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WIP 91 • AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1993

# PROGRESS

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- The Workers' Party debate
- Making sense of negotiations
- The WIP Readership Survey



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Why South Africa needs its own Truth Commission

# Digging for the truth

# Editorial comment

# Digging in the dirt

**A**lmost a year ago, this magazine ran a ground-breaking article which looked at the question of a general amnesty for South Africa's war criminals.

We're doing it again.

Only this time, there's a real sense of urgency. As we move towards a negotiated settlement, the amnesty debate takes on increasing importance.

Why? Because a negotiated settlement isn't enough to ensure peace and justice in South Africa. We need reconciliation and political tolerance, to try and heal the wounds of the past.

Hundreds, even thousands of South Africans have their own skeletons in the cupboard. For years, they've run dirty tricks, covert operations and other acts of terror.

The murderers who deprived our country of leaders like Matthew Goniwe, Griffiths and Victoria Mxenge, David Webster and so many others have a lot to answer for. So too do the shady characters who orchestrate other political violence — attacks on hostels, forays into informal settlements, drive-by shootings in white suburbs, grenade attacks on churches ... the list is almost endless.

The operative word here is anger. Covert operations have driven division into our society, leaving thousands of angry South Africans in their wake. They've lost parents, children, relatives and friends. And, as Lloyd Vogelmann argues in his article on page



14, it's important that this anger is dealt with.

'Unless victims are encouraged to express their anger in non-violent ways,' he states, 'it will more than likely be taken out on those closest to them — such as family members. Alternatively, it will be directed toward the self, resulting in tendencies such as alcoholism, drug abuse and suicide.'

'And unless we create a South Africa which demonstrates to the survivors that their trials and tribulations

have meaning and have led to something better, we will create a generation of cynics and misanthropes.'

In this edition of WIP, we look at what is possible. Among other things, we try to warn of the danger of glossing over the amnesty debate — or trading away an amnesty during political negotiations.

We also look at the feasibility of an official Truth Commission, set up by the negotiating forum to probe the past and investigate specific human rights abuses.

From our enquiries, there seems to be widespread support for a Truth Commission. The challenge now is to ensure it is taken up within the negotiating forum — and that the search for the truth is a key part of any negotiated settlement.

— Chris Vick

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## WHY I'D LIKE TO BE A KANGAROO

Albertina Sisulu speaks personally — and admits that she longs to have a warm pouch where her children can hide

— *Page 8*



## DIGGING FOR THE TRUTH

The amnesty debate is far from dead and buried. WIP gauges support for a UN-supervised Truth Commission to probe the sins of the past

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## STATE OF THE STATE

Hein Marais tries to make sense of the National Party. And it ain't easy

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## WILL A WORKERS' PARTY WORK?

We can learn a few lessons from Brazil, says Jeremy Cronin. Just a few

— *Page 30*

## BABYLON BY BUS

Mozambicans brave the Tete corridor 'hell run' to make contact with long-lost relatives. We find out why

— *Page 39*



## Restructuring through the back door

MERE MONTHS BEFORE A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, the government has rammed through parliament a package of legislation that seems aimed at sabotaging democratic solutions to South Africa's land problem.

While eyes were trained on the multiparty negotiating forum, the government during two weeks in July hur-

ried through a series of bills that cater for the privatisation of communal, trust and state land. There was no public debate nor was there independent evidence presented to the select committees reviewing them.

Buried in nine pieces of legislation are far-reaching measures that form the framework for restructuring land tenure on the basis of large-scale privatisation.

Similar measures were blocked by groups in 1991 when they forced the withdrawal of the Rural Development Bill. This time the measures were

slipped "through the back door", hidden in vaguely titled legislation like the *General Law Second Amendment Act 108 of 1993*.

In a statement, the ANC advises "the government and future recipients of the land that it does not consider itself bound to honour transactions" under the acts. It warns that "hasty and ill-managed privatisation of existing traditional and informal land rights can lead to large-scale dispossession, removals and instability in land rights".

The National Land Committee (NLC), which also objects to the moves, accuses the government of ignoring "the right and complex diversity of tenure forms existing in South Africa" and of implementing "policy that has been widely criticised and rejected ... months before a democratic election".

### Findings pre-empted

The findings of a major World Bank study on appropriate tenure rights have been pre-empted with this manoeuvre, charges the ANC. Private ownership is the only form of tenure catered for in the acts facilitating the transfer of state, communal and trust land.

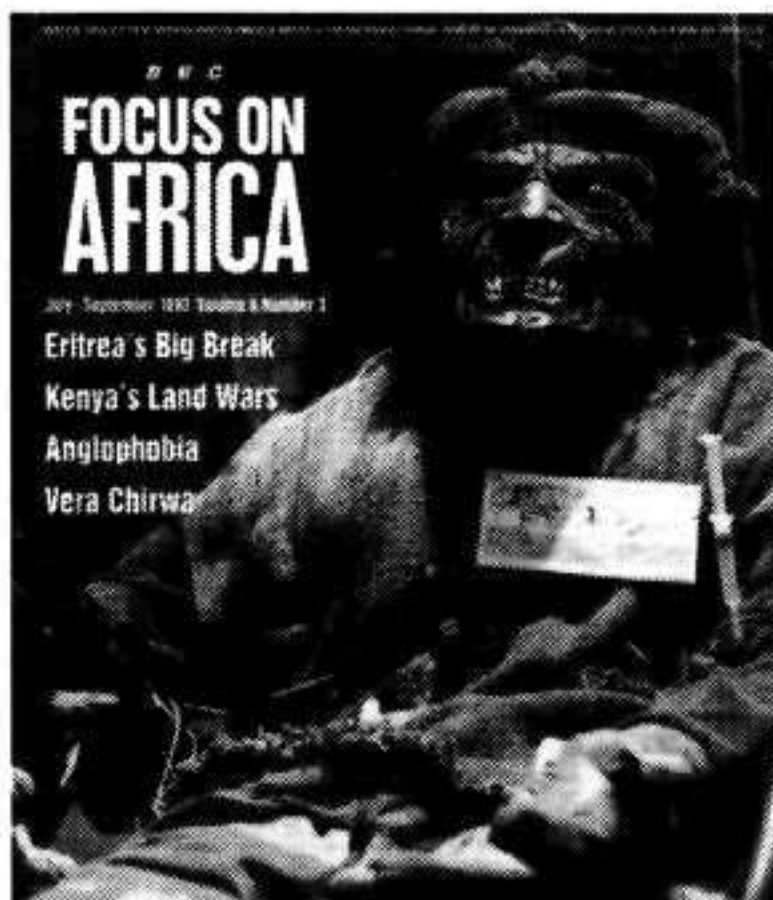
Several of the acts also serve notice that the government is in no mood yet to relent to a year-long campaign demanding a moratorium on the sale and transfer of state land. The legislation provides mechanisms for transferring large portions of land to bantustan government and other apartheid-era institutions.

This badly undermines a future land distribution programme, warns the NLC. "Land, as a physical asset, once disposed of, is extremely hard to recover."

The legislation includes the *General Law Second Amendment Act*, the *Distribution and Transfer of Certain State Land Act* and the *Provision of Certain Land for Settlement Act*. ■

— Hein Marais

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LAND

## Congress of the (rural) people

RURAL COMMUNITIES HAVE COME UP with a way of getting their issues on the political agenda — invite the key decision-makers to hear about those issues firsthand.

A rural summit — the first of its kind — is planned for next February, when more than 1 000 rural representatives will meet at what has already been dubbed the “Congress of the Rural People”.

And among those invited to attend, and hear about the problems, are the major players in the multi-party negotiations.

One of the major objectives of the conference is an attempt to unite rural and landless people around common demands. Organisers hope these can be presented as a Land Charter, which in turn will give impetus to the development of a rural social movement.

Among those targetted for participation are farmworker communities, labour tenants, people who were forcibly removed, people in informal settlements and landless people from all over the country.

A key aspect of the conference is the participation of all rural communities. Because of this, organisers are putting a lot of emphasis on consulta-

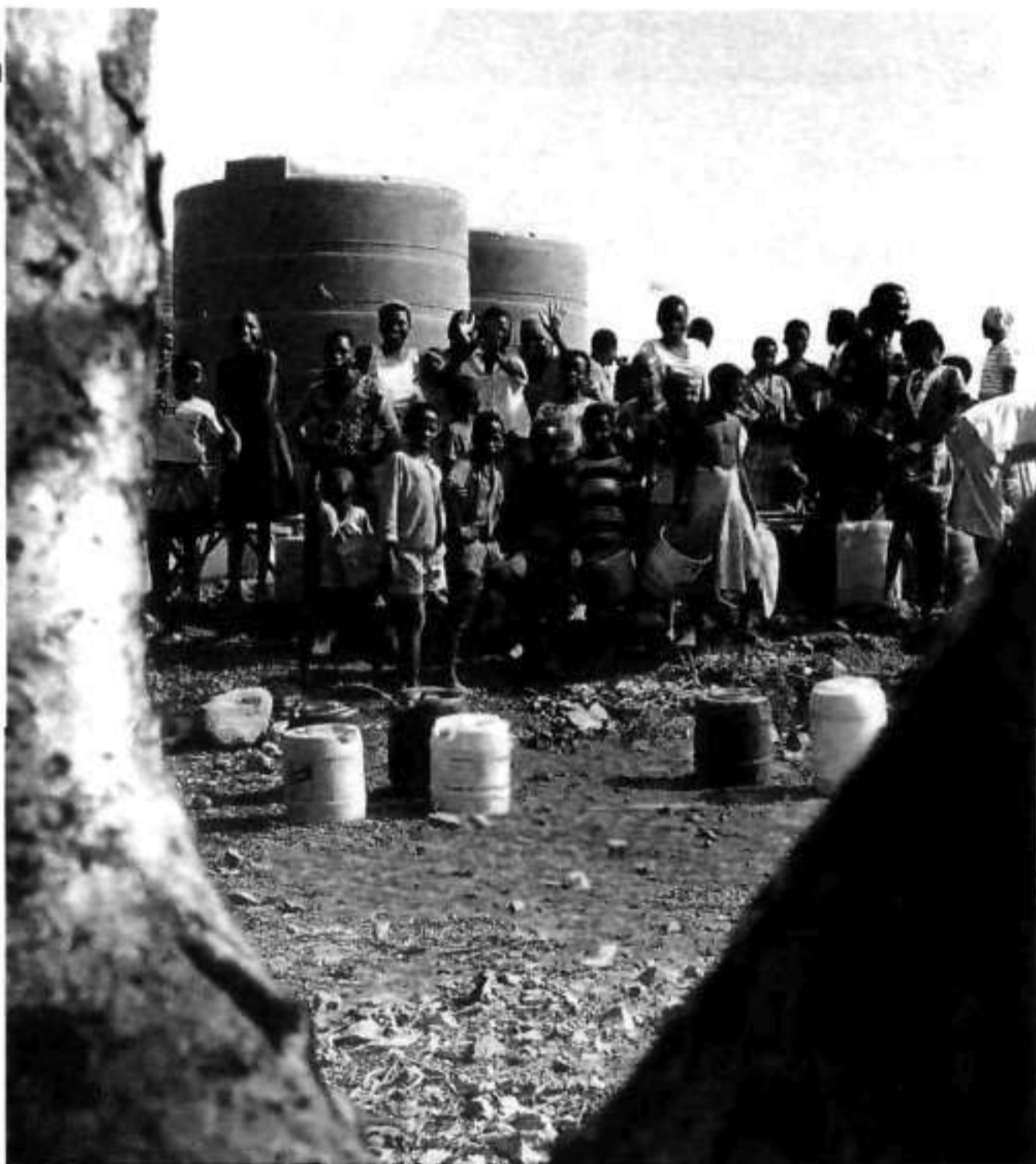


PHOTO: FRANCIENE JOSS

### ■ BACK ON THE MAP: Trying to get rural issues on the political agenda

tion within communities, and mandated representatives.

“We want this to be a community-driven conference,” says organiser Jabu Dada. Communities have to hold at least one local meeting to discuss problems, solutions and demands, and to

elect two representatives to attend the conference. Regional meetings are also planned to prepare delegates.

The process is being co-ordinated by the National Land Committee and its nine affiliates around the country. ■

— Land Update

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ANGOLA

Gunning for oil

UNITA IS LIMBERING UP FOR WHAT MIGHT become the decisive part of its war against Angolan government forces.

Increased Unita activity in the Cabinda enclave — surrounded by Zaire and flanked by the Atlantic Ocean — has followed an attack by Unita fighters there in early February. Seizure of the Malongo oil installations in Cabinda would choke Luanda's economic lifeline.

Several Cabindan separatist factions are active in the enclave, among them the *Frente para Libertacao do Enclave do Cabinda Renovado* (FLEC-R) which held several talks with Unita leader Jonas Savimbi in 1992.

The bulk of Angola's R10 900-million annual oil revenue comes from Cabinda. And without it, the govern-

ment's war effort will grind to a halt.

Most of the oil companies operating in the enclave are American.

Until June, Unita had refrained from attacking US interests in Angola, but Washington's recognition of the elected Angolan government might change that. Unita then shelled a tanker operated by Texaco oil company off the Soyo coast. It missed — but the message was clear.

Provincial autonomy

Luanda is trying to woo FLEC-R's rival, *Forças Armadas do Cabinda* (FLEC-FAC), into a deal that would give the enclave provincial autonomy plus a 10% share of the oil revenue generated there (more than R3 500 per head). So far, FLEC-FAC is not biting.

There are fears also of a possible joint Unita-Zaire joint offensive in the enclave. Zairean troops participated in

Unita attacks on Soyo in January, when the *Division Speciale Presidentielle* helped capture oil installations and was set loose on a looting spree.

