revolution, the Vanguard Role of the SACP and the *Path to Power*, are still essentially accurate.

They are the result of nearly 70 years of communist struggle in South Africa. They sum up our experience, an experience which has helped to guide the revolutionary alliance to the threshold of power.

When the Bolsheviks adopted a new programme

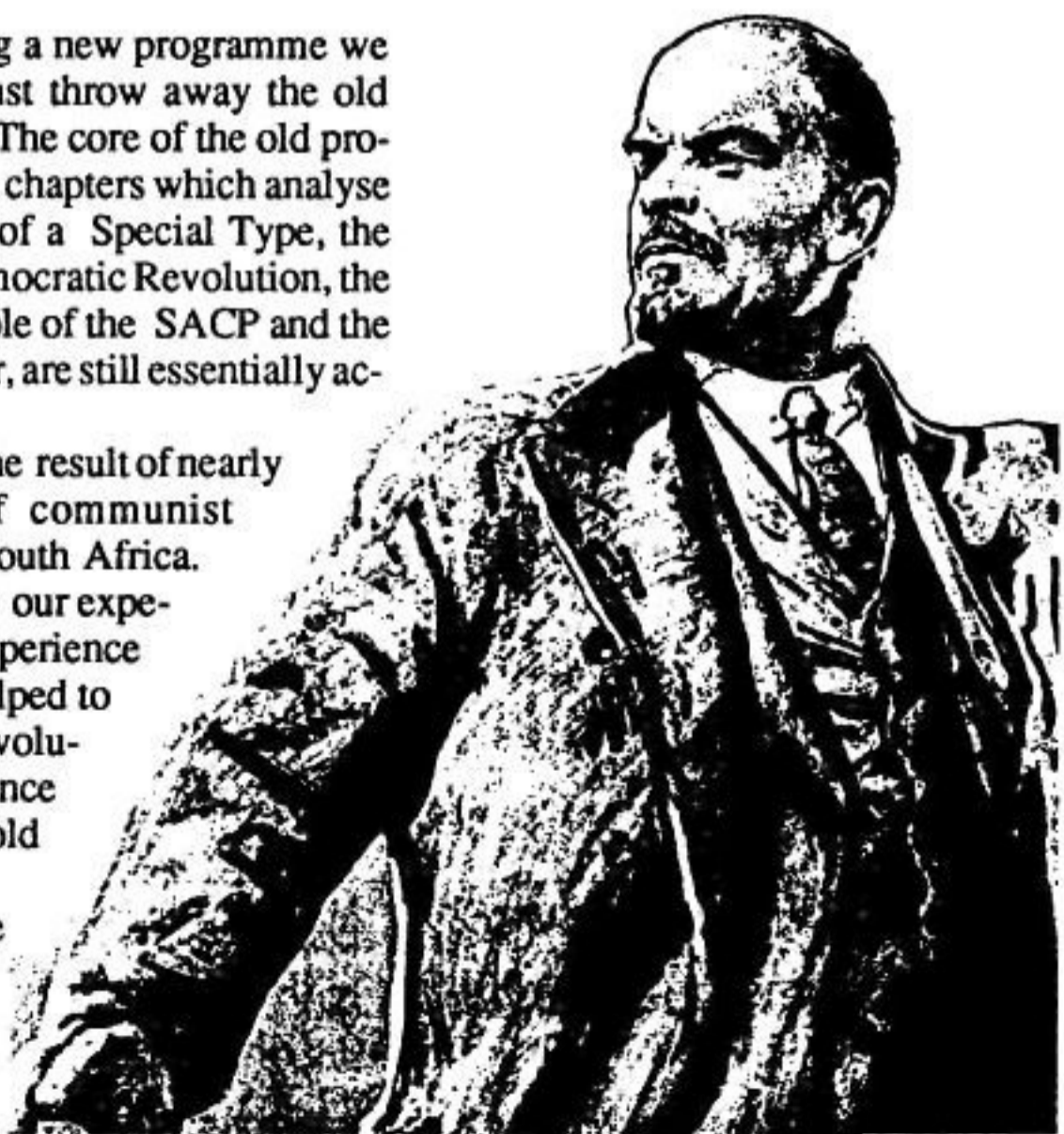
four months after the October Revolution, Lenin urged his comrades "not to lose our ways in the sharp turns of history — to retain the general perspective ... to see the scarlet thread that joins up the entire development."

Underground

Building a mass Party means thousands of new comrades are being drawn into the Party. Their experience and understanding - which may be different from comrades who have worked in the underground or in exile - must be reflected.

We also need to discuss whether we should add new chapters to the programme. *The Path to Power* has very little to say about the economic and social policies needed to protect the interests of the working class in a democratic South Africa.

And we need to outline the policies which will lay the basis now for an uninterrupted transition to socialism.



Long live Marxism!

Red plots and red faces

Underground Party conference

The Party recently held an underground national consultative conference, drawing together members of our underground structures in the major industrial areas of the country.

It brought together the practical experience of comrades currently engaged in the organisation of trade unions, women, youth and civics, and those involved in the re-establishment of the legal ANC. With an average age of just under 40, the participants spanned every living generation of struggle.

The focus of the conference was the building of the legal SACP. The following were presented:

- The challenges we face.
- What type of Party should emerge.
- The context within which the Party emerges.
- The tripartite alliance.
- The participation of women workers, and
- A consideration of the present relevance of the Party programme, "The Path to Power".

The conference drew up an extensive set of resolutions and recommendations which formed the basis on which the Central Committee reached its decisions on the launch and character of the new legal SACP.

What's so 'secret'? Each of the 100 000 copies of Umsebenzi's special prelaunch edition contained a report on the conference

Joe Slovo from its negotiating team.

Before looking at their conclusions, it is worth touching briefly on the uncontested facts:

- The "secret" Tongaat meeting was, by the time of the government "revelations", no secret at all. Each of the 100 000 copies of Umsebenzi's special prelaunch edition contained a report on the conference. Umsebenzi also recorded that a paper had been presented at Tongaat on the continuing relevance of The Path to Power. Obviously this would address the issue of insurrection, a central component of the Party programme.

- The decision not to disclose names was not in itself sinister. Our Party had not yet emerged publicly.

- Even taken out of context, Comrade Joe's statement is uncontentious: Obviously no agreement is binding on anyone who has not signed it. But as De Klerk must have been aware - and his police, with access to 100 pages of minutes, certainly were - Comrade Joe was arguing that a ceasefire would not deny the people of Natal the right to defend themselves.

- The meeting was consultative: empowered only to make recommendations. And the statement by Comrade Joe was no more than the opinion of an individual. As a seasoned politician and a lawyer, De Klerk

knows such statements do not have the authority of policy.

On the basis of this De Klerk and his Ministers believed - or say they believed - that an insurrectionary Red Plot had been hatched.

It was their rush to reveal the Party General Secretary Joe Slovo was at Tongaat that showed their deficiencies - or their dishonesty.

Their police sleuths were aware that Slovo was in Lusaka when the Tongaat meeting took place. In addition, these same sleuths had just arrested Siphwe Nyanda in the Vula swoop. And as Siphwe and half-a-dozen of those arrested with him must have told them he was using the cover-name "Joe".

Siphwe was in fact "Comrade Joe". And yet De Klerk appeared to believe Comrade Joe was Joe Slovo. This suggests his security chiefs misinformed him - either intentionally or because they were blinded by their own anti-communist propaganda.

Faced with the facts, the Red Plot claims soon collapsed, to be replaced by red faces in Pretoria. Slovo attended the second summit as part of the ANC team. And The Citizen ended up exhorting the government to "concentrate on Operation Vula" instead of "taking far too much cognisance of the controversy over Mr Slovo".