Angolan forces complained that artillery bombardments were launched from Zairean soil when Unita attacked Soyo again in May. Now there are reports that six Zairean army battalions have been deployed on the border of Cabinda.

Zaire's Mobuto Sese Seko might feel he can deflect international attention from his embattled reign by stoking the war in neighbouring Angola. But it is uncertain whether he will risk Washington's wrath by joining in an attack on US oil interests in Cabinda.

However, for Savimbi, who needs a spectacular success almost a year after restarting the civil war, Cabinda beckons.

— *Africa Confidential* / SARDC

VENEZUELA

Another one bites the dust

VENEZUELA'S CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ IS the second Latin American neo-liberal president this year to be forced from office on charges of corruption.

The downfall of CAP (as Perez is known) in June saw thousands of demonstrators cheering and setting off fireworks as he tearfully addressed the nation. Perez's administration had been rocked by corruption scandals.

One of South America's longest continuous democracies, Venezuela has been ruled by civilians since 1958. Oil wealth made Caracas one of the continent's most sophisticated and modern cities.

During the boom years the poor were placated via the time-honoured routes of populism and clientelism. Food prices were heavily subsidised, and city slums were modernised.

This system came crashing down

in the 1980s — the result of foreign debt and the sharp fall in the oil price. By 1989, when CAP took office for a second term, it was no longer possible to maintain his "populist system of conciliation".

CAP pledged to protect the poor, but his economic recipe was straight from the IMF cookbook. Government spending was slashed, import duties lowered and subsidies cut for food, water, electricity and transportation.

That quickly provoked "27-F" — February 27, 1989, the first of four days of bloody riots in which security forces killed hundreds of people, almost all in the *barrios*.

The past three years have seen huge GDP growth — 10,4% in 1991 — drawing praise from the West for the Venezuelan "miracle". But the benefits of growth have been distributed narrowly, with a few growing rich in the stock market and through shady financial deals. The "miracle" is seen in the 10 daily flights between Caracas and

Miami, where the rich go to play and shop in the chic boutiques stocked with imported clothing and yuppie toys.

Meanwhile, the real minimum wage in 1991 was just 44% of its 1987 value. The number of people living below the poverty line leapt from 15% in 1988 to 41% in 1991. Social spending, already badly cut, will fall another 12% this year.

Social discontent has grown steadily, with strikes and protests a regular feature. Security forces have killed at least 430 people in the last four years. Hundreds of others died in last year's coup attempts.

December's election may shatter Venezuela's two-party system. The strongest opposition candidates are populist Rafael Caldera, and leftist Andre Velasques of Causa Radical. But many voters are fed up with democracy and will sit out the balloting; pollsters are already predicting record abstentions.

— *The Nation*



ERITREA

The morning after

FOUR MONTHS INTO THEIR HARD-WON INDEPENDENCE, Eritreans are staring in the eye that inevitable question of the Morning After Victory: What now?

The challenges that confront Eritreans will require the determination that saw them trounce Ethiopia on the battlefield and the single-mindedness that saw 99,8% of voters opt for independence in the April referendum.

Entire cities lie in ruins — including Massawa port, once hailed as Africa's most beautiful city. Three in four Eritreans depend on food handouts to stay alive. Half a million Eritreans are still in Sudanese refugee camps — 100 000 of their compatriots were killed in the war.

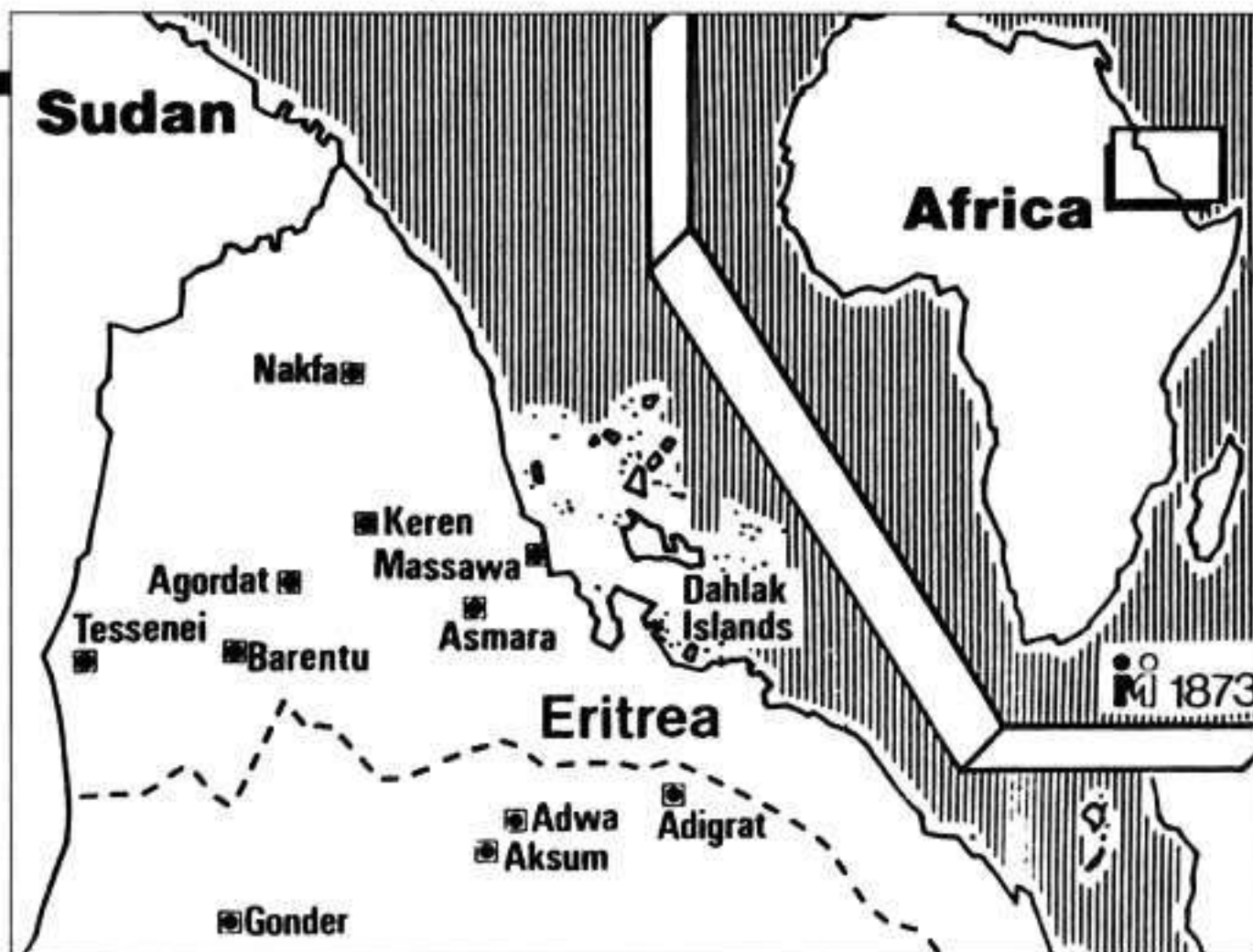
Several tests await the provisional government of the left-inclined Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF). Can it deliver the social justice, broad economic equality and land reform it espouses while also catering to Western donors demands for economic "realism", code for free market policies?

Last year EPLF leaders sent US Agency for International Development officials packing when USAID tried to link an R80-million aid package to a privatisation programme.

That sort of pluck now seems to have been tempered. "We want to create an enabling environment for international investment," former EPLF hard-liner Haile Woldentensai was recently quoted as saying. The World Bank has added R460-million to an international recovery fund, presumably acknowledging the surge of "realism" in the Eritrean capital, Asmara.

The investment code, though, is not totally mercenary. It calls for 51% local ownership of strategic ventures while mining operations must involve the state. Government monopolies are ruled out.

The government is eyeing tourism as a healthy foreign exchange earner, touting year-round bathing, good fish-



ing waters and 300 islands as a surefire attraction.

Visitors still return from Eritrea with stories reminiscent of the early days of the Nicaraguan revolution or Thomas Sankara's spunky experiments in Burkina Faso. Diplomats talk of being able to leave cars unlocked, factory owners brag that stock never seems to go missing. EPLF secretary-general Isasias Afewerki works without a salary, while other top rankers share cramped living quarters with each other.

No easy road

But these "Arcadian" images are unlikely to hold for long.

The transition to democracy will prove bumpy. The almost unanimous support for independence does not reflect social or political homogeneity. There are nine ethnic groups, each with its own language, and two major religions (Christianity and Islam).

On top of this is the formidable task of reintegrating the 100 000 EPLF fighters into civilian life. Many are still in a kind of limbo, working long hours for little or no pay beside better treated civil servants.

At least 30 000 of those fighters are women, whose experiences and sacrifices on the battlefield armed them with skills and high expectations.

"They're rejoining society to find that patriarchal village traditions have changed little," observes one report.

There were no women on the provisional government's slate last year, and it took dogged pressure from women's organisations to get the leadership to appoint women to four of the 16 cabinet posts.

The EPLF government has repeatedly promised to dissolve and make way for a multiparty constitution. So far, movement has been slight.

The EPLF has muzzled a fledgling human rights group that challenged its leading role, while another non-governmental organisation had its wings clipped because it had not registered itself "properly".

The government's anxiety is perhaps not all due to the paranoia generated by power. Having survived three decades of war through tenuous and shifting alliances, the EPLF has learnt to watch its back.

Now it finds (one-time ally) Sudan supporting Islamic fundamentalist groups in Eritrea, Saudia Arabia eyeing this cocky young state suspiciously from across the Red Sea and Ethiopia, now land-locked by Eritrea, yearning for sea access.

— Hein Marais



# Politics by opinion poll

More polls = More democracy? **BOB MATTES** jumps off the bandwagon with this sharp look at the political effects of public opinion polling

**C**ALLS FOR MORE POLLS ARE COMING from some rather divergent sources. We've seen the *Weekly Mail's* Philip van Niekerk summon more polls so we can discover the voice of the South African people. Now the Afrikaner Volksfront's Gen Constand Viljoen wants a public opinion poll to test the "will of the Afrikaner *volk*" on a homeland.

Both proposals succumb to the seductive notion that opinion polls unproblematically mirror the "will of the people", a notion that appeals especially to populist traditions of politics. As the father of modern opinion polling, George Gallup, once claimed: "It is my sincere belief that polls constitute the most useful instrument of democracy ever devised."

## One person, one vote

What are the apparent grounds for such optimism? First, the mathematical theory of random sampling upon which polling is based means all citizens have an equal chance of being interviewed. So polling promises a sort of "one person, one vote" which, in the case of SA, gives voice to previously suppressed majority opinion. Polls also promise to supplement elections by more frequently testing public opinion. They can amplify the otherwise silent majority by directly measuring the popular will — free of the biases imposed by activists, group leaders and the news media.

Some even argue that polls actually *improve* on elections, because they do not suffer from the distortions of registration, voter apathy, gerrymandering

or electoral systems. In sum, polling holds the promise of "one person, one vote, *all the time*".

Too good to be true? Exactly. Public opinion polling does not neutrally mirror political reality. It is a political instrument, and pollsters are political actors. Moreover, the widespread acceptance of polling has specific political consequences that the Left has to be alert to.

The need for caution goes far beyond the issue of the individual integrity of any specific pollster or researcher (as implied by the controversy involving the Human Sciences Research Council in *WIP88* and *89*).

Most crucial is the fact that there is *no single objective* way to collect and tally citizens' preferences. Different methods can provide different results. More importantly, we have no way to tell which election or poll result is a "true" reflection of opinion and which is an artefact of the method used. Regardless of their individual virtue, pollsters have to decide several seemingly "technical" questions; their answers can significantly affect the results. And there are usually no flat-out, "correct" solutions.

For instance, should pollsters question all adults, or only likely voters, people who have pondered the issue, or only those most likely to be affected by it? How do they measure knowledge or interest, or the likelihood of voting? Should they ask their questions in person or over the telephone? Should the interviewer be a woman or a man, black or white, Afrikaans or Xhosa? Should

they ask about Mandela's popularity immediately after a triumphant trip abroad (or De Klerk's immediately after a scandal or massacre), or wait awhile?

## Creating public opinion

Without being devious, pollsters can literally *create* public opinion where none existed before. Merely asking a ques-



PHOTO: RAFS MAYET



tion can set people thinking and create a debate. The very words used, and the alternatives posed, can shape respondents' opinions. Should the pollster force a choice between mass-action and negotiations, or offer a third alternative? Should they push those without an opinion on Apla into developing one quickly, or encourage people who don't know much about VAT to say so? Should they help those unfamiliar with the debate on federalism by attempting to describe the respective proposals?

Beyond all this, polling has enormous political implications for the Left. Popular opinion is generally expressed through forms of group action (such as marches, boycotts and strikes). South African politics is still shaped by the potential power expressed by membership lists and mass protests, or the real power shown by effective consumer boycotts and work stoppages.

Polls offer political leaders a new source of information which may reinforce judgments gathered from effective activist mobilisation — or, more importantly, they may challenge those judgments. To the extent that leaders rely on

polls, they might obtain *different* pictures of public opinion than if they set their bearings solely by the numbers of people marching, striking, boycotting or rioting.

Imagine this scenario: constitutional talks hit another pothole, and the ANC-COSATU alliance decide to roll out mass action one last time. We see the largest wave of marches, protests and stayaways in our history. The media conclude that the ANC has indeed won the battle of public opinion and the government has no choice but to accede to their demands. Then the SABC reports the results of a prestigious survey in which only 33% of black South Africans agree with the entire range of ANC demands and 35% actually support the government's position.