RIGHT on cue, only days before the July 29 launch of the legal SACP, the people of South Africa were treated to a Red Plot media extravaganza.

It was an attack by our enemies, with the government's favourite newspapers as willing accomplices, intended to discredit our Party and weaken the revolutionary alliance between the ANC, SACP and Cosatu.

But it failed.

The result of the Red Plot red herding was not a collapse of the revolutionary alliance - which remains as firm as ever - but red faces in Pretoria.

The original Red Plot allegations centred on an SACP underground national consultative conference in Tongaat on May 19 and 20.

When police arrested comrades of the Vula group in Durban in the second week of July, they obtained important information about ANC underground activity. But the computer disks they seized also contained minutes of the Tongaat meeting. They rushed these to Pretoria to show their masters, leaving the details of Vula on ice for the moment - and their masters, victims of 40 years of their own anti-communist propaganda, leapt at the chance for some red-bashing.

Pik Botha has since claimed that the Tongaat minutes reveal a secret SACP agenda and that, having looked at the documents, De Klerk "came to the same conclusion".

What the minutes showed was this:

- The Party had held a secret meeting in South Africa in May.

- The chairperson announced that the names of those present would not be disclosed.

- At the meeting someone called "Comrade Joe" argued that a ceasefire was not binding on people not party to signing it.

- A discussion took place on the question of the seizure of power, in which a person called "Joe" participated.

Somewhere in these facts Pretoria found "evidence" of a communist conspiracy to embark on the path of insurrection should negotiations fail.

And on the basis of this, the government expected the ANC to drop



Umsebenzi guest writer LEFT HOEK looks at the paranoia which seems to have gripped liberal democrats since the unbanning of the SACP

With friends like this, democracy needs no enemies

After mumbling in their sleep through decades of bitter popular struggle for democracy, a group of self-proclaimed liberal democrats has suddenly woken up. They are now pushing themselves forward as the guardians of democracy and freedom in our country.

Their concern is not the racists who have brought our country to the brink of disaster. No, it is against the SACP that they direct all their "democratic" fury.

But the SACP is one of the few parties with a record of actual physical, political and economic struggle to bring about democracy.

Now let's be clear, the SACP has always worked for the broadest front of democratic unity. This has included liberals and we have never demanded that they should change their basic outlook as a condition for joining this broad front.

Many sincere and committed liberals have joined African nationalists, socialists and communists in the struggle against white minority rule. It is a struggle which is not yet over.

But the group of liberals now making such loud moral claims for themselves are neither serious, nor sincere ... nor very liberal. Their sudden awakening betrays the fact that they are more worried about the democratic verdict of the majority of our people than they were about dec-

ades of racist tyranny.

Among the loudest "liberal" trumpeters is the former editor of *Business Day* (recently promoted to the *Sunday Times*), Ken Owen. Owen's prime method of attacking the SACP is bar-room humour.

He writes (*Business Day*, August 30): "Hani blathers on in public, and struts about with his bodyguard; Slow Joe (that's Owen's name for Slovo) makes jokes on the wireless, and Ronnie Kasrils plays James Bond with double whiskies, and Mac Maharaj ... well, I don't want to talk about him because the man has been detained under that appalling Section 29, and I'm hoping he will be brought to court soon."

Hunting

You'll agree, Owen is a great wit. The bit about Maharaj is particularly funny. Laughter can be heard ringing around the boardrooms of big business, John Vorster Square, the Union Buildings and all other places where concern for freedom and justice has always been on everybody's lips.

Owen's mission is to hunt out socialists. After the public announcement of the Party's Interim Leadership Group he wrote: "We know that the serpent exists, and we (now) have a starting point from which to trace its length. We can look for connections that reach from the SACP into other political organisations, into welfare

Power to the people!

groups and into the human rights struggle, into the unions and into the legal profession, into the media and religious lobbies, and into all branches of civil society”.

Communists in human rights groups? In the unions? So what!

This kind of rabid anti-communism is backward, intolerant and anti-democratic.

Democratic pluralism

Owen should rather spend his energies finding out just who or who isn't in the CCB, or tracing the coils of that real python, Anglo American, as it winds its way through the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, swallowing everything on its way. Owen would deny the fruits of democratic pluralism to the SACP, one of the few parties actually to fight for that system.

Owen, of course, is not alone in his “liberal” crusade. One of the saddest of the crusaders is the Oxford University academic, RW Johnson.

Long an adversary of the SACP, Johnson did once at least merit some respect. He used to be able to argue seriously and rationally. But now, alas, something seems to have come loose. Armed with a few rumours, some anecdotes and fewer facts, Johnson now furiously wields his pen in the people's “defence” against his own personal fantasy of what the SACP is and does.

Unfortunately he expresses his fantasies in a number of newspapers which are influential - the New Statesman and Sunday Independent in Britain, and in the Sunday Times here in South Africa. And some people believe him.

Johnson's most recent theme has been: Operation Vula was, as the government tried to allege, a plot by the SACP and “dissidents” within the ANC; it was kept secret from the bulk of the ANC leadership; it was an act of bad faith contrary to the Groote Schuur Minute; it was intended to undercut the negotiation process; and the existence of Operation Vula indi-

cates a split between a Stalinist SACP and an “Africanist” leadership in the ANC, which must surely result very soon in an open break (New Statesman, August 3, and Sunday Times, August 26).

Johnson is supposed to be an historian. Minimal research would have established the following:

- Operation Vula was decided upon by the ANC national executive committee in 1987 and placed under the command of the ANC president himself.

- It was a plan for the development of an internal ANC political leadership coordinating the development of underground and armed work. The fact that SACP cadres were among those involved results from the SACP's standing orders to members always to be in the forefront of attempts to strengthen the national lib-



Mac Maharaj

eration movement.

- Continuation of Operation Vula was endorsed by the ANC leadership early this year as a sensible precaution against the failure of the negotiating process and in terms of a decision that all underground structures should not reveal themselves.

- The Groote Schuur Minute, signed on May 5, made clear the ANC's commitment to move towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict, but specifically excluded any ceasefire agreement. Consequently, both the government and the ANC continued to build and deploy their forces although at a lower intensity than before.

- Three senior SACP members helped formulate the resolution that went before the ANC executive in late June proposing a suspension of the armed struggle at the next meeting with the government.

- The arrests of ANC/SACP members allegedly involved in Vula came in mid-July, whereas the ceasefire agreement came in the Pretoria Minute signed only on August 6.

In trying to support his argument, Johnson also comes with a whole series of other blunders - too numerous to list in full here. But let's mention just two prize samples.

- We are told that National Union of Mineworkers' General Secretary Cyril Ramaphosa is a member of some select group of young up-and-coming Xhosa leaders of the SACP. This must have come as a surprise to Ramaphosa - to say nothing of his siVenda speaking parents.

- We are told that the SACP is “the most Stalinist CP in the world”. This comment comes from a man who in 1977 labelled South African communism as “merely an off-shoot of ... white liberalism”.

The only consistent thing here is Johnson's dislike for the SACP.

How long will newspapers, with the resources and means to better inform themselves, feed their readers on Owen's and on Johnson's ascertainable nonsense? •

Build the anti-apartheid front!

The Communist Party of the Soviet Union held its 28th Congress in Moscow between July 2 and 13. We publish excerpts from the congress report of CPSU General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev

The future of perestroika

We cannot evade the question: why has the process of perestroika, which began successfully and which - in historical terms - has already given society so much, failed to cure many of its diseases? In some respects, the situation has even worsened.

First and foremost this applies to the consumer market, but also to the economy as a whole, public order and interethnic relations. One of the serious reasons for the difficulties we are encountering in many fields is the resistance to change put up by the bureaucratic stratum in managerial structures and by the social forces associated with it.

We of course realised that it would inevitably affect the interest of those who held power and who administered society's wealth in the name of the people. Nor should we close our eyes to the fact that forces have emerged in society which are pushing us towards the bourgeois system and which link coping with the present difficult situation to putting the country on the capitalist footing.

We must do everything we can to enable perestroika to develop as a peaceful revolution, imparting a new quality to the country along socialist lines without upheavals whose chief victims are always the people.

The market

What we are talking about is establishing a basically new model of

economy: a multi-sectoral model, with diverse forms of ownership and management, and with a modern market infrastructure.

In general, we regard the market not as a goal in itself, but as a means of making the economy more effective and improving the standard of living.

The market must facilitate a speedy solution to the problem of giving our economy a greater social orientation and gearing it to the people's interests.

The market, in its contemporary interpretation, rejects the monopoly of one form of ownership and requires a diversity of such forms, vested with equal economic and political rights.

State-owned enterprises, the collective ownership of a cooperative or joint-stock association, the work-earned property of the farmer, craftsman, or family all serve to strengthen the democratic pillars of society, since the working people become the genuine masters of the means of production and the results of their labour, and have a personal stake in efficient performance and high final results.

Here there is no basis for exploitation. This means that by moving towards a market we are not swerving from the road to socialism, but advancing towards a fuller realisation of society's potential.

It is this that underlies the concept of perestroika.

Needless to say we cannot leave it to the market to implement major long-term scientific and technical projects, advance basic science, culture or national social and ecological programmes.

The Party

The Party has officially dropped its claim to substitute itself for government bodies and to carry out administrative and managerial functions.

Various documents (now) refer to the need to revert to Lenin's concept

Gorbachev: The state of the Union

Tell no lies...



Mikhail Gorbachev

of the Party as the vanguard force in society.

But doesn't that mean - and questions such as this are being asked - that we are once more aspiring to a kind of pre-eminence while just changing the term "leading role" to "vanguard role"? We must make this point clear.

We consider that this vanguard role cannot be imposed on the community, that it can only be won by an active struggle for the interests of the working people, by actual performance and by the Party's entire political and moral image.

The CPSU will pursue its policy and work to retain the mandate of the ruling party within the bounds of the democratic process, involving elections for legislative institutions at national and local level.

In this sense it will operate as a parliamentary party.

There are powerful tendencies in the Party which favour excluding this principle (democratic centralism) from the Party rules as it has been discredited by the preceding practices.

But many are in favour of retaining it because they see in its renunciation the danger of turning the Party

into a debating club.

Another question of principle, that of factions, is connected with this.

We have taken a tremendous step forward in the development of democracy and inner party glasnost and openness.

All attempts to suppress different opinions have been renounced. But there is a threshold which, if crossed, would cripple the Party. And that is to form factions with their own special discipline.

Let me specify this point. When speaking about the inadmissibility of forming that kind of faction, we allow for Party members who have their own point of view on certain issues differing from that of the majority to discuss and popularise it freely and express it publicly and even address Party congresses.

Let us make it clear that we have an understanding on this score.

All primary Party organisations (branches) are free to organise their inner life on their own. Their decisions, insofar as they do not run counter to the aims of the CPSU programme or the Party Rules, cannot be cancelled by higher organs, with the exception of resolutions on personal cases.

Any regulation of the activity of primary Party organisations is to be abolished. They are to be responsible for admittance of members to the CPSU and are granted the right to the final judgement of the activity of any Communist registered in his or her primary Party organisation.

Gorbachev on Marxism-Leninism

The substance of the social theory produced by Marx, Engels and Lenin had been formed on the basis of an analysis of the reality of the nineteenth century, and, in Lenin's case, also of the opening decades of the twentieth century.

The world has since changed beyond recognition, notably, under the impact of Marxist thought itself, the October Revolution and the international revolutionary and democratic movement.

We, however, have been trying for decades to find answers to every contingency of life in quotations from classics, forgetting that the classics themselves had insisted on taking the historical circumstances into account behind any theory and had mocked those who have sought to convert Marxism into a kind of scripture.

On Eastern Europe

Deep-going changes are underway in Eastern Europe.

When anybody says this is the "collapse of socialism", we counter it with the question: which type of "socialism"? The one which was, in point of fact, a variation of Stalin's authoritarian bureaucratic system, which we have ourselves discarded? We are even reproached for "leaving the field without fighting".

It turns out that we are advised to resort to exactly what we resorted to before ... what we have correctly broken with and emphatically denounced.

From the policy statement of the Congress

The CPSU resolutely rejects democratic centralism in the way it took shape in the conditions of the command-and-administrative system and rigid centralisation, and upholds democratic principles such as electiveness and replaceability, openness and accountability, the subordination of the minority to the majority and the right of the minority to defend its views, even in the Party mass media.

The democratisation of the Party presupposes the participation of all its members and structures in evolving Party policy by means of all-Party and regional discussions and referendums, the right of individual Communists and groups to reflect their views in platforms, the collective and open work of all Party bodies, and freedom of criticism.

Claim no easy victories!

Why we need national bargaining

COMPANIES like Barlow Rand, Delta and BTR Dunlop strongly oppose national industry bargaining.

These are very repressive, anti-union companies. And they are fighting to stay out of national industry-level bargaining. They want workers to bargain at plant level - or sometimes even at department level.

Why?

Barlows, Delta and Dunlop have learnt this lesson from overseas experience. In Britain, when the engineering unions were strong they bargained at national level on wages and working conditions.

But as the unions have grown weaker, more and more British companies demand that unions bargain at plant or departmental level. This way, the bargaining unit is much smaller. Unions cannot unite workers in big groups, mobilising their collective power.

The bosses in Australia and in many other countries are trying to impose the same limitations on the unions.

In South Africa, the President's Council decided three years ago that "national bargaining was not good for a developing country". It claimed "enterprise bargaining" was better because bosses could pay what they could afford — that is, they could pay less.

Weaker councils

Since then, in line with this policy, the Department of Manpower has tried to weaken the national industrial council in the metal industry, the biggest in SA. But they have failed.

In the clothing industry the bosses are trying to shift negotiations to regional level. They want to pay lower wages outside of the PWV.

All of these are attempts at divide and rule.

But many union members also prefer plant level, or enterprise level bargaining. They say it gives them more money.

Is this true?



UNION BASHERS

Members forget that plant level bargaining is often on top of wages and conditions already won at industry level. The majority of workers would do worse, not better, if there were only plant level bargaining.

But there is also more than wages at stake in taking the national approach. Around the world, in both capitalist and socialist countries, manufacturing is having to become more flexible. Sooner or later the manufacturing sector in South Africa will also have to transform itself.

Our trade unions must be ready to negotiate how this transformation takes place - and to make sure that it benefits workers more than capitalists. This can only be done by keeping national industry level bargaining.

At plant level, workers are far more likely to be pushed into productivity deals that cause retrenchment.

Increasing the skills of the whole industrial work-force will be a crucial part of this industrial restructuring. With national bargaining we can demand training that enables workers to transfer from company to company and industry to industry.

If there are only company level training schemes, workers are under

management's control. The skills they learn are then only useful on the machines on which they were trained.

Housing and health are other areas where industry level negotiations, or even negotiations across industries by Cosatu as a whole, are essential.