Impossible? Consider an HSRC poll last year on strategies for achieving change, conducted just prior to the mass action campaign. In contrast to conventional wisdom, it found that "the single most popular strategy among blacks is patient talks and negotiations (rather than mass action), even though these

may take a long time to bear fruit." The conclusion did require some inference and interpretation (though no more than past research I've seen from some progressive social scientists), but the poll was technically sufficient and would pass muster in any introductory social science methods course.

### The silent majorities

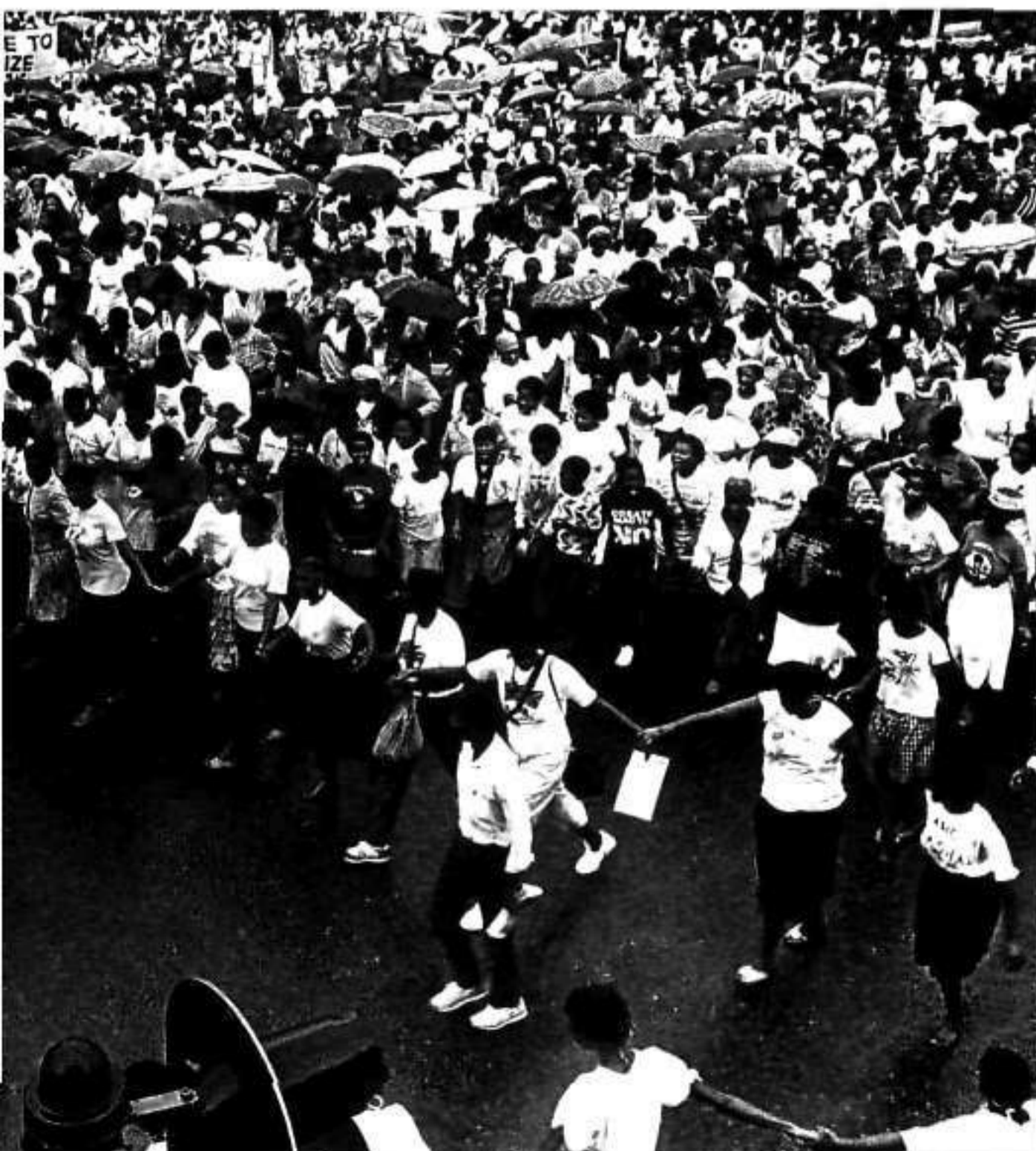
This raises a fundamental question of democratic theory. Whose views carry more weight: An intense, activist minority which cares enough about an issue to make a personal sacrifice to strike, march and boycott; or an apathetic, silent majority which only pollsters can hear?

The political implications are clear. Where polling is non-existent, or a curiosity, public opinion is a spontaneous, behavioural phenomenon dominated by groups and group leaders (largely on the left) who exercise their initiative of how and when to express themselves. Due to their scientific and democratic status, poll results may not only compete with, but actually overwhelm these "older" methods of popular expression. South African leaders who use polls to judge what is risky or feasible might act quite differently if they set those premises according to strikes and boycotts. This could diminish significantly the power of organisations on the left.

One can argue that polling, far from empowering the people, actually domesticates popular opinion and makes it a less dangerous and more predictable political force.

We are going to see much more public opinion polling, especially in the run-up to the election. It will help if we remind ourselves that the results of *any* poll will never truly reflect "the public will" — and they will always be, at least partially, a function of the polling method. This healthy scepticism might prevent the apathetic "silent majorities" created by polls from being used as a Machiavellian weapon against those people (usually numerical minorities) who actually have opinions and act on them. ■

● Bob Mattes teaches politics at the University of Cape Town. He is researching the political impact of public opinion polling and survey research in the USA and SA.



personally



**What animal best describes you?**

I'm in love with a kangaroo. It reminds me of a mother. She has a pouch to hide and protect her baby, and when they are both happy she lets the baby appear from the pouch.

**What did you think you would grow up to be?**

A teacher. As a child I admired one particular teacher who concentrated on the children who needed help. Her dedication and persistence impressed me so much. But, unfortunately because of the conditions (in this country) I could not be trained as one.

**And what would you love to do, but were always afraid to?**

I would have liked to be a professional woman ... to educate my brothers and sisters, to lend money to those who wanted an education.

**What is your greatest accomplishment?**

That's difficult to say. Certainly participating in putting together the Freedom Charter. Also, working to secure proper education for black children, and proper housing for all our people.

**If you were given the opportunity to speak at the multi-party talks, what would you say?**

Albertina Sisulu's name is synonymous with suffering. A woman of deep dignity and humility, she tells **Work In Progress** of the pain and hope of her daily life



■ **TOGETHER IN LOVE:** Ever since husband Walter's release, Albertina Sisulu has been at his side

The transitional period must not take very long because it will continue to feed the violence. The talks should not take more than three months to get to an interim government, and no longer than nine months for the constituent assembly.

**Where do you see South Africa 10 years from now?**

I'm optimistic. I think we are headed toward a democratic, non-sexist, non-racial society. A country where everyone will be free. Where people can live where they want, work where they want, go to school where they want and have freedom of speech.

**What is your most painful moment?**

To see the people of this country dying because of violence, murdered for no reason. Also, seeing so many homeless people suffering from unemployment.

**What makes you smile?**

When I think of a future, or when I see my grandchildren.

**Who was the greatest influence in your life?**

My husband and my God.

**What do you see as the future of women in South Africa?**

I see women holding the highest positions. I am already counting the years until we get a woman prime minister. Women will be involved in all parts of government, even as members of parliament.

**What is your worst habit?**

Feeling lonely at times. It comes quite often. Also, sleeplessness has become a habit. Perhaps from the strain of work.

**What makes you angry?**

Anything that is annoying. Especially people loitering in the streets doing drugs and causing trouble.

**Are you religious?**

Very much, I am a Roman Catholic.

**So who do you confide in?**

My husband, I trust nobody except him.

**What is the best way to combat gender inequality — for women to work from outside the system, or within it?**

To work within the system and educate men. Our duty is to stand up and fight against men, make them accountable for their actions. United as women, we can do it, we have already started. There were no women in the committees at the multi-party talks. We fought and argued, and now we are there. There are 15 women in the ANC NEC, we got there by protesting and staging a walk-out. We can break the yolk of oppression from our men.

**What is the most important lesson a mother can teach her child?**

A growing child needs to be taught discipline, the difference between right and wrong. Respect for education, and respect for elder people, regardless of who they are. Children must know the importance of an education, that it is

their job to go to school.

**If you could be dictator for a day what would you do?**

I would instruct everyone to be human, because what is happening in our country today is not human.

**You have suffered so much. If you could, would you change anything about the life you have had?**

I would have liked to go further with my education, but due to certain conditions I was not able to. What I can do now is see to it that my children go as far as they want to go.

**How have you dealt with all the suffering that you and your family have had to endure over the years?**

*There were difficult days where I was financially embarrassed, no food in the house. Determination is one thing that really kept me alive and brave. My faith in God, and a belief in what I'm striving for, gave me wonderful strength. Also, the support from my husband and children.*

**What would you die for?**

Democracy, freedom ... but most important, peace in this country.

**What is your last thought before falling asleep?**

I pray each night that there will be no more deaths and no more bad news. What is killing this country is the attitudes of people. We must know that we need each other, without unity we will never move forward. We have to stop pulling each other by the hair in order to stop the violence. ■

● Interview by Francine Joss

# Albertina Sisulu



# The skeletons come out of the cupboard

*The amnesty debate goes on trial*

by Hein Marais

*Silence has its laws and its demands ... Silence demands an enormous police apparatus with an army of informers. Silence demands that its enemies disappear suddenly and without a trace. Silence prefers that no voice — of complaint or protest or indignation — disturbs its calm. And where such a voice is heard, silence strikes with all its might to restore the status quo ante — the state of silence.*

— Ryszard Kapuscinski,  
*The Soccer War*

**T**HERE WILL BE AN AMNESTY. Reasonable people say this with the same certitude that enables them to announce: “The sky is blue”, or “Your shoelaces are undone”.

There will be an amnesty because the balance of forces decrees it. Because wobbly democracies cannot always afford the luxury of justice. Because the past belongs behind us, not all around us. Because amnesties can buy the apathy, even the loyalty, of dangerous men.

You will find no-one saying: *Because it is just.*

A debate that properly occupies several dimensions (ethical, legal, political, social, religious) has become compressed into a political matter. “Justice” features — but as a rhetorical device, not as an ethical or legal concept.

Perhaps that is unfair. For there has hardly been a debate, nothing that publicly explores an amnesty’s implications, the motives, the stakes. Nothing that risks disorienting the deductions of the wise with the intuitions of millions of ordinary South Africans condemned to Kapuscinski’s silence.

## The politics of justice

“We don’t have a written policy on this, but our unspoken policy is that there will not be trials,” ANC negotiator Mohammed Valli Moosa told *WIP* recently.

Here’s the logic of that hushed policy. Ours will be a settlement hammered together with compromises and concessions, a political reconciliation shaped by a balance of forces that denies outright triumph but permits small victories.

Government politicians have not yet moved an amnesty high up on their wish list at the negotiations — largely, says Valli, “because they don’t see themselves being guilty of those crimes of apartheid”.

But no matter how placid the politicians, security forces tend to become jumpy around this stage of a transition. They did the dirty work of the old order, and they’re left with the skeletons to prove it.



■ **SHOW AND TELL:** Full disclosure is a vital element of any amnesty

# Would a truth commission work in South Africa?

Is full disclosure of all serious human rights abuses necessary and might a Truth Commission such as the one set up in El Salvador help achieve national reconciliation in South Africa? *WIP* asked political parties, human rights organisations and public figures. This is what they told us...

## LET THE TRUTH BE TOLD

● **Max Coleman, Human Rights Commission:** Full disclosure can ensure there is no repetition of such actions and that those involved are never again placed in positions of power. It is vital that victims and relatives know what happened, as a form of catharsis. It could be better for an international body to take charge of the process.

● **Nadine Gordimer, author:** Full disclosure is necessary for reconciliation *provided* the commission's work includes recommending practical measures to advance that reconciliation. People must learn to forgive, but *never forget*, so that such abuses may never be repeated; a museum, built on the very site where people were interrogated and tortured, should be constructed as a permanent reminder of what South Africans inflicted on other South Africans.

● **Dene Smuts, Democratic Party MP:** Disclosure is desirable for the kind of change of heart one would like to see accompanying political change. A commission would be preferable if our own enquiries did not produce results.

● **Jacko Maree, Director of Information, National Party:** We support full disclosure — as long as the truth-telling is truthful! We would support 'Truth Commissions' — provided they are not manipulated to slant their reports, and the integrity of members is beyond question.

● **Gomolemo Mokae, Azanian People's Organisation:** Full disclosure is a vital prerequisite to attain justice, peace and reconciliation ... those forces which have not been exposed will continue to endanger a new dispensation. We would support [a Truth Commission] process provided it is completely neutral and has international clout ... and not a mere charade like the toothless Goldstone Commission.

## ... AND LET JUSTICE BE DONE

● **Barney Desai, Pan-Africanist Congress:** We would be living in a fool's paradise if we believed that telling the truth will end human rights abuses by the security forces. We would support the establishment of a Commission to Investigate Human Rights Abuses, name the violators and put them on trial.

## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

● **Sheila Camerer, Deputy Justice Minister:** In a sense the government has already established a Truth Commission for SA in the form of the Goldstone Commission. A general amnesty would be the correct way to proceed in order to make a new start in the new SA. However, it is a matter which will have to be negotiated.

## WELL, MAYBE ...

● **Suzanne Vos, Inkatha Freedom Party:** There should be investigations into crimes and abuses, but it might not be healthy for the peace process to dig up everything. There should also be multiparty consensus on the type of commission ... it should not be a witchhunt ... the liberation organisations should not be left out of such investigations.

## SILENCE

*WIP* harassed and reminded, but received no answers from the ANC (despite repeated promises) or the Afrikaner Volksfront.

The security forces are seen to occupy the crossroads of the transition, able to cripple the new order through a programme of destabilisation which can become the pretext for seizing power through a coup. Real, threatened or imagined, the coup scenario radically narrows the horizons of politicians.

Or the veto can be less overt. Because the intelligence apparatus also spies on the politicians, the security forces hoard information which becomes a kind of insurance policy that they, in times of crisis, can "cash in": Back us or we'll sink you.

The irony is that our peace process has generated such dependency between the main players that the ANC can hardly afford to see the government — particularly its vanguard — vaporised by a burst of scandals.

The politics of amnesty are the politics of guilt or blackmail. An organisation committed to human rights, the rule of law and the principle of accountability tends to be *forced* to choose the "lesser evil" of amnesty to avert a greater disaster.

So far, the ANC has dismissed President FW de Klerk's self-amnesty, stating that only an elected government can have the moral legitimacy to grant an amnesty. But, says Valli, "the closer we come to a deal, the more the army and police will demand that an amnesty be part of the whole package."

## Sheer fear

Two assumptions deserve a closer look. One is the premise that it is sheer fear of the security apparatus that imposes the amnesty. The reality is more nuanced, as Latin American experiences suggest: New democratic governments grasp the need to keep the security forces on-side if the ride looks bumpy.

Another is the fear of an army coup. Rocky Williams argues in *A Very South African Coup?* (p19), that this bogey does not survive scrutiny. The US-based human rights organisation, Africa Watch, has made a similar deduction: "A new SA government will be under much less threat of military intervention than the Latin American countries, since the armed forces do not have the same tradition of political involvement nor have they been implicated to the same extent as the police in the abuse of rights".

But so "self-evident" are the poli-



## El Salvador still struggles to heal the wounds

**F**ew countries have experienced repression and violence of the scale unleashed in El Salvador during 12 years of civil war. Since 1980 at least 75 000 people were killed and one in six forced to flee this tiny Central American country.

Under an accord brokered in April 1991, the negotiating parties agreed to establish a "truth commission" to:

- Investigate the worst human rights violations
- Recommend legal, political and administrative measures aimed at preventing a repetition and promoting national reconciliation.

The UN secretary-general appointed three eminent international jurists to the commission, which had to report back to him. The government and the FMLN opposition bound themselves to implement its recommendations.

Six months of investigations culminated in a report, released in March this year, that lists the plight of 18 000 victims. A 211-page compendium of the most traumatic episodes of the war, it blames the state and its security forces for 95% of the abuses.

"On the principle that individuals, even those caught up in the fury of civil war and the orders of superiors, are accountable for their actions," the report names the institutions and people deemed responsible.

"If these people stay in power, it will be seen as business as usual," said truth commission member Thomas Buergenthal, referring to human rights violators named in the report. "The way to end impunity is to make these people pay a price, and they have to be seen to be paying a price."

Because an earlier amnesty (dubbed the "Law on National Reconciliation") did not cover cases investigated by the commission, President Alfredo Christiani is now pushing for a new amnesty.

Several pointed recommendations stand out. The commission affirmed that "justice demands punishment for the violations of human rights", although it was not willing to entrust that duty to the current Salvadoran judicial system. Those named, however, should be prevented from holding office for 10 years.

It also proposed that victims of human rights violations receive material compensation from a special fund, which can be financed by directing 1% of all foreign aid into it. ■

tics of the amnesty that counter arguments are seen to betray, at best, idealism or sentimentality.

The "consensus of common sense" is captured in phrasings such as this, from Kader Asmal, writing in the *Cape Times* last year: "The principle of prosecuting those who committed — or continue to commit — crimes against human rights is inalienable. However, we need to focus clearly on our fundamental objective: the creation, maintenance and strengthening of a just and democratic society."

The claim that an amnesty might strengthen democracy is a bit brittle. In South America, serious human rights violations continue partially because the principle of accountability was not established. It is no consolation that the violence now targets "the extreme left and right" (as in Chile), or the defenceless and forgotten (streetchildren and Indians in Brazil, "delinquent" youth in Argentina). In Zimbabwe, as Richard Carver has observed, a general amnesty "allowed a culture of abuse and impunity to permeate the security structures".

An amnesty that shields the worst violators of human rights ends up compromising basic features of the democracy it is supposed to fortify, by:

- Establishing at the outset a dangerous precedent by suspending the rule of law
- Flouting the principle of accountability
- Failing to discourage repetitions
- Undermining reconciliation.

### Detour ahead

The Chilean path of "reconciliation, truth and justice" has been popularised in SA as a route that skirts the pro- and anti-amnesty disputes.

Forced by the balance of forces to pursue "the politics of agreements", the new Chilean government in 1990 sidestepped decisive action on past human rights offences. There were to be no trials. Abuses would be investigated and the findings publicised ("truth"), victims and their families would receive reparations ("justice"), and the blend of repentance and forgiveness would yield "reconciliation".

The Rettig Commission's report delved into 2 000 state murders and disappearances. It recommended that an official body be set up to promote compensation and aid for the victims, help search for the remains of bodies, and

## South African players are amenable to an independent, legitimate 'truth commission' to advance national reconciliation

til a commission that will:

- Be agreed to and established by the negotiating forum as an independent and impartial body
- Be mandated to investigate serious violations of human rights committed over a specified period
- Respect international norms of due process and have the power to subpoena witnesses
- Report back to a body widely seen as impartial and legitimate
- Be tasked with disclosing the actions, their perpetrators, their victims and their fates, and has to widely publicise this information
- Recommend measures to ensure such abuses are not repeated and the process of national reconciliation is advanced (including reparations and aid to victims and their survivors).

Such an initiative would seem in harmony with the position adopted last year by the ANC's NEC. Official policy is still reflected in an August 1992 statement that says an amnesty "is properly



■ PINOCHET: He's out, but his methods are still in

the province of an (elected) interim government of national unity".

Still, in the scramble for a settlement, the ANC might be tempted to trade a disguised amnesty for some of the government concessions it still needs. The numbness of such a move is obvious.

Or, the "politics of agreement" might propose trading an amnesty for a "truth commission" — the one in return for the other. That, too, would be a swindle. First, it undermines a truth commission's efforts to prevent future abuses by recommending appropriate measures, such as prosecution. And it violates the principle, popularised by Chilean activist Jose Zalaquett, that the granting of an amnesty must represent the will of the people.

Arguments for an amnesty come adorned with many bows — whether De Klerk's A-New-Start sweet talk or the Uruguayan attempt to camouflage it as "a search for peace".

We're left with this bare fact: an amnesty that indemnifies human rights violators is neither moral, just, or — in cases where it violates international law — legal. It is justifiable only on the basis of political expediency or necessity.

If it's an eminently *political* question, why not debate it as such, scrutinise and weigh its attraction against the *equally political case for opposing it?*

That debate cannot be waged on a vacuum of knowledge, under the silences of this land. It requires, first, full disclosure of exactly what and who an amnesty will absolve. A truth commission, furnished with muscle and legitimacy, can do that and more.

Then we can look one another in the eye and argue an amnesty.

The question that confronts us, ultimately, is plain. In the writer Eduardo Galeano's matchless words: "Did the absolution of military and paramilitary terrorism granted by civilian governments consolidate democracy? Or did it in fact legalise arrogance, encourage violence, and identify justice with vengeance or madness?"

● This article proceeds from Marais and Monty Narsoo's "And Justice for All?" in *WIP* 85, October 1992. Also of note is Africa Watch's "SA: Accounting for the Past"; Lawyers for Human Rights' paper "Accountability: The Debate in SA", and the El Salvador Information Project's reports on that country's Truth Commission. ■

research newly-lodged cases.

Unfortunately, President Patricio Aylwin's appeal that the military apologise for its crimes fell on deaf ears. Only the crimes and their victims were publicised, not the identities of the perpetrators. The Rettig report was not widely circulated. Human rights groups charged it with grossly underestimating the number of killings committed by the Pinochet dictatorship, but their claims were not investigated further. The judicial system was reformed, but this has not prevented the detention of 138 political prisoners in the past three years, "most of them tortured using the classical methods of the Pinochet regime", according to a new report by the International Association Against Torture.

In 1992, citizens launched a campaign to annul the 1978 amnesty law, with victims and their supporters staging angry protests that have led to clashes with the police. "The concept of reconciliation, broadly supported in theory," notes Americas Watch, "has proved profoundly controversial in practice."

### Raising the stakes

In El Salvador, negotiators decided to have abuses investigated and remedies recommended before putting a binding amnesty on the bargaining table (the 1991 Peace Accords implicitly overrode two "self-amnesties"). The shockwaves from the report by the UN Truth Commission report are still to subside (see box).

Having lost several battles to suppress the report and the names of the guilty, President Alfredo Christiani has now gone for broke by demanding another amnesty "because if we really want reconciliation we won't be doing any good by wasting time on the past".

De Klerk is the natural heir to such crooked logic. But there is no reason why it should hold sway in SA.

Judging by *WIP*'s enquiries, South African players are amenable to an independent, legitimate "truth commission" that not only probes and gives voice to our past, but recommends measures to prevent repetitions and advance national reconciliation.

From the responses (see p11), as well as the Goldstone Commission experience, Latin American precedents, and suggestions from Americas Watch and Amnesty International, one can dis-



# It's hard to forgive — even harder to forget

The pain of the past is not going to go away unless we help heal the victims now, says **LLOYD VOGELMAN**. And, he warns, a blanket amnesty could do more damage than good in the quest for reconciliation

**I**N A COUNTRY WHERE AN AVERAGE OF 55 people are murdered daily, psychological survival in South Africa requires something of an emotional distance from reality. And the quest to escape the daily reality of horror often means that the survivors of human rights abuses are overlooked. For them, the country of their birth is tired of listening to their sagas of pain and torment.

But the key question in years to come is going to be: Will we open ourselves to their stories of pain and anguish?

Primo Levi, a survivor of the horrors of Auschwitz, asserts that reconciliation after repressive violence involves three categories of people: the *victims*, the *survivors* and the *perpetrators*. For Levi, the dead must be mourned, the survivors must be cared for and pitied, and the perpetrators must be punished.

For those who have survived violent human rights abuses in South Africa, and the families of the victims who died, such a programme should *penalise* the perpetrators; *compensate* the victims and their families, as well as publicly acknowledge their trauma and pain; and *assist* them to alleviate the psychological burden of victimisation.

Two features

are common to the vast range of human rights abuses in this country:

- For the perpetrator, there is the exertion of power over another human being.
- For the victim, there is a profound sense of loss — not just material or physical loss, but psychological loss, as self-esteem and dignity are impaired.

## Emotional response

The three key emotions which stem from this loss are sadness, fear and anger. The sadness stems largely from a sense of mourning — something has been taken away, and the void which results leaves the individual with a sense of having been damaged. The terror of their experi-

ence provokes an intense fear of the event re-occurring, and of situations which are a reminder of their trauma. Survivors who had an assumption of invulnerability (“it won’t happen to me”) now have less confidence in their world, and their faith in humanity is either dramatically diminished or completely lost.

The experience of trauma also has other effects symptomatic of stress, such as depression and anxiety — sleep disturbance, sexual dysfunction



**Political groupings must apologise for human rights violations. In this way, the secrecy of evil is unlocked and society can begin to come to terms with itself**

**■ BOW YOUR HEAD: No mourning tomorrow**

PHOTO: GILLIAN EDELSTEIN (MAYBUYE CENTRE)



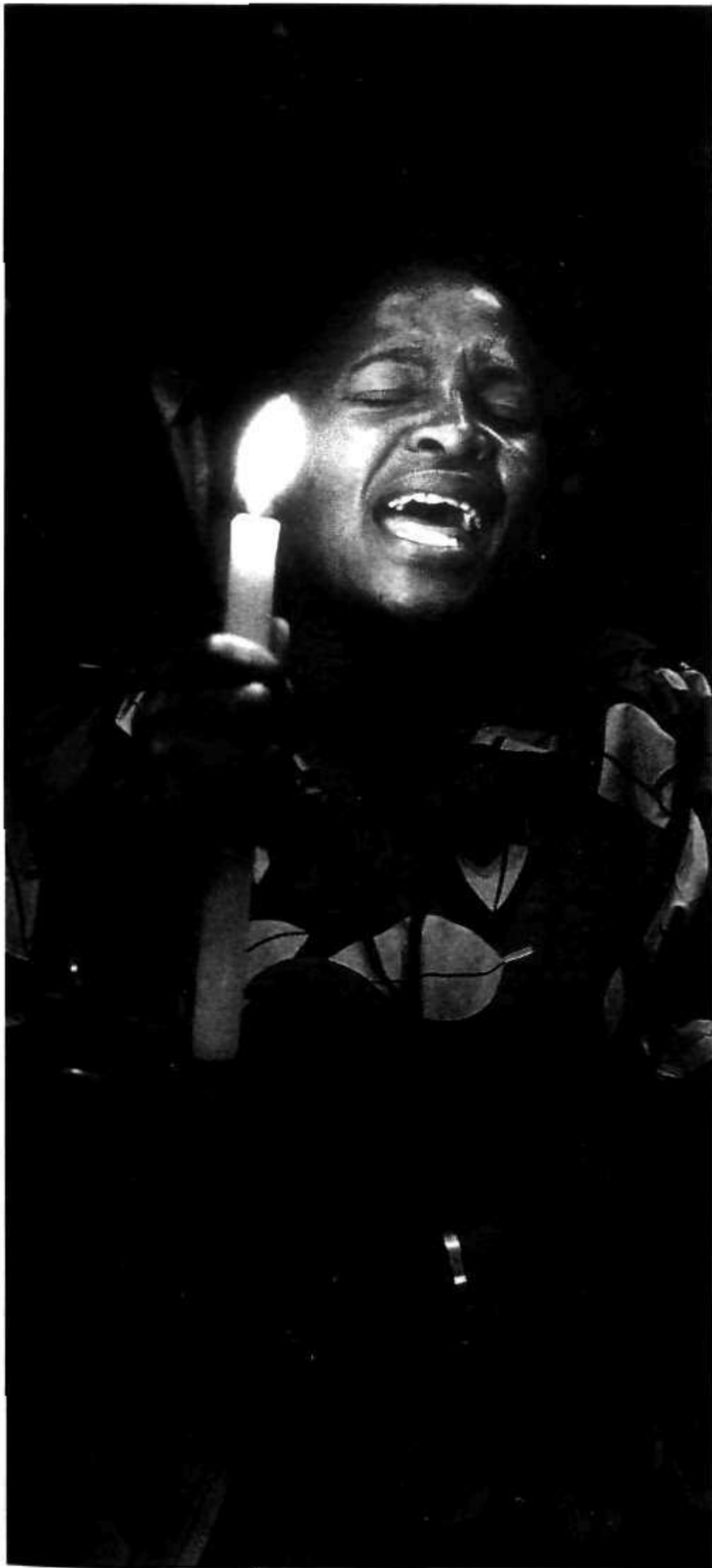


PHOTO: ANNA ZEMINSKI

■ **A CANDLE IN THE WIND:** The damage and humiliation suffered in the past evokes both sadness and anger

tion, appetite loss, irritability and impaired concentration. When these are combined with other criteria (in particular the existence of a recognisable stressor that would evoke symptoms of distress in almost anyone) it is referred to in psychiatric terms as *post-traumatic stress disorder*.