Housing schemes negotiated at plant level tie workers to the bosses - if they strike or get retrenched they lose their houses.

Medical schemes and pension and provident funds negotiated at plant level can only increase privatisation.

Instead, our union movement should be moving towards national pension and provident schemes, national housing schemes, national health schemes, national insurance and national training.

Above all, the national approach is in line with our longer-term goals. Winning increasing working class control over production depends upon our ability to mobilise the broad masses of workers.

Workers cannot win significant control of production in isolated plants without confronting the highly centralised and concentrated nature of capitalism in our country.

Undemocratic

But this does not mean that we must abandon plant level bargaining on every issue. If there is no plant-level bargaining union structures in the plant run the risk of becoming weak and undemocratic.

Our approach to bargaining - getting the correct balance between national and plant level - must be guided by both our immediate and long term goals.

We need to build powerful working class organisation at every level. We need to develop a strong, national, cross-industry working class consciousness. And we need to build a working class increasingly capable, through its organisation and through its consciousness, of taking control of production.

Viva COSATU!

THROUGH measures like privatisation and deregulation, the bosses and the government are trying to sabotage our future. They want a future democratic government in South Africa to be as economically weak as possible. They are determined today to shape the future society in ways which still serve the interests of a privileged few, even when the present political system of white minority rule has gone.

Our broad liberation movement has consistently fought against privatisation, deregulation and other manoeuvres by the state and bosses. The ANC-led liberation alliance has been warning them that any companies that are now suddenly privatised will be renationalised after liberation.

Caught like thieves in the act of selling off our national wealth, our opponents are now pretending that these moves are based on sound reasoning. They tell us that the public sector is necessarily inefficient. They preach to us about the bureaucratisation of the public sector. And they point to the experience of Eastern Europe.

In the first place, as workers in many privately owned companies, we know that inefficiency is not the monopoly of the public sector. And in any case what is efficiency? Whose efficiency are we talking about? A company making luxury goods might be making profits very efficiently, but it is not efficiently meeting the basic needs of our people.

Demands

But in any case, let's be very clear what we are demanding. Yes, we want a strong public sector in a future South Africa, at the service of the population as a whole. But no, we do not want a large bureaucracy which enriches only the people who run it.

Why do we want a strong public sector? It is because we believe that capitalists and their free market will not provide basic services to the majority of the people - the poor and the working class. We can't leave the social and economic development of



Democracy and the public sector

our country to the bosses. They are only concerned with profits.

There are some essential services which the government has to provide. These are:

- A national health service.
- Compulsory, free education.
- Cheap and accessible electricity, transport and telecommunications.
- A broadcasting system which reflects all viewpoints.

We agree that it is not a good thing to have too large a state, or for the ownership and control of things like access to housing to be too centralised. We are not denying that the market has a role to play.

A future government does not have to own all land and control access to all housing through rentals. But a future government must ensure that the poorer sections of the community are able to have housing and security.

So how do we prevent the public sector from becoming bureaucratic and even corrupt? How do we ensure that it becomes more efficient than the present apartheid public sector?

In the first place, a future public sector will have to operate within strict budgetary controls. This means that the spending of the public sector will have to be very closely controlled and monitored.

Accountable

But most importantly, the future public sector must be accountable through democratic processes to the government and to the people. Recently, Soweto residents have considered setting up electricity user committees to monitor the supply of electricity. We should not just think of such structures for the present. They should continue to exist in a post-apartheid South Africa.

Indeed, our demand for an effective, democratically answerable public sector must go hand-in-hand with our building of our SACP and ANC branches, and democratic mass sectoral organisations of all kinds.

It is our organisations, rooted on the ground, that will ensure an efficient future public sector.

Forward to a people's government!

An economic policy

THE ANC's Department of Economic Policy has recently produced an economic discussion document.

This is a very important initiative. As we move towards democracy, debates are taking place on all fronts and the debate on economic policy has been receiving a lot of attention.

Unfortunately this debate has so far been dominated by the concerns and interests of big capital.

When there has been discussion about redistribution or the need for a democratic state to play an active part in the economy the bosses have responded with threats of capital and skills flight. They warn about inefficiency and problems of attracting foreign capital.

But big capital was remarkably silent about the inefficiencies of apartheid which has brought our country's economy into a deep crisis.

Poverty

Apartheid poverty has massively narrowed our internal market.

National oppression has deprived our economy of skills.

The violent social instability in our country, caused by homelessness, joblessness and racist tyranny, has frightened away more foreign capital than our own sanctions campaign.

For the bosses it has always been profits before people.

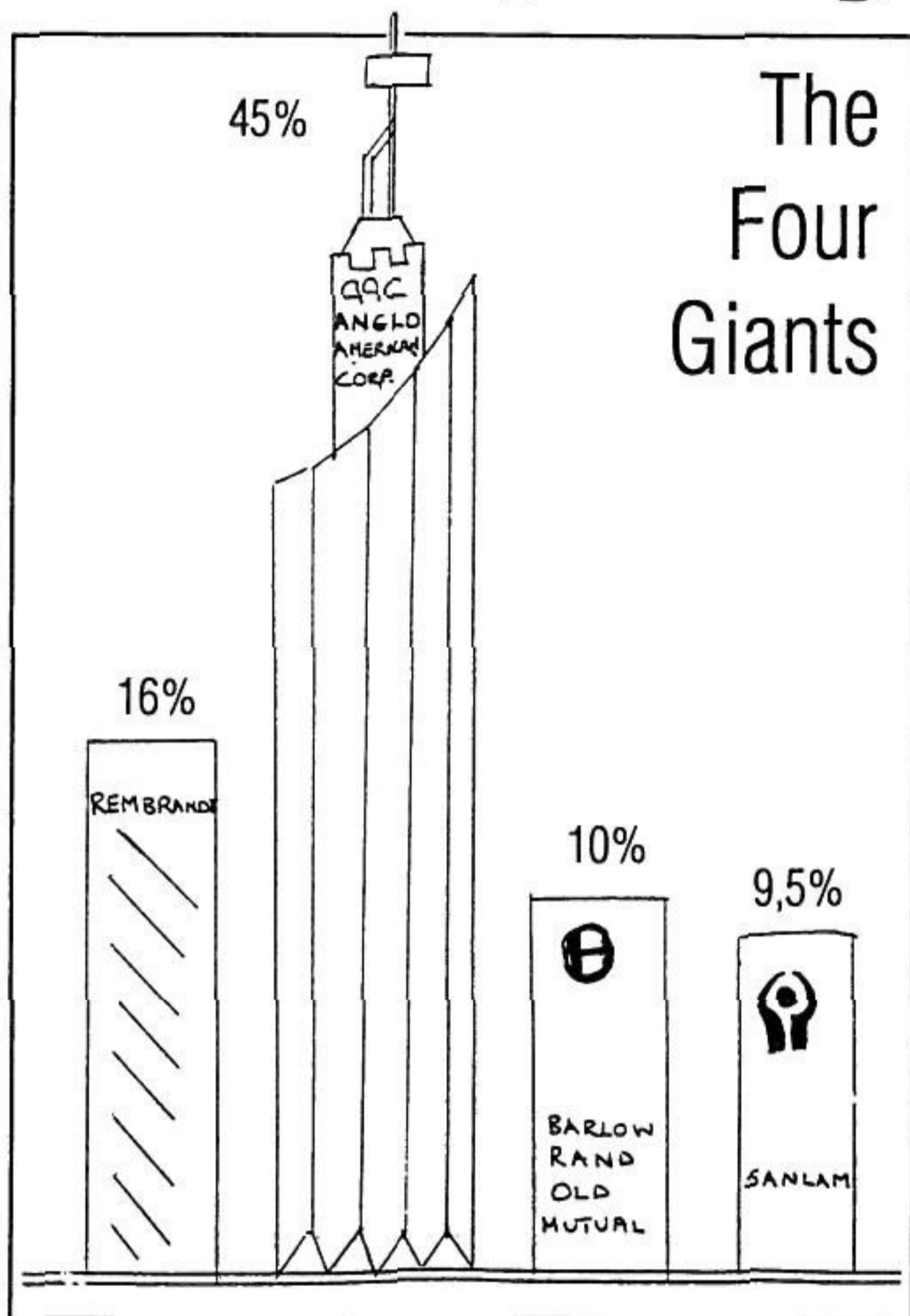
And that is the basis for their present arguments as well.