Whether the individual's feelings of anger or sadness predominate depends upon that person's clinical history as well as on their own situation. The South African social climate, which fosters an acceptance of violence and which has no tradition of democracy or human rights, increases the likelihood that anger rather than sadness, or a combination of both, will be expressed.

Much of this anger stares us in the face every day. Violence has become a form of communication, and for the forgotten and marginalised it is a way of reminding us that they demand acknowledgement for the pain they have endured.

### **Programmes of reconciliation**

The repression that sustained apartheid, and the wider political subjugation and economic privilege that apartheid involved, have spawned hatred and violent conflict — not only between white and black South Africans, but also within the black community itself. The use of black community members as informers, vigilantes or police acted as a major source of friction.

Reducing these levels of suspicion, resentment and violence will require not only a move towards a more democratic society but more fundamental programmes of reconciliation. Such a programme would incorporate, at the very least, a few basic components:

- The legitimacy of the pardon of offences: International human rights groups and the United Nations appear to support the idea that those who have violently abused the rights of others should be punished. In South Africa too, there is a strong feeling that justice must be seen to be done. However, in this case the politics of power and negotiation are likely to override principle and justice. The government, to protect itself and those in the security establishment, insists on a blanket amnesty. Although the ANC has not accepted this proposal, it has — with the excep-

## The way we present the history of South Africa to our children will have a substantial impact on the nature of future political and social systems

apartheid human rights abuses will be a distant memory, and in 100 years time there will be no living survivor of apartheid rule. The establishment of permanent reminders of the apartheid legacy, such as monuments, museums, public holidays and ceremonies, will thus serve to immortalise the tragic experiences of the survivors. Hopefully also, the devastating effect of an undemocratic system will be imprinted on the public conscience. The way we present the history of South Africa to our children will have a substantial impact on the nature of future political and social systems in South Africa.

● **Financial compensation:** The most concrete form of reparation is monetary compensation. Although financial constraints may not permit large-scale payments, it is still important to provide financial compensation in other forms — such as free or subsidised medical and psychological treatment, reduced interest on loans for education, home building and the establishment of new businesses.

● **The “working through” of victimisation:** The damage and humiliation suffered in the past not only provokes sadness, it also induces anger. Anger is always expressed, whether overtly or covertly, and it always finds a target, whether it be an external or an internal one. It will be difficult for survivors to vent their anger on those responsible for their victimisation. Unless they are encouraged to express their anger in non-violent ways, it will more than likely be taken out on those who are acces-

■ **DIGGING IN THE DIRT:** Unless victims work through their anger, they're likely to take it out on those closest to them



PHOTO: GIDEON MENDEL (MAYIBUYE CENTRE)

sible and closest to them — such as family members. Alternatively, it will be directed toward the self, resulting in tendencies such as alcoholism, drug abuse and suicide.

To counter this, it will be vital to establish non-violent channels through which to express anger, such as support groups. These would provide a channel for the non-violent expression of pain, frustration and anger as well as the potential for survivors to gain insight into their ordeals.

Survivors often need to talk about the experience continually. This can be a source of irritation to family members and friends who are required to endure repeated accounts of the events. To facilitate this process, it is also necessary to provide educational information to family members about the importance of this cathartic vocalising.

It is only through verbalising the experience that the individual can begin to integrate the trauma into his or her personality. This acknowledgement of the ordeal, and the acceptance that the traumatic experience cannot be reversed, is vital to any process of psychological recovery — and central to the relief of the symptoms associated with post-traumatic stress disorder.

### A lengthy process

Reconciliation will be a lengthy and complex process. Essentially, we must restore the victims' faith in humanity, for ultimately, this is what violence destroys.

Unless we create a South Africa which demonstrates to the survivors that their trials and tribulations have a meaning and have led to something better, we will create a generation of cynics and misanthropes. ■

● *Lloyd Vogelmann is director of Wits University's Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation*

tion of a recommendation that the crimes of the past be made public — increasingly accepted the position of a blanket pardon on political crime. This position of compromise stems largely from the ANC's desire to move towards a political settlement as quickly as possible.

The ANC's message to its members and supporters is thus likely to be that a political settlement which creates the opportunity for a peaceful SA should take precedence over principles of justice and the desire for retribution.

Despite the expectation that the perpetrators of violent human rights abuses will be pardoned, this decision will not be a popular one among those who have borne the consequences of such abuse. If this process is to make any contribution to the process of reconciliation, it is therefore vital that it have as much legitimacy as possible.

Since the present government is not a democratically-elected one and was largely responsible for such human rights abuses, there is little purpose in it pardoning itself. Such a pardon should emanate from an elected government, or at very least an interim government. In any case, there will be little to prevent an ANC government from overturning legislation which aims to render the abuses of the past a secret.

● **Penalties:** While perpetrators may escape prosecution and conviction, they may still face the consequences of their criminal actions. One possible penalty would be to disqualify such people from occupying a position in the public or civil service for a particular length of time. The evidence of such penalties will satisfy, even in the most minimal way, the survivors' desire for retribution.

● **Public acknowledgement:** An acknowledgement of the injustice and abuse that has been suffered is necessary. The perpetrators must publicly account for their violence, and the government, the ANC and other political groupings must apologise for the human rights violations they have condoned and encouraged. In this way, the secrecy of evil is unlocked and society can begin to come to terms with itself.

For the families of victims and survivors, such accounting serves as immediate public recognition of their pain and trauma.

In 50 years time, the years of



# When killers walk free

*Goniwe inquest opens some doors, but shuts others*

Eight years and two inquests after Matthew Goniwe's murder, there's a good chance that his killers will go free. **LOUISE FLANAGAN** looks at some of the flaws in the process

**I**F MATTHEW GONIWE WAS ALIVE today he would be in line for a senior position in next year's new government.

But observers of the inquest into his murder are left wondering whether his killers will escape through amnesties and a concerted campaign to keep them out of court — and possibly retain their government pensions or even retain their positions under the government Goniwe would have served in.

Goniwe and his colleagues — Fort Calata, Sparrow Mkonto and Sicelo Mhlauli — were murdered on June 27, 1985. Evidence at the inquest has given a good indication of who ordered the murders, who carried them out and just how the security apparatus operated then — and possibly still does now with minor changes.

Goniwe was murdered at a time when the Eastern Cape was regarded by security forces as “the flash-point of the revolution”. Security police have admitted to monitoring him closely — listening to his telephone calls, bugging his house, following him around — but denied that they regarded him as a threat. Goniwe's colleagues have told journalists he was involved in the ANC underground, at a time when the underground was becoming more militarily involved and obviously regarded

■ **GONIWE:**  
Murdered  
eight years  
ago

as a great threat.

Security police witnesses have admitted destroying hundreds of files from that time, including the file on Goniwe. One has admitted that information on Goniwe's underground activities — regarded as a motive for his murder — was in the destroyed files.

The police also admitted that documents and files on activists were destroyed nationwide, explaining that this was because organisations such as the ANC, PAC and SACP were unbanned in 1990. It seems highly likely that evidence of security force involvement in further dirty tricks and possibly murders was destroyed at the same time, or even that the mass destruction was a deliberate move to destroy as much evidence as possible.

### The JMCs

Evidence from some of the remaining documents and securocrats has indicated that the security networks in the region were controlled by the National Security Management Structure (NSMS), through its local arm, the Joint Management Centre (JMC). It's this structure which was headed by the Officer Commanding the Eastern Province Command, then-Brigadier Joffel van der Westhuizen who is now a general and head of Military Intelligence.

The controversial military signal of June 7, 1985 names its sender as Van der Westhuizen. This signal, sent 20 days before the murders, refers to the "permanent removal from society" of Goniwe, fellow victim Calata and Goniwe's relative Mbulelo Goniwe.

Van der Westhuizen has denied knowledge of this signal in an affidavit to the inquest. The man named in the signal as the recipient, Gen Johannes Frederik Janse van Rensburg — at the time seconded to the Secretariat of the State Security Council (SSSC) where he was head of the Strategy Department — said he recalled the signal but denied it was a death order.

Second in command of the JMC in 1985 was the chief of the security police for the Port Elizabeth region, Colonel Harold Snyman.

Piecing together the evidence of several different witnesses, it emerges that:

● On June 7, 1985 there was a morning telephone call between Van der Westhuizen and General Janse van Rens-

## Cops in the dock

**Fingers are being pointed at the following policemen:**

● **Colonel Harold Snyman, who currently operates as a police media spokesman. He allegedly interrogated Steve Biko shortly before his 1977 death in detention. Snyman was promoted less than four months after the Goniwe murders. He currently sits on the current equivalent of the JMC, the Local Co-ordinating Structure, which fits into the National Co-ordinating Mechanism.**

● **Colonel Eric Winter, ex-Koevoet member and the 1985 chief of the Cradock security police. He is now based in Port Elizabeth.**

● **Major Gideon Nieuwoudt, an explosives expert based in Port Elizabeth. At the inquest, SADF lawyers accused Nieuwoudt of involvement in the December 1989 murders of four of his colleagues, allegedly because he feared they were about to expose police involvement in the Goniwe murders.**

● **Captain Sakkie van Zyl, who served in Koevoet with Winter and was with the Port Elizabeth security police in 1985.**



■ **PERMANENT REMOVAL: Joffel van der Westhuizen**

burg.

● Later that same morning there was a routine meeting of the JMC's Joint Operations Centre. Both Van der Westhuizen and Snyman attended.

● At 2:20 that same afternoon the "permanent removal" signal was sent, referring to the telephone call earlier in the day.

### Army evidence

The evidence of the signal points to Van der Westhuizen, in his capacity as JMC chief, as having ordered the murders. Further evidence at the inquest, some of it provided interestingly by the SADF, has pointed towards the security police as the actual killers. It appears they could have been tasked, through their superiors in the JMC structures, to carry out the operation — an operation quite possibly discussed in the Joint Operations Centre meeting of that day.

The focus in the inquest has now turned to the police — a move largely brought about by the SADF lawyers. This happened the day former SADF colonel Lourens du Plessis — the man who drafted the signal and who is now expected to spill the beans on his one-time colleagues — was expected to give evidence. While the detour will quite possibly point out the men involved in the actual operation, it appears to be an attempt to keep the spotlight off those who ordered it.

It also seems to be a blatant attempt to keep Du Plessis out of the witness-box at all costs to stop him from exposing any more SADF covert operations of the time. The limited style of Du Plessis's indemnity supports this. Du Plessis was indemnified in relation to the signal message — an indemnity the state could hardly refuse given the intense interest the case has generated — but refused indemnity in relation to other operations such as Operation Katzen.

Du Plessis previously handed in Katzen documents to the inquest, documents which indicated Van der Westhuizen's involvement in covert actions.

It seems the SADF will do anything, including sacrificing their less powerful partners the police to the inquest, in an attempt to divert attention from the military top brass. — *Ecna* ■

● *The inquest reopens later this month.*



# A very South African coup

## *The SADF's way of dealing with negotiations*

Rightwing big-guns in the SADF are unlikely to confess their sins without a fuss. But just how much fuss can they make? A coup, perhaps? **ROCKY WILLIAMS** looks at their potential

**T**HE SIGHT OF A VIPER ARMoured VEHICLE CRASHING THROUGH THE DOORS of the World Trade Centre raised a fear common to most transitional societies — the prospect of a coup.

Almost any transition raises such fears. Hardliners within the state, dissatisfied with their loss of power and the compromises being granted by “softliner” negotiators, repeatedly threaten to use their military influence to halt, derail or influence the outcome of negotiations.

Negotiators are thus forced to compromise on key issues to avoid a military counter-reaction. This frequently affects how much can be achieved politically — and the extent to which the state can be restructured.

The same applies with South Africa's transition. Because of concern at the potential for sabotage by elements within both the security establishment and the bureaucracy, the democratic movement has already made concessions in certain key areas.

In addition, certain players in the democratic movement have confused the *interventionist* rhetoric of the rightwing with their *actual physical and mechanical capacity* to mount a coup.

While a future government will undoubtedly face resistance from some sections of the armed forces, we should not overstate the forces' ability to overturn democratic gains (whether through a classical “coup d'etat” or selective intervention).

Developing strategy on the basis of a “worst case” scenario — a coup d'etat for instance — without considering the range of more likely possibilities, will deprive the democratic movement of much its strategic flexibility both in the transition and in the post-settlement period.

### **1. Forms of military influence: From constitutional channels to coups**

Most analyses of the SADF have collapsed its mechanical power — its force levels, its sizeable inventories and its budgetary allocation — into an account of its real or potential power.

The SADF is depicted as marching onto the terrain of the state, establishing its HQ at the political centre and deploying its personnel to all levels of society. Driven by its



■ **VERLOORKOMMANDO: Small private armies could play a key role in local-level rebellions**

relentless corporate designs, the SADF proceeds to refashion state and society according to its own military and political objectives.

These accounts of military influence fail to take account of a host of issues relating to the very real limitations imposed on the capacity of the armed forces to intervene in and/or influence the political process.

A range of factors determine military influence — the political culture of a particular society, the legitimacy of

central political institutions, the corporate identity of the armed forces, the institutional capabilities of the armed forces should they be called on to govern, their social composition and the nature of relations within the state.

“Intervention”, for instance, is just one type of military influence within politics and is itself characterised by various forms of coercion — violence

against the civilian authorities, failure to protect those authorities from violence, threats of non-cooperation and the intimidation and blackmail of the authorities themselves.

However, not all forms of military influence seek to replace the states’ organisational forms, management styles and personnel. Infinitely more problematic is the subtler forms of influence wielded by the armed forces in different societies.

Less visible and less extreme than the Latin-American scenarios are the forms of military influence wielded by the armed forces within countries of a reasonably developed political culture. Indeed, it remains highly unlikely that

the present SADF would prove capable of mounting a coup even if its officer corps — or dominant factions therein — desired to do so. Its influence over the political process is less pronounced and less drastic than a coup scenario suggests.

## 2. To coup or not to coup

Military coups are rarely mounted by an officer corps in its entirety. Factions within the armed forces — acting on their own or in collaboration with certain political actors — engage in armed intervention. But the decision to intervene is determined by a host of variables — a breakdown in “law and order”, the election of a politically unpopular government, the forging of strong alliances with influential political actors or the notion of the armed forces intervening in the name of “national interest”.

A coup scenario is extreme and a range of limiting factors must be considered before a coup can be launched. The factors that can either restrain and/or impel the SADF to intervene are varied:

### a) Technical and logistical obstacles

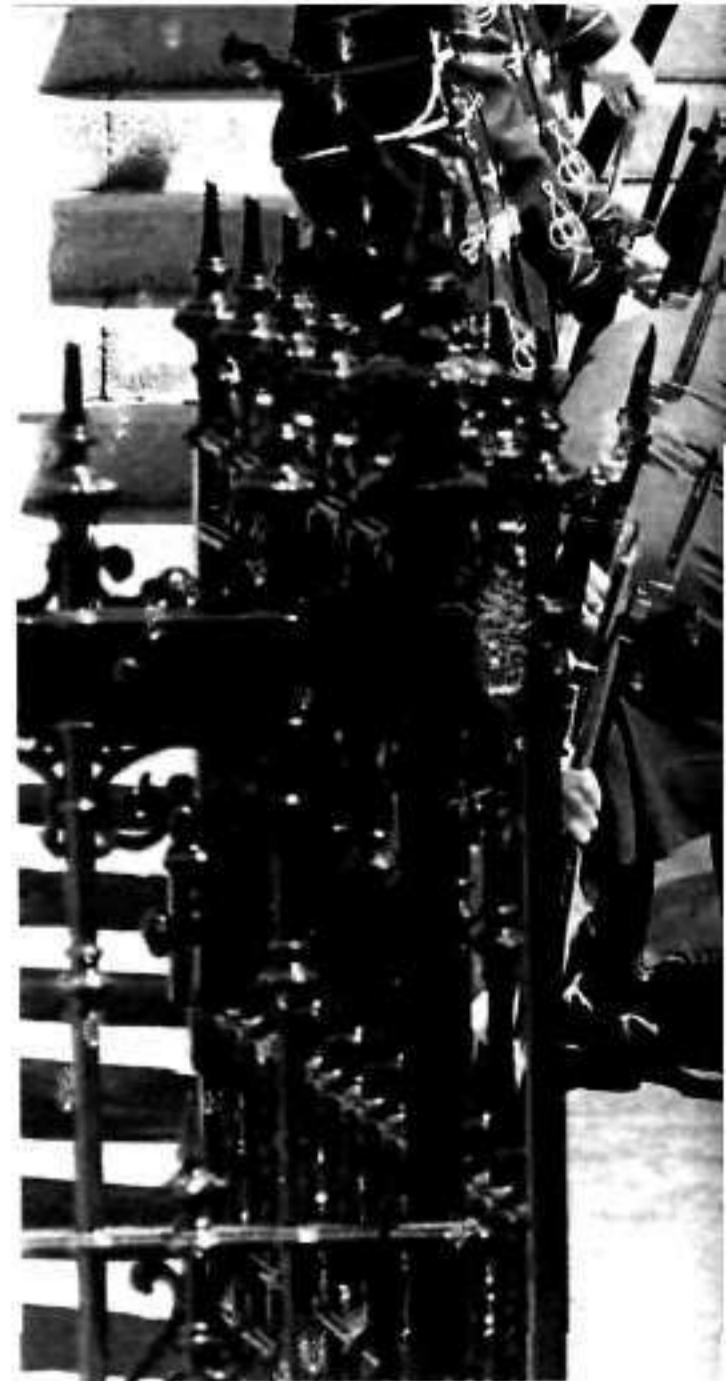
Coups do not simply “happen” — they require ideological cohesion among the plotters.

No coup can be successfully launched without an element of surprise. To do so requires the support of ready battalions of loyal troops who can be sworn to secrecy (or isolated from society in the months preceding the coup).

It’s worth noting at this point that the SA Army’s Conventional Forces are largely reservist in origin and would require at least two months’ effective mobilisation time (during which the element of surprise could be lost).

In addition, there’s the question of *morale and unity*. Every coup attempt requires the support of the armed forces’ rank and file. In the SADF, the bulk of the combat personnel are either white conscripts, African or coloured permanent force members or Citizen Force reservists (white regular army personnel almost exclusively occupy non-combat positions — command and control, administrative and training functions).

Given the high levels of resistance towards conscription, township deploy-



■ DOWN AND OUT: The generals would

ment and external military campaigns, and the ambiguous loyalties of many African and coloured troops, it remains questionable whether either category would be prepared to support — let alone defend — the interventionist ambitions of certain sectors of the officer corps.

And then there is the question of *the neutralisation of adversaries*. In any coup attempt, the SADF would have to deal with a host of adversarial groups, as well as securing key administrative and economic structures.

This is a daunting task in a country with a resilient civil society and a complex infrastructure!

Firstly, the complexity of the South African bureaucracy, the strength and depth of civil society, the dispersed and extended nature of the country’s economic infrastructure and the decentralisation of the national capitals (Pretoria, Cape Town and Bloemfontein) would render the organisation of a coup a logistical nightmare.

Furthermore, opposition to a coup would span a range of interests (particularly in a country with a reasonably developed civic culture). Both factors would strongly militate against the success of a coup.

## How to keep a coup in place

The following conditions must be met if a group of putschists want to consolidate their gains:

● The real centre of political power within a country has to be located and neutralised

● Party leaders and bureaucratic leaders have to be subordinated and/or neutralised

● The support and/or acquiescence of business must be ensured

● Trade unions, civics and grassroots organisations must be neutralised

● Political opposition has to be neutralised

● Local government structures have to be neutralised or bypassed

● Key economic installations have to be secured.

● Key administrative structures have to be secured



PHOTO: THE ARGUS

## h to think they could bank on full support from within the SADF

There's an additional problem for putschists: Do the SADF's Permanent Force (PF) musterings possess the administrative and technical ability — as well as the political will — to govern? The small size of the PF cadre, coupled with the extensive skills and personnel required to govern the country, would present an insurmountable bureaucratic and managerial task.

### b) Divisions in the officer corps

The SADF is not a homogenous structure and admits to strategic, political, institutional, ideological and pragmatic differences depending on its musterings, the social origins of its personnel and the different career paths and experiences of its PF cadre.

These differences and contradictions will become more pronounced in periods of political transition and could even lead to factions within the SADF moving in different political directions in periods of political crisis. It seems few officers are prepared to jeopardise career, pension and gratuity benefits for the sake of narrow party political goals. It is, therefore, important to assess the loyalties of the different factions within the SADF senior officer corps, and the extent to which these changing loyalties could impede and/or facilitate a coup

scenario.

These factions include:

- The "Constitutionalists" — senior SADF officers who, regardless of their political convictions, will obey the government of the day and desist from intervening in the political process. Undoubtedly the largest faction within the SADF officer corps, these officers tend to be located in the air force, the navy, the medical services, the non-operational staff divisions (chiefs of staff finance and personnel for instance) and the army's conventional forces.

The loyalty of the air force, for example, would prove central in crushing any coup bid — and the loyalty of the present air force general staff appears to be largely anti-interventionist in direction.

- The nascent praetorian faction within the SADF's intelligence community and its elite units. Their tactics include, typically, the fielding of "hit squads", the provision

of covert funds to allied political organisations, and the use of their intelligence to discredit certain popular and community leaders. These elements are most strongly represented within the structures of army intelligence, military intelligence and the special forces division (although all three components are being restructured at present).

- Rightwing officers, who constitute a surprisingly small faction within the SADF's permanent force (although they are certainly more numerous in its conscript ranks). This has much to do with the image of the SADF as the "military-as-modernisers" and the strong ascriptive ties that have linked it with the National Party in the past. It is important to note that most mainstream rightwing officers *do not support* intervention of the coup d'état variety — a result, no doubt, of the strong constitutionalist ethos within such organisations as the Conservative Party and the Herstigte Nasionale Party. Even General Constand Viljoen has emphasised, at the height of rightwing anger, the need for moderation, negotiation and non-violent action.

Therefore, despite the presence of a nascent praetorian faction within the SADF, the bulk of the officer corps inclines in a constitutionalist direction. Given their key strategic location (the air force and the conventional forces, for example), they would render any coup attempt virtually ineffective from the start.

### Feel safe? Read on...

On the basis of the evidence above, a coup appears to be a highly improbable prospect in a diverse and institutionally complex country like South Africa.

But to predict strategies on the basis of this is to fail to understand the precise contours of military influence — and, as a result, to devise responses that are inherently flawed.

South Africa is undergoing profound political transition and many of the variables that have restrained the SADF



■ MODERATE RIGHTWINGER? Even Constand Viljoen at times argues for non-violence

PHOTO: G. LUMLEY

from exercising a more assertive role in the political process are, and will be, subject to revision. In the fluidity and instability of such a transition, the SADF may find itself exercising its influence through a number of formal and informal mechanisms.

Although this may not follow the lines of the classical coup d'état, it may assume "lower" forms of military involvement in the process. Potential factors which are impelling the SADF, or factions therein, to consider more direct involvement in the political process include:

- The fact that the armed forces reflect the social divisions, fissures and cleavages of South African society. Already sectors of the armed forces (both serving and retired) are attempting to use their military experience and skills to favour specific party-political interests (the so-called "Committee of Generals" for instance).

- The high level of civil violence within the country (aided and abetted by a variety of renegade elements within the security forces) may impel the armed forces into acting more decisively in ensuring the maintenance of "law and order" and the preservation of "national interest". Although not tantamount to a coup, a "blackmail" position like this could slow down the process of negotiations (this is, however, very much a "worst case" scenario).

Within this scenario, a number of options could be considered. These include the selective assassination and "removal" of anti-state activists from the community, the provision of funds for "sympathetic" pro-state or SADF organisations, the discrediting of key leaders and local destabilisation — something which is already happening in the rural areas.

Although this type of influence is obviously less effective than a coup d'état, it remains difficult to control or anticipate given its "invisibility". A coup is highly visible and remains an easier target against which to organise. Covert action remains somewhat less tangible and requires, as a consequence, a specific set of measures to address it.

### 3. Creating a democratic hegemony in the armed forces

The recurring spectre of military

## How to keep an eye on the soldiers

- **Formal mechanisms of control: Parliamentary control, budgetary oversight, parliamentary procedures, the right to ask questions, Freedom of Information Act etc.**

- **Structural mechanisms within the armed forces: Public audits, redefinition of the offensive doctrine of the armed forces, disbanding of contentious units, redefinition of the military intelligence brief etc**

- **Informal mechanisms: Access to and knowledge on the arms industry. These can involve a creative mixture of measures designed according to the peculiarities of the country concerned — Freedom of Information Act, public audits, project updates, a healthy relationship with the media etc.**

**We need appropriate mechanisms of accountability and transparency in virtually all areas of defence restructuring — defence policy, institutional restructuring, the ethos of a future defence establishment, defence legislation, arms export policy, and civil-military relations.**

involvement in the political process can be addressed on two levels. The first involves the institutional *restructuring of the armed forces themselves* (imperative in light of the changing domestic, regional and international threat scenarios). The second involves the *organisation of a democratic hegemony within the armed forces*.

#### a) Limiting the power of the praetorians

The influence of intervention-inclined sectors of the SADF could, potentially, be constrained by a number of measures. These include:

- **Redefining the SADF's roles and missions:** The army must no longer be used as an urban counter-insurgency unit. This will reduce its influence in local government and its tactical intelligence brief (the latter being the source of many "third force" activities). The primary mission of the armed forces, particularly during a transition, should be externally oriented and narrow — primarily the preservation of the territorial sovereignty of the country.