The ANC's new economic discussion document has a completely different starting point.

Economic policy must be the result of the people's demands and struggles. It is too important an issue to be left with the leadership or the experts.

Popular education around economics and the setting up of forums to discuss our economic policy must be made a priority.

But what kind of economy are we



There are four big companies which control our economy. Between them they own 81% of all the shares on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange.

inheriting?

It is an economy that has many serious problems. The three main crises facing the economy are:

1. Crisis of accumulation or growth

The South African economy has, since the mid-1970s, been declining. We had an average growth rate of 5,8% from 1960 to 1970. From 1975 to

1989 it has been only 1,4%. In this period our population has been growing at 2,5%. This means our country has been becoming poorer.

Investment in new factories and jobs has decreased by R10-billion over the last 10 years. Unemployment now stands at over 30%, nearly one in every three - that is some 3 to 4-million without jobs.

Redistribute wealth!

of the people

2. Crisis of distribution

This is no surprise. South Africa has one of the most unequal economies in the world.

The richest 5% of the people own 88% of the personal wealth in the country.

The white population (14% of South Africa's total population) earns 60% of the monthly pay packet, while the remaining 86% earn 40%.

Similar inequalities exist in education, health, social services, housing and skills.

3. Crisis of democracy

There are four big companies (Anglo American, Sanlam, Old Mutual and Rembrandt) which control our economy. Between them they own 81% of all the shares on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange.

The Land Act denies African people access to 87% of the land. When the Land Act is scrapped, the majority of black people will still be too poor to buy what has until now been legally restricted to white ownership. Nothing much will change.

The systematic exclusion of black people from meaningful participation has meant they have very little power to influence the economic life of the country. Any new economic policy we develop must answer these problems.

National development plan

The ANC discussion document calls for economic growth through redistribution, in the context of political democracy.

For this to succeed, the discussion document envisages a national development plan. Key elements of such a plan would include:

- Using redistribution to ensure people can begin to afford basic needs.
- The production of food and housing, and the requirements for health

and welfare, education and training will be emphasised, rather than luxury goods.

- Promoting agricultural development as well as land reform.

- Promoting local industry so more jobs are created and more foreign exchange can be earned. The state's role will have to be increased to make sure this happens.

- Developing higher levels and numbers of skilled people from the oppressed communities in all sectors of the economy.

- Changing the tax system so that individuals pay less and business pays more. The state must also intervene to ensure that more money is spent on productive investment (building more factories), and less is spent gambling on the stock exchange.

Our key task at the moment is to take the economic debate to the people.

We must find creative ways of ensuring that the people's demands are placed at the centre of the economic debate. •



The Land Act denies African people access to 87% of the land. When the Land Act is scrapped, the majority of black people will still be too poor to buy what has until now been legally restricted to white ownership. Nothing much will change.

The land to the people!

AN ARTICLE in the last issue of Umsebenzi takes a position on religion which must be criticised. It was vague, unclear and often incorrect.

How can we, as communists, build a strong and lasting alliance with religious comrades if we do not clearly understand the basis on which our alliance must rest? The purpose of this article is not to attack or criticise religion. We are attacking the liberal attitude that obscures the differences between Marxism-Leninism and religion and, in so doing, misrepresents the real basis for unity between communists and believers.

As Marxist-Leninists our outlook is a materialist one. Material reality and actual practice are the foundations from which we derive our theory, our ideology, by using the methods of scientific evaluation, interpretation and deduction. And our theory, so derived, guides and enriches our practice (where it, again, is tested and refined).

Marxism-Leninism therefore sets out to be a science. Its subject matter, its methods, its goals are those of science: to achieve a correct understanding of the material world so we may change and improve it. That is why Marxism-Leninism calls itself scientific socialism - sentiment and idealistic confusion should have no place in it.

Idealism

By contrast, the religious perspective on the world is an idealist one. Religion interprets reality in the light of its prior belief in a superior, non-material deity or creator: its starting point is a faith in a level of 'reality' that is not open to scientific proof.

Even though religious persons may use the methods of scientific enquiry and analysis in their daily lives, their ideological perspective bases itself on a fundamental commitment to religious ideas and ideals, a commitment which informs, guides and shapes their actions. Thus, in contrast to Marxism-Leninism, religion proceeds, at least on one level, from theory to practice.

DEBATE ARTICLE

We need a scientific approach to religion



It is therefore correct to say that on a basic theoretical or philosophical level there is a deep and irreconcilable contradiction between Marxism-Leninism and religion. The one proceeds from material practice via a scientific method to its theory. The other proceeds from a religious ideal via faith to its practical actions. And on this level, the two stand diametrically opposed.

However, this is only one side of the story. We have seen how the two perspectives differ. But do they have any points of convergence? The perspectives and methods of Marxism-Leninism enable it to expose and explain the realities of oppression in South African today, as well as to frame guidelines for practical action to end that oppression. For this reason, communists have taken their stand in the struggle and fight side by side with the broad masses of our people to put an end to national oppression and to achieve a democratic society - a struggle that is for us the first vital step towards a socialist transformation of our society.

But we also find many religious comrades fighting alongside us in the same struggle, guided by their reli-

gious ideals to fight for liberation and justice. This is because certain (but by no means all) religious perspectives emphasise a commitment to the poor, the dispossessed, the oppressed, and support the struggles of ordinary people for personal, political and economic freedom.

Therefore, in practical terms we communists find ourselves in alliance with many religious believers in our common struggle. We share the same trench. But what unites us is our practice, our common actions in struggle against oppression, and not our theory. Faced with the active, antagonistic contradiction between ourselves and the forces of apartheid, the basic theoretical contradiction between religion and communism becomes non-antagonistic and largely irrelevant.

A firm stand

The nature of the differences between communism and religion, as outlined above, do not warrant - in the current situation - a specific prohibition on believers joining the party. However, the party must take a firm stand in its own ranks against manifestations of idealism and against unscientific analysis.

Comrades, we must be absolutely clear on all of the above. To equivocate over these points of difference and of unity, as the Umsebenzi article does, is a disservice to both religious persons and communists alike. How can we be really clear on why and how we stand united in our common struggle, unless we start by knowing where and why we differ? Only on this basis of accurate analysis and full understanding can we build a strong and lasting alliance of unity in action.

• Umsebenzi invites further contributions on this topic.

Unity in action!

An open letter to Pallo Jordan

Dear comrade Pallo Jordan

What I am about to say in this letter I have already raised with you personally. But since I wish to deal with some widely published remarks of yours, it seems only fair to our readers that the reply should also be public.

I have in mind your paper, 'The Crisis of Conscience in the SACP', originally published in Transformation, and now re-published several times over. There are many excellent and thought-provoking points in your paper. It's not the purpose of this letter to itemise the many positive features in your article - things we can learn from and things requiring further discussion.