- **Restructuring the SADF's intelligence structures:** Limiting SADF intelligence to an external intelligence brief will prevent it from involving itself in domestic issues (and with it the temptation to pursue its own political agenda).

- **Judiciously reshuffling contentious**

officers: Whilst not summarily dismissing such personnel (unless irrefutable evidence exists to the contrary) they could be appointed in non-contentious staff positions or used in training and non-combatant positions.

- **Introducing effective forms of budgetary, parliamentary and legal oversight over the armed forces (see box).** This transparency and accountability will prevent the armed forces from conspiring against the civilian and political authorities.

#### b) Building a post-apartheid defence force

It is vital to build a broad-based hegemony within a future officer corps around the general principles underpinning a post-settlement South Africa.

Possible candidates could include:

- **MK officers** who, given their history of political accountability and subordination to the political executive of the ANC, can be expected (in most cases) to abide by a new constitution.

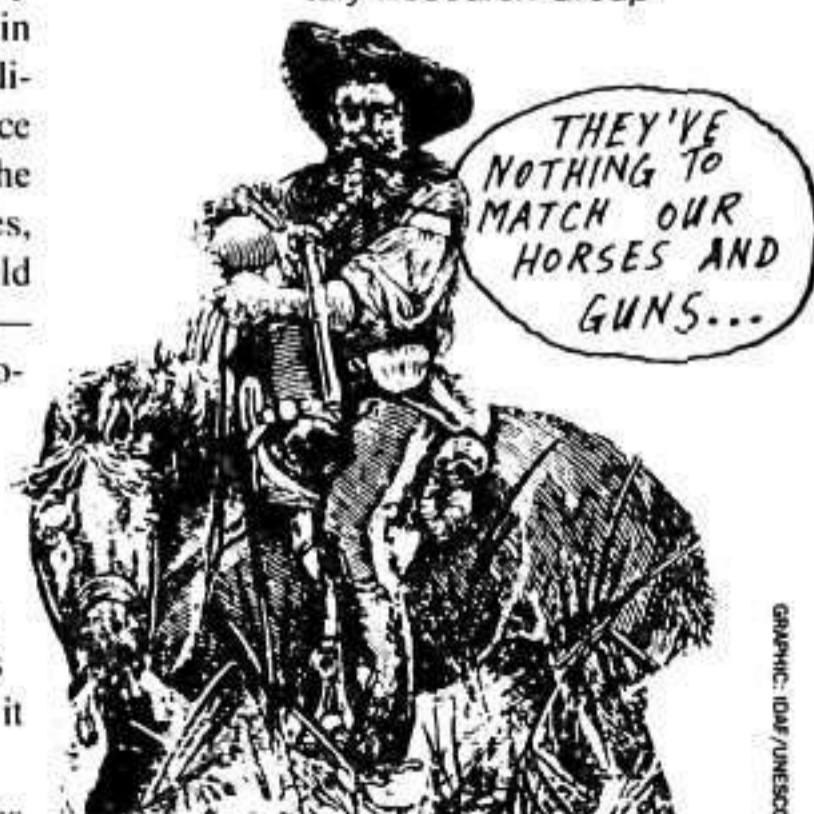
- **Democratically-minded officers** from the homeland armies who are prepared to uphold and respect the constitution.

- **Constitutionally-oriented officers** from the SADF.

It is important to stress, however, that the organisation of such a hegemony among democratic and constitutionalist officers should be done in a way that avoids undermining both the professionalism and the roles and missions of the armed forces.

But make no mistake — the influence of such a bloc of officers will play a vital role in limiting the influence of more reactionary officers. ■

- *Williams is a member of the Military Research Group*







# Racism and sexism:

*You can't have one without the other*

Women bore the brunt of the rightwing invasion of the World Trade Centre.

Black women, in particular, had to run the gauntlet of khaki-clad men.

This statement — by the **ANC Commission for the Emancipation of Women** — explains why it was women who felt the wrath of the right

**T**HE HEAVILY ARMED MEN ASSAULTED AND TERRORISED women as they entered the World Trade Centre. Women were slapped in the face, pulled by their hair, pushed around, spat at and verbally abused as they made their way through the mob.

Black women delegates became the targets for the most foul and humiliating racist verbal abuse. All this happened within full view of the police and a number of the rightwing leaders, who did nothing to assist the women.

Women journalists were exposed to the same behaviour from individuals in the Afrikaner Volksfront. Apart from open hostility and rude treatment, women journalists were sexually harassed, intimidated and threatened.

## Who's weak?

Cowardly and fearful men reinforce their egos and trivialise and denigrate women — particularly in times of war. They portray their own wives, mothers, sisters and daughters as the “weaker sex” who need to be “protected and defended” — while simultaneously attacking and abusing other women to demonstrate that their enemies are “not man enough to defend them”. The rape of thousands of Muslim women in Bosnia, and the Mozambican women kept as sex-slaves by Renamo, are recent illustrations of this.

The institutions investigating the violence in our country have not paid sufficient attention to its impact on women. This is an omission that the Technical Committee on Violence, the National Peace Accord and the Goldstone Commission need to address as a matter of urgency.

The presence of women (especially black women)

among the negotiators at the World Trade Centre no doubt challenged sexist and racist stereotypes. And the fearful white thugs reacted by attacking women and stealing their bags.

The inclusion of a small number of white women among the rightwing militarists illustrates their co-option into a male style of behaviour and dress. These women will find that their uniforms will not protect them from domestic and public violence. They should learn a lesson from our history: black people who allowed themselves to be coopted were not rewarded by being treated as equals — they remain second class citizens.

The behaviour of the rightwing terrorists illustrates once again the connections between racism and sexism. In South Africa this was institutionalised through laws that confined African women to the rural slums of bantustans, to remain as the breeders of the future labour force and the minders of children, the old, the sick and the handicapped.

## Sexists

The National Party, the SADF and the SAP have the same undemocratic, racist and sexist traditions as the Afrikaner Volksfront and the AWB, as is manifested by their failure to prevent the attack, protect the negotiators or speedily bring the leaders before the courts.

In the short term the incident illustrates the urgent need for joint control of the security forces. In the longer term it illustrates the fundamental importance of ensuring that our new constitution provides a framework which will prohibit both the racist and sexist behaviour which these white men displayed. ■



# Breathing new life into the abortion debate

Pro-choice? Pro-life? The abortion debate is a complex one, and part of a much broader discussion about patriarchy and the emancipation of women, argues **LIZ WALKER**

**O**NE ASSUMPTION MADE ABOUT South African women is that they are generally in favour of abortion. Researcher Anne Hilton recently took this assumption further by arguing that "(abortion) is a woman's issue and it is the women of this country who should have the final say". This "say" would presumably result in a victory for the pro-choice lobby.

There are two problems with these assumptions: an arrogance on the part of white feminists, in assuming the consciousness of African women, and a failure to take into account the ambivalence (and even hostility) which many African women display towards abortion.

I recently conducted a study among African nurses in Soweto and found that the large majority unambiguously and unequivocally reject abortion on all levels. Seventy percent of them expressed overwhelmingly negative responses to abortion.

● "Abortion is about killing people. They are being killed by their own kind. How can this woman kill her child?"

● "Women won't care if they are allowed to have abortions, they will just do it all the time."

● "I really don't think women should be able to have abortions. Why should they be allowed to have them? Why can't they just go to family planning?"

Moreover, the

nurses did not identify with their patients' problem of unwanted pregnancies as women: in other words, being a woman was not a basis for empathy, solace or support.

As one nurse put it: "A woman who wants an abortion would come here and expect to be helped because I am a woman as well. But they are wrong. They are disappointed that I don't help them. What they are doing is wrong. It is like murder."

Another told me: "My work is to help the woman who wants a child, not the woman who wants an abortion".

## Hostility

The nurses expressed a deep anger and hostility towards all women — irrespective of their class or social standing — who have abortions.

● "Any woman can want an abortion. It can happen to any woman, even married women sometimes."

● "I think abortion happens to all women. Sometimes, even if they are rich, the pregnancy is still unplanned and unwanted. It can and does happen regardless of the person's money."

Their negative responses were not, as Hilton suggests, "because of religion and moral objections". In fact, church affiliations and religious convictions did not significantly affect their responses: only 11% of the nurses

cited religious beliefs as their central opposition to abortion.

By the same token, they did not "object to the procedure" — nor did they argue that the rights of the foetus assume greater significance than those of the mothers.

Their main objection, in fact, was that an unplanned pregnancy or abortion was seen to be the act of an irresponsible woman and a highly irresponsible mother.

When a woman has an abortion, many of them said, she is terminating more than her pregnancy — she is terminating her womanhood.

In their eyes, these women have rejected who and what they are as women. They are denying and extinguishing their own strength, and indeed what lies at the core of their identity as women.

In short, abortion epitomises an irresponsible and reprehensible woman, whose pregnancy is symbolic of her lack of control, irresponsibility and self-negation.

Interestingly, in their discourse on abortion, men emerged blameless. Men were in no way expected to assume responsibility for unplanned and unwanted pregnancies.

## Some new assumptions

The findings of this research suggest that:

● It is incorrect to assume that all women would support a liberalised abortion policy because abortion is necessarily a "woman's issue". Not all women have an innate feminist consciousness simply because they are

## About the research

Liz Walker, who teaches in the sociology department at Wits University, interviewed nurses at three Soweto clinics over a period of six months. A total of 35 intensive interviews were conducted.

women. Nor do all women have a common consciousness. Rather, the research suggests that women's response to the issue of abortion is a complex one. Further, it implies that women's understanding of abortion cannot be seen in monolithic terms.

- International experiences of the abortion debate (around which questions of religion, the rights of the foetus etc, have been central), have less resonance in the South African context. Here, deeply moral notions of motherhood and complex patriarchal relationships assume greater significance.

- The right for women to control their own fertility is a demand made by feminists both locally and internationally.

...systems" and further, "that they can play a very constructive role (debate), if it takes the lead". I would argue that activists and academics working in the area need to address the debate in the context of challenging the patriarchal relations in South African society more broadly. They need to look more concretely at mechanisms through which women can be empowered.

What needs to be acknowledged in South Africa is that there is no "one patriarchy". Rather, there exists what Belinda Bozzoli refers to as "a patchwork quilt of patriarchy" which is socially and historically constructed. Through taking account of divergent

## What the major players say about abortion

### INTEREST GROUPS

- **WOMEN'S HEALTH PROJECT, WITS UNIVERSITY:** We support a woman's right to choose what is best for her health and her life. (*WHP document on Illegal and unsafe abortion in SA*)

- **BLACK SASH:** We have called for a clause in a bill of rights which says: 'The right to life should not derogate from a women's right to choose an abortion.' We have also called for a freedom of choice bill which says the state shall not restrict a woman's right to terminate a pregnancy. (*From Black Sash national conference resolutions*)

- **PLANNED PARENTHOOD ASSOCIATION:** We are strongly in favour of liberalisation of the present legislation. (*Gail Brittain, PPASA*)

### POLITICAL PARTIES

- **INKATHA:** All people shall enjoy ... the right to terminate an unwanted pregnancy. (But) while abortion will be legalised, it will not be promoted. Individual doctors, clinics and hospitals can exclude the provision of abortion from their range of services. (*From IFP policy document, The Status of Women*)

- **AZAPO:** We are 'pro-choice'. But we are worried that this may lead to abortion being viewed as a form of contraception. Our women's secretariate is grappling with measures to prevent this. (*Azapo publicity secretary Dr Gomolemo Mokae*)

- **CONSERVATIVE PARTY:** We most strongly oppose the legalisation of abortion on request. (*CP health spokesperson Dr WJ Snyman*)

- **NATIONAL PARTY:** The question of abortion must be handled delicately. Changes to existing legislation can only be made after extensive consultation with all interested parties. (*NP policy document*)

- **ANC:** The 1992 ANC Policy Conference failed to reach agreement, but we are in the process of arriving at a policy. Most ANC members feel men and women must have the choice. It is increasingly being talked about as an issue on which we need to take a firm stand. (*Baleka Kgositsile, national executive committee member*)

- **PAN-AFRICANIST CONGRESS:** We have no policy on abortion, but there are discussion papers. It's a very sensitive issue. (*Patricia de Lille, national executive committee member*)

— Research by Botlhale Nong



### WATCH YOUR BACK: South Africa needs its own brand of feminism

This demand is, however, uttered somewhat glibly, as it assumes that women are both willing and empowered to challenge patriarchy. The debate around abortion needs to be recast to take into account the resilience and complexity of both the practices and consciousness surrounding patriarchy. While the practice of abortion may signify one crucial way through which women are able to claim a degree of control over their own fertility, abortion itself may not directly constitute a challenge to patriarchy and male authority.

I agree with Anne Hilton's recommendation that "abortion should be made available, together with pre- and post-abortion counselling and appropri-

experiences of patriarchy, interventions which aim at women's emancipation can relate to the day to day experiences of the many groups of women in South Africa. This will allow for the development of a South African feminism which is neither the property or privilege of white articulate woman activists and academics.

The ultimate challenge of a woman's liberation movement is the incorporation of concerned men in the struggle for gender equality. Indeed, such a challenge needs to incorporate men rather than be directed at them. ■

- This article is in response to Anne Hilton's call in *WIP84* for greater discussion within the ANC on the question of abortion.



# Adventures in the wild

## *First stop: The World Trade Centre*

Is the National Party's 'new realism' at the negotiating table for real? Do the Nats know where their negotiators are? Is that a deal we see around the next corner? How many Nats does it take to change a system? Questions, questions, questions. **HEIN MARAIS** takes a deep breath, and dives in ...