Let's just say that it's refreshing to have intelligent, robust debate within the ranks of our national liberation alliance.

But let's also remember, waving the banner of anti-Stalinism doesn't guarantee any of us against falling into Stalinist habits. Unsubstantiated, simplistic, sweeping condemnations are a case in point.

In your article you claim that "the

political culture nurtured by the SACP's leadership over the years has produced a spirit of intolerance, petty intellectual thuggery and political dissembling among its membership which regularly emerges in the pages of both the African Communist and Umsebenzi".

Those are serious charges - although, of course, they are very fashionable just at the moment.

I am writing as a member of the Umsebenzi editorial collective, and I want to confine myself to the case of this journal.

I do not believe you could single out one clear instance (let alone "regular" instances) of intolerance, petty intellectual thuggery and political dissembling appearing in the pages of our journal.

The whole Umsebenzi project has been based on the objective of encouraging critical and self-critical thought within the Party and broad liberation alliance.

As you know, with the exception of the last two issues of Umsebenzi, our journal has been illegal since its launch in 1986. Copies have circu-

lated inside our country with great difficulty and at high risk. Some of our most devoted readers have only managed to secure the odd, battered copy over the last several years.

The majority of our readers have not, unlike yourself, been able to sit down and read the entire series of Umsebenzis at their leisure.

This makes your throw-away remarks all the more problematic. Umsebenzi readers (never mind the rabid anti-communists circling on the peripheries) are likely now to wonder if there is perhaps some intolerant, petty thuggery and dissembling that they have missed.

No doubt, there have been Umsebenzi articles with which you might not have agreed. Me too. But that's a completely different matter, isn't it?

To make serious allegations which cannot be substantiated is surely to come very close to indulging in precisely the petty intellectual thuggery you are attacking?

Yours in the struggle (including the struggle against anti-democratic behaviour within our broad ranks),

Jeremy Cronin

What is the current role of the SACP?

The SACP enjoys great popularity among the masses. But we need to be very careful not to be complacent.

The Party, like the ANC, has entered a new phase of struggle, which throws up questions we cannot easily answer. It is by no means clear what the precise role of the Communist Party is in this new, changed situation.

This situation has serious dangers. All eyes have been fixed and fixated on the negotiation process. We have, within the broad liberation alliance, stopped evaluating our progress towards national liberation.

And in the light of the present crisis in socialism, it is no longer easy to define the role of any Communist Party.

The first step may need to be identifying the present strategic priorities of the liberation movement as a whole. Having identified these, we can focus on the role of the Communist Party in helping their realisation.

The main goal of the current phase is to secure the transfer of power to the people, to secure democracy - which in South Africa means national liberation.

But the question of democracy within society cannot be separated from democracy within the ANC and all the other formations of the mass movement against apartheid.

Building the ANC is simultaneously part of the process of building the new, democratic South Africa. It is in this process that the participation of Communists must be prioritised.

Both the legal ANC and the SACP may have had to be re-established from the top downwards and it is only now with branch and region formation that the process of empowerment of ordinary members has started.

An important element of this democratic process needs to be the increased involvement of ordinary members in the process of decision-making and policy formation. To be in the forefront of the struggle for democracy, within the liberation movement and within society as a whole, would be one of the ways of clarifying the role of the Party.

'Party Veteran'

Viva the spirit of glasnost!

Party Pioneers: Bopape from Brakpan

ON THURSDAY August 10, 1944, the gates of Brakpan Location stayed closed.

All 7 000 workers who served in the factories, shops and kitchens of "white" Brakpan stayed at home.

The school bells of the location rang as usual, but the classrooms remained empty.

That afternoon, teachers, mothers and schoolchildren marched under banners declaring: 'No Bopape, No School!'

Brakpan's white town councillors rushed to the location, but were told firmly that this was between the community and the school superintendent.

Who was Bopape, the cause of the unheard of disruption in this small East Rand town?

David Wilcox Bopape, born in 1915, was a school teacher, son of a farm labour tenant near Pietersburg. Educated at a mission school near Middelburg, he took up a teaching post in Brakpan location in 1939.

Bopape held a number of political positions: ANC Transvaal secretary, founder member of the ANC Youth League, national secretary of the Anti-Pass Campaign and a leading member of the Transvaal African Teachers' Association.

He was active in local politics too - as secretary of the Location Child and Welfare Association, and a member of both the Vigilance Association and Residents' Association.

Party member

But the key to his remarkable activism was his membership of the Communist Party.

The Party, says Bopape today, gave him political direction, education and support. It was the Party which en-

**School teacher
DAVID BOPAPE
played a major role in
building popular
organisation on the East Rand**



couraged him to engage in struggles on a grass-roots level as well as on the broader political front.

He remembers clearly his first experience with the Party.

"It was early in 1940 ... I went to a big rally held in Gandhi Hall. On the platform they had people who reflected solidarity with the people of South Africa - a 'coloured' man, a black man, a white man. I liked that."

He joined the Party a few months later, after hearing Party leader Yusuf Dadoo speak. "Dr Dadoo was a wonderful speaker," says Bopape. "He was a man of the time, like Churchill was a man of that time. The man was dynamite."

World War II, which began in 1939, had ushered in a period of rapid economic growth.

But as black people flocked to the cities, neither the municipalities nor employers were willing to put up enough funds for housing.

And South Africa's cheap labour system kept wages miserably low - so low it was impossible to survive without supplementing them.

Apartheid was not yet formal government policy, but racist laws and racial segregation flourished.

Black workers were forbidden by law to belong to recognised trade unions or to go on strike.

Women, struggling for ways of earning more money to supplement meagre family wages, were constantly harassed.

In Brakpan Location police con-

stantly raided homes in search of paying tenants staying without permits.

They also checked frequently for evidence of beer brewing - banned by most municipalities because they wanted to monopolise this activity themselves.

They wanted to use the profits to run - and control - the townships.

ANC branch

Two years after Bopape joined the Communist Party, he revived the Brakpan branch of the ANC, mobilising support particularly among older residents, teachers and women. The women strongly supported him - it was their living the authorities were trying to smash.

Bopape and the local ANC branch opposed the Brakpan town council on many issues.

They criticised the system of lodgers' permits, low wages at a time of rapidly rising prices, and the law against brewing.

One evening, the Brakpan town council called the Residents' Association and other groups to meet the new "manager of native affairs".

Bopape was the residents' main speaker: "I said there must be no more managers. The council must be one council for both the blacks and whites - one man one vote for the council, for the town council of any city."

This shocked the right-wing town council, and Bopape was dismissed from the school.

The location was outraged. Bopape had been dismissed for political, not professional, reasons. The response was so solid and clear that the town council quickly capitulated. They agreed to reinstate Bopape.



Part of the crowd of 20 000 people who marched against passes at Market Square, Johannesburg in May 1944. INSET: David Bopape.

But he had by then been drawn into anti-pass activities.

Both in the towns and the countryside, the militancy of ordinary people was growing. People began to resist their appalling living and working conditions.

In 1942 the government reacted by embarking on a series of mass pass raids.

As secretary of the Anti-Pass Campaign, Bopape found himself travelling to "towns, villages, locations, compounds and factories" throughout the country, mobilising people to join the campaign.

By then he had also been appointed full-time secretary of the ANC, and was addressing meetings all over South Africa, from Sekhukhuniland in the northern Transvaal to Paarl in the Western Cape.

Dadoo

There was great popular support for the campaign: the pass deeply affected the lives of all African families.

Initiated by Dr Dadoo, the campaign was also significant because it began to draw together different organisations.

"We invited all movements - church movements, stokvel movements, civic associations, the trade unions - all of them were invited to the Trades Hall,"

Bopape remembers.

The response was so great that the ANC eventually joined, and its president, Dr Xuma, was elected chairman. The campaign now included the Communist Party, the ANC and the Transvaal and Natal Indian Congresses.

It attracted huge rallies and marches. People bought and wore anti-pass badges in the ANC colours.

A year later, the Anti-Pass Committee presented the acting Prime Minister with a list of hundreds of thousands of signatures.

But the pass laws remained. The war was coming to an end and the government was thinking ahead to the next elections.

It hardened its attitude towards black opposition. When the mine-workers went on strike for higher wages in 1946, the government ruthlessly crushed them.

But resistance continued. The number of strikes, bus boycotts, squatter camp and education struggles grew. Members of the Communist Party were almost always involved.

White right-wingers began to agitate against the Party and call for greater control over blacks in the city, with the National Party in the forefront of the campaign.

In 1948, the Nationalists won the election - apartheid became official

government policy.

The pass laws were tightened, group areas, race classification, job reservation, control of land and other racist laws were extended.

In 1950 the Nationalists banned the Communist Party.

This set the scene for the radicalisation of the ANC. Urged by some of the youth leaguers and its Communist Party members, including Bopape, the ANC launched its Defiance Campaign in 1952.

Last stand

It was to be Bopape's last stand in public. With other Party members, he was "listed" and forced to resign his post as ANC Transvaal secretary. Bopape and Dr Dadoo defied their bannings by attending a Defiance Campaign meeting. They were arrested and charged, but were eventually released with suspended sentences.

Although forbidden from doing so, Bopape continued to keep in touch with old comrades.

Today, he is proud that Brakpan sent more defiers to the campaign than any other town on the Rand. And he honours Andries Raditsela, the shop steward from Brakpan, killed in 1983 while in detention. The militant tradition, going back to that far-off day in 1944, lives on in the East Rand.

Build people's self-defence units!

1. Introduction

The ugly violence that has been unleashed against township residents makes the question of self-defence a vital necessity.

In the past our attempts to defend ourselves have been spontaneous and sometimes poorly-planned, and lacking in discipline.

What we need is an organised and disciplined force, guided by political leadership, which will serve both to protect the community and to ensure law and order.

2. Self-Defence is a Right!

The government allows Inkatha impis to carry so-called "cultural" weapons and to mobilise in battle formations. Minister Vlok tells the AWB with its military camps that there is nothing wrong with "self-protection" provided the commandos do not attack anyone.

Our people, who are overwhelmingly the victims of the violence, demand the right of self-protection too. This is a political demand and a right. It must resound throughout our country.

We do not intend to attack anybody but we demand the right to protect our lives, our families, our homes, our communities!

Clearly we cannot rely on the apartheid police and army.

When they are not attacking us they are siding with the attacking impis and vigilantes.

The impression that the sinister hit-squads are recruited from their ranks is very strong too. No! If we are to protect our lives then we must rely on our own strength, organisation and resources.

Our strength is in our numbers

BUILDING SELF-DEFENCE UNITS A new Umsebenzi series



but it must be organised strength. A group of 200 armed thugs cannot possibly overcome a township of 20 000 if the people are ready, prepared and organised.

3. About this series

This series will attempt to give guidance and provide ideas on the building of defence units. It should, however, be viewed as a contribution to the on-going discussions that are taking place everywhere.

To be relevant our series requires comments and contributions from activists who have gained invaluable experience over the years in the struggles to defend their communities.

There is a wealth of experience that has been growing up out of township and rural resistance. Theory must grow out of practice and in turn guide practice.

4. Tackling the problem

How do we build defence units? We need to tackle the problem in an organised and systematic way.

We cannot simply rely on calling together any group of people off the streets and run about haphazard in the face of attack.

There are various elements and tasks we will have to tackle. Amongst these are

- Organisation
- Structure
- Recruitment
- Training

- Communication
- Intelligence (gathering of information on hostile forces)
- Observation (of hostile force movements)
- Barricades and fortifications
- Weapons
- Tactics
- Plan of operation (which requires study of the area).

5. Organisation

The setting up of a defence system for a township or area must first be discussed with the local organisations such as ANC and SACP branch, civics, trade unions, women, youth groups and other formations.

These organisations should discuss the idea with the community at large, and ensure the community's understanding and acceptance.

The local, popular organisations should then elect or appoint a committee for self-defence. This committee will be responsible for the protection of the community.

It should be composed of reliable and decisive people who have the ability to organise and command without being dictatorial.

Comrades with military skills, such as MK ex-prisoners or reliable ex-policemen, will play an important role.

It is important to stress that the committee is appointed by the popular organisations and that anyone who proves unsatisfactory can be immediately replaced by these organisations.

Defend the people!

The committee serves the community and the people's organisations and is subservient to them.

But at the time of attack or impending danger all must obey the orders of the defence committee.

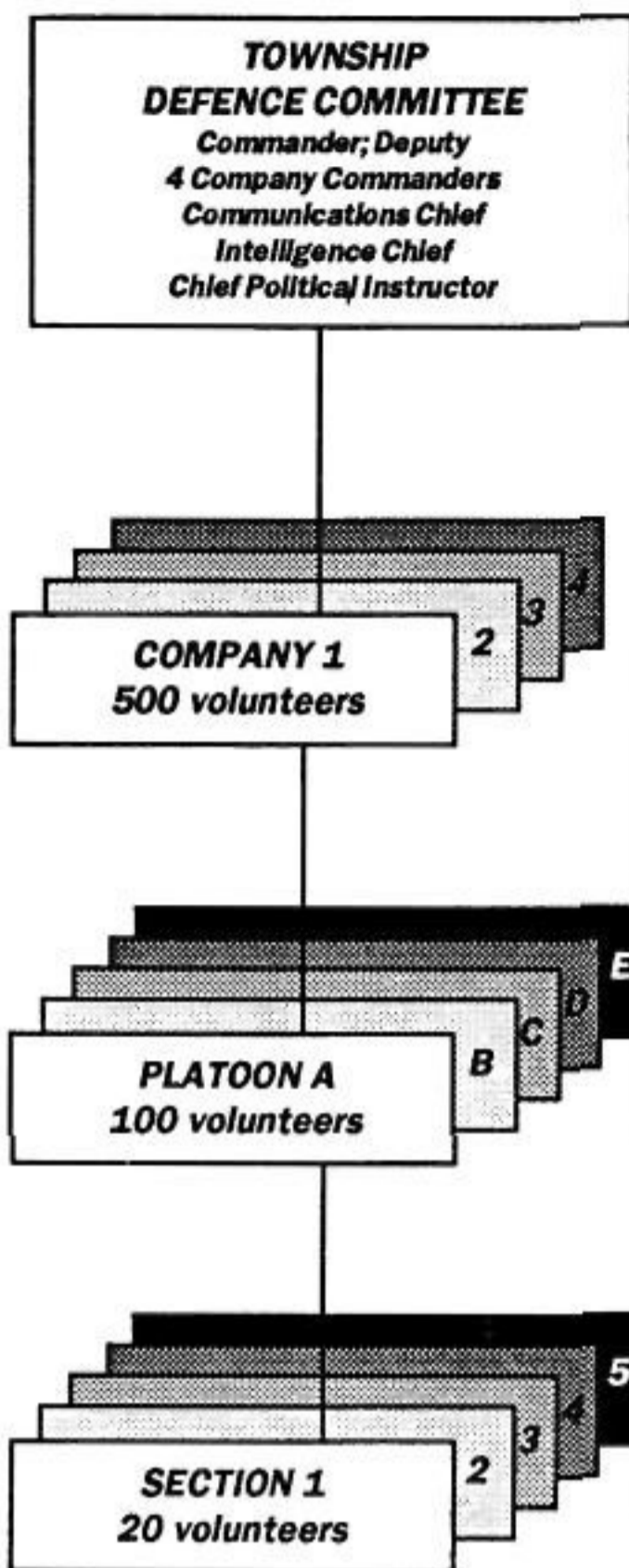
The committee must be headed by a commander who works with a deputy (2nd in command), and about six or seven others (depending on the township's size) who head the various defence formations and structures - company commanders plus those responsible for communications, intelligence, political instruction, etc.

6. Structure

Under the defence committee are the various defence units. These should be organised along para-military lines. Experience will show what the most manageable size of a basic unit or section should be.

Twenty volunteers could conveniently make up the basic section which is headed by a section leader and deputy.

Each section is responsible for the defence of a single street - from one intersection to the next.



Five sections could make up a platoon (100 volunteers) which defends a block of five streets (see diagram).

Five platoons could form a company (500 volunteers) with the responsibility of defending 25 streets (intersection to intersection in block formation).

Four companies (2000 volunteers) should be sufficient for the defence of a township of 20 000 inhabitants.

These companies constitute the Township Defence Force.

The rest of the population should be organised in an auxiliary or support capacity assisting at the section level.

This support should be organised with the assistance of the township street committees where these exist.

Every person, young and old, has a role to play and all should be organised (more about this later).

7. Recruitment

Joining the defence units must be on a voluntary basis.

The volunteers must be carefully selected. Criminals and other unreliable elements must be excluded until they reform and prove their reliability.

Would-be recruits must be screened and checked by the street committees and popular organisations so as to prevent infiltration by izimpimpis.

The capability of the volunteers must be constantly developed.

They must undergo physical fitness training within their sections; receive education about their role as defenders of the community; and be trained to understand the needs of discipline and to obey orders.

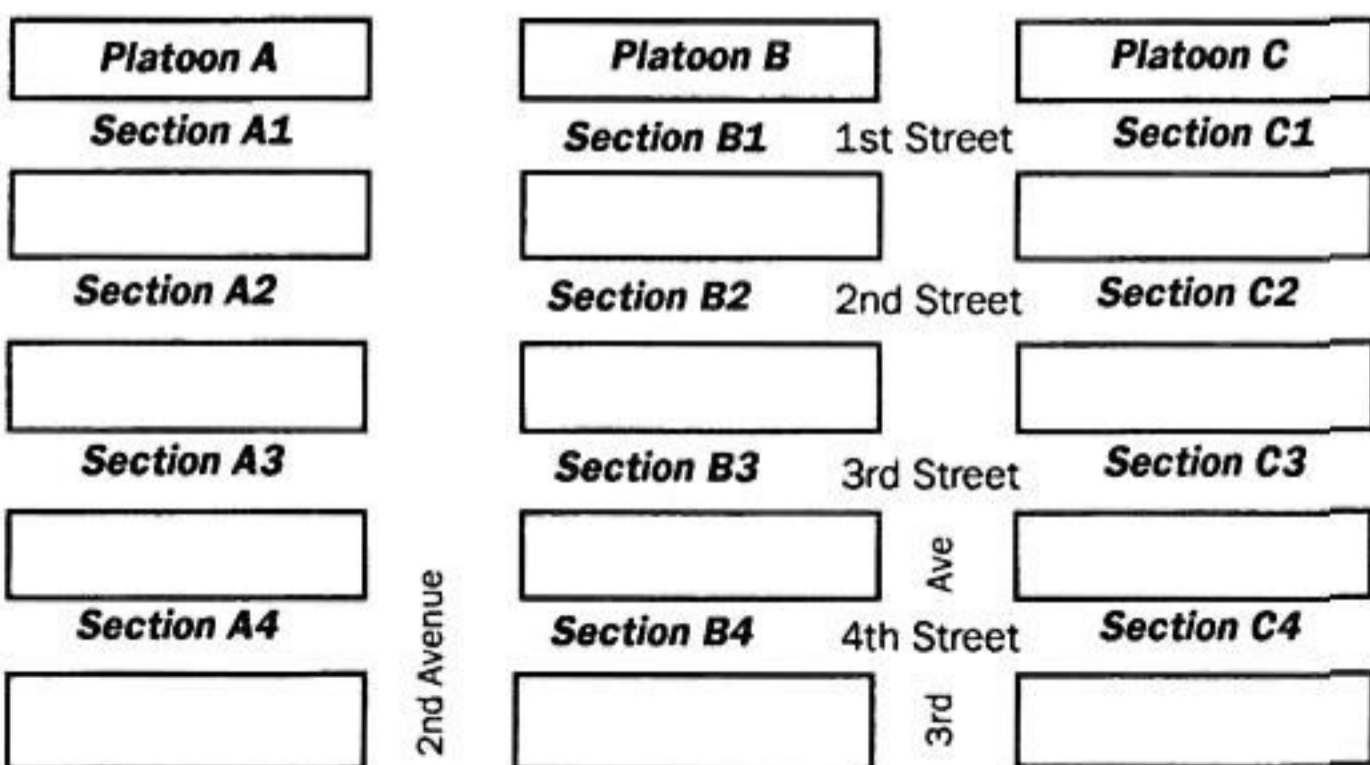
The wearing of uniforms, drilling and political education will build the required discipline and morale.

Those with outstanding qualities are appointed to leadership positions.

In this way we will build defence organs that serve the people and complement our political organisations.

• To be continued...

STREET DEFENCE SYSTEM



In this system Section 1 of B Platoon (B1) defends 1st Street, between 2nd and 3rd Avenues, and the houses on the north and south sides of 1st street. The five sections of B Platoon defend the houses on 1st to 4th Streets between 2nd and 3rd Avenues.

Free all political prisoners!

Party Flashes

• **Transkei launch**

The Transkei SACP Regional Launch Rally will be held in Umtata on October 28. Speakers include Joe Slovo and Chris Hani.

• **Eastern Cape and Border launch**

The Eastern Cape and Border SACP Regions will be launching at a joint rally in Port Elizabeth on November 11.

• **Transvaal SACP region interim working group**

The following comrades have been announced as an interim leadership working group to start the process of SACP branch formation in the Transvaal: Stanley Nkosi, Moses Mayekiso, Bob Mabaso, Sam Shilowa, Benny Monama, Lisa Seftel, Gwede Mantashe, Mandla Nkompfe, Vusi Mavuso, Zwelinzima Vavi, Bobby Marie, Nomvula Mokonyane, Mike Roussos, Feroz Cachalia, Jerry Majatladi, Ismail Momoniat, Duma Nkosi, James Maseko, Elias Motsoaledi, Joyce Kgoali, Ignatius Jacobs, Andrew Zulu, and Paul Mashatile

• **Western Cape SACP region interim working group**

A similar working group has been formed in the Western Cape.

It includes Reg September, Ray Alexander, Jack Simons, Garth Strachan, Zollie Malindi, Cheryl Carolus, Mountain Qumbela, Alan Roberts, Nosie Pieterse, Liz Abrahams, Noma-India Mfeketo, Rose Sonto, Lumko Huna, Desi Angelis and Murray Michel.



Where to contact the SACP

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TRANSKEI

38 Spridge Street, Umtata

Build the Party!