**A** PACK OF MEN AGREE TO DRIVE A LOAD OF UNSTABLE nitro-glycerine through the South American jungle, each chased by their own ghosts and spurred by fearsome ambition. Together they're a mix of fellowship and desperation. They cross swollen rivers, rickety bridges and crumbling mountain passes. They double-cross each other at every other turn. All the while, the cargo shakes and rattles, on the verge of turning into a fireball.

The plot belongs to *Wages of Fear*, Henri-Georges Clouzot's 1946 movie classic. The film belongs wherever the negotiators go, as a kind of permanent installation: as soon as the smell of deadlock rises, delegates are marched to the screening room, made to sit down and watch.

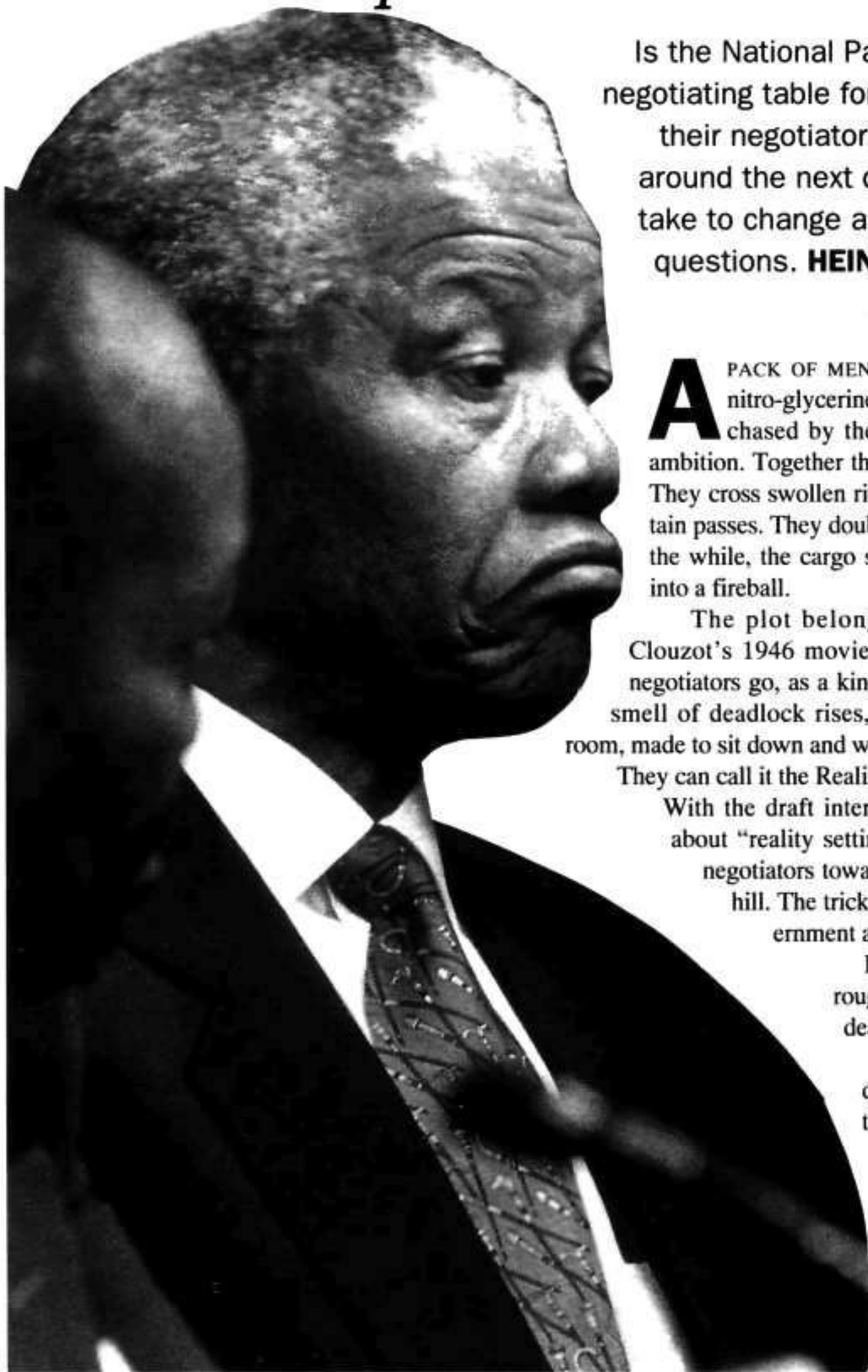
They can call it the Reality Chamber.

With the draft interim constitution out, there is a lot of talk about "reality setting in", "a sense of urgency" spurring the negotiators towards a settlement. From here on, it's downhill. The trick now is to keep Inkatha, the KwaZulu government and the Conservative Party (CP) on board.

But it's not going to be easy. Ahead lies the roughest part of the peace process, dotted with deadlocks, disorder and deferred conflicts.

Bearing down on it is a troop of dare-devils — Inkatha, the CP — that drive on the wild side to make a point. There's an ANC that's made more concessions than most observers and supporters thought it could survive. And there's a factious and frazzled NP — determined to clinch a deal to ensure that much of the old order becomes part of the new, but uncertain what it should look like.

The concession that set things rolling in late June was the government's apparent abandonment of its



■ **HOW MUCH MORE DO YOU WANT? ANC negotiators have already bent over backwards**

demand for entrenched power-sharing (PS for short).

From across the negotiating table, says an ANC insider, the Nats appeared to drop *permanent* PS as early as March. Then President De Klerk punted it back onto the table in his *Financial Times* interview in June. For a couple of days Nat officials were talking out of both sides of their mouths. Then the NP negotiators Tippexed out all references to PS in their submissions at the World Trade Centre. And De Klerk announced from Austria that, no, five years of PS are just dandy, thank you.

So have they really rolled this boulder out of the way?

An answer actually doesn't take us far, but it begs a set of more fundamental questions that cast more light on the road ahead. Like ...

- Who are "they"?
- Has the NP found other tools to do the job of permanent PS?
- Does an official retreat mean that PS ends in 1999?

First, "they" are a motley bunch: united by convenience and a foggy common purpose, divided by anxiety, habit and ambition. There are talking heads and wagging tails — the relationships between them are not altogether clear. We return to this later.

The second question. Permanent PS was a means to an end. The major thrust of the Nat reform programme has not been to keep white racists happy (it long ago ceded that responsibility to the white Right), but to keep or revamp SA as a place where "good business" can be done and its fruits enjoyed.

Some Nats hoped for a settlement that would strap the ANC and its allies in snugly as junior partners in a new order. They rested their hopes on the swollen whimsy and exaggerated sense of ability that decades of authoritarian rule tends to produce.

Others understood this was impossible. An ANC government's ability to push beyond the barriers of "managed change" had to be limited by a variety of mechanisms. Permanent PS was an important short-cut to achieving this.

ANC negotiators seem pretty bullish and proud nowadays, confident they've stepped clear of that trap. "Our scenario for the transition has become the accepted scenario," says top negotiator Mohammed Valli Moosa.

But a scenario that *looks* like the

## How do we deal with these IFP guys?

**The National Party's current bewilderment crystallises in the tensions around Inkatha.**

**Inkatha 'loyalists' in the NP caucus are driven by several impulses: ideological affinities with the IFP, hopes of reviving a Christian-Democratic alliance, distrust of the 'new realism' at the top end of the ANC-NP partnership — and, for Natal MPs especially, sheer careerism.**

**These confusions are now percolating upwards, as the NP ponders whether to buckle to IFP brinkmanship (and twist the ANC's arm into accommodating more of its demands) or bid it good riddance.**

ANC's, does not necessarily deliver what it wants. Form is not content. The ANC, for example, has its elected constituent assembly. Yet that body's hands are being tied already as the multiparty forum lays down the principles it will have to heed.

That there is still a peace process to write about is due largely to the ANC's flexibility at the bargaining table, which stems both from the prevailing balance of forces and from its belief that there is no other route around disaster.

The Nats, however, have feigned a lot of compromises — submitting to changes in form and process, but staying either unwilling or unable to trade fairly when the hat is passed around. (Doom talk? Take a closer look at some of the bills whisked through in the most recent sitting of Parliament.) Here's part of what they've wheedled out of the ANC so far this year:

- No majority rule or full democracy until 1999, with a fair chance that it can be postponed further.
- Agreement on a system that is not quite federalism, but very close.
- Allowing an unelected negotiating forum to set constitutional principles that bind the elected constituent assembly when it draws up a new constitution.

These are some of the straps that

will tie down the ANC in government. The sales pitch Roelf Meyer and co. are laying on NP supporters is that these features do what power-sharing was meant to do. But it's not at all clear whether even his own caucus buys that hook, line and sinker.

Third question. The ANC submitted to five years' PS until 1999 because it knows it cannot govern SA alone — not with a civil service hogged by nervous and hostile whites; an army that was devoted to crushing the organisation it will now have to serve; a police force caught somewhere between "private army" and public service.

But what if, as Centre for Policy Studies director Steve Friedman asks, the Nats could persuasively argue in six years' time that the conditions which proposed the sunset clause had not really changed? "The civil service and the shooters are still itchy, but



■ HOME, JAMES: But who's taking who for a ride?

# Into the big white yonder

**T**he contradictions within the National Party cannot be blamed on trying "hardliners" and "moderates". They're also the byproducts of the general incoherence that besets an NP without a strategic programme.

The ANC's Mohammed Valli Moosa says the lack of a discernible NP strategy has been a constant source of frustration in the talks: "They chop and change; often we're amazed at how little they've thought through the steps and the consequences."

Within the caucus the disarray is magnified — viz Herrus Kriel running amok among the PAC with his law-and-order obsessions, the pigheadedness around the exam fees crisis, FW de Klerk demanding permanent power-sharing after his negotiators have relented, the disputes over whether to patch up relations with Inkatha.

The Nat negotiators are also outspinting their own caucus and constituency in the process. Many of the whites chortling at TV footage of the rightwing assault on the World Trade Centre voted for the NP in last year's referendum. Party support dipped to 29% in March — largely because it has made no effort to market the content of the peace process.

"In the 1980s, the legalisation of black trade unions and the abolition of influx control were all preceded by media campaigns to market the moves," says the Centre for Policy Studies' Steve Friedman. "But we're not seeing that today."

The Nats seem to be hoping the 1994 election will reunite the caucus and a blockbuster campaign will repair voters' support levels. Valli thinks they can pull it off: "They have a long history of hoodwinking the electorate ... the ordinary white person will go with them."

But a range of other contradictions kick in at this point. "If you plan to share power for the foreseeable future you don't do everything possible to weaken your partner — which is what the Nats are doing to the ANC," says Friedman. The NP's problem is that, to have enough weight in a power-sharing government, it must win at least 25% of the vote. Which means it has to compete feverishly with the ANC for black votes.

On top of that, it has to solve this puzzle: how does it land the white vote (by placating white fears, downplaying the changes, massaging prejudices) and peach enough black votes (which requires dazzling promises of change)?

"Part of what makes negotiated transitions work," says Friedman, "is that the two main players are supposed to reinforce each other ... But here we've got this bizarre situation where Mandela is basically saying (in public!) 'We're worried about the NP, what can we do to help them?'. His problem is that there's nothing on earth he can do."

— Hein Marais

they trust us — keeping us on-board can make life a lot easier"?

Or there's a less Machiavellian route. No matter what Nat cheerleaders say, they know they won't win the first democratic election. But some of them do believe they can have a fair crack at winning the 1999 vote or running a close second.

Now, imagine. ANC election promises lie wheezing on a heap of failed policies and failures of will. The experience is magnified by a hostile media, and contrasted with the relatively "happier" fate of a couple of states or provinces run by NP regional governments (Western Cape, maybe Natal with Inkatha, and the Northern Cape). The 1999 vote sees the ANC and NP outspint their rivals, but not a lot separates them from each other. The ANC can form a minority government but is hesitant. The NP proposes PS, only it calls it a coalition government. It says: "Don't fret, this time it's not a deal cut

in Kempton Park, it's the will of the voters."

The Nats never pretended negotiations were a going-out-of-business sale, did they?

## Hooked on each other

At the symbolic level, ANC-NP relations look like a sort of gentlemanly duel. A bit of cut and thrust, a lot of smiles and hand-

shakes.

But the relationship is ambivalent — at two levels. First, these are two foes locked into a mutual dependency. The one cannot rule without the other, now or in the foreseeable future; each needs the other, to do the deal. Secondly, the current rough consensus has little currency beyond a handful of ANC and NP top rankers. This problem is particularly acute within the NP — which brings us back to that question, "Who is this 'they' that is finessing the deal?"

Let's assume the Nat avant-garde (Dawie de Villiers, Roelf Meyer, Leon Wessels and their patron, De Klerk) have done a deal with the ANC leadership, a give-and-take shuffle to prevent matters from turning too unpleasant. There's not a lot of detail, but they've



PHOTO: THE STAR

pencilled in a basic outline. Both parties are relatively happy, no-one's ecstatic.

The hole in this plot is the fact that the deal is done by the avant-garde of the two parties. And they're separated from their constituencies either by party culture or by the dynamics of negotiations.

The ANC has sold to its members some stupendous compromises already — from the suspension of armed struggle to the postponement of majority rule to the end of the century. No matter how conciliatory or spooked its negotiators might now be made to feel, there's not a lot more they can concede.

### Constituency problem

But it's the NP that is stricken with the biggest "constituency problem". Says Friedman: "The biggest danger to the transition right now is the political weakness of the NP," he says (see box).

Even within the Nat caucus, "new-agers" like Meyer will not walk off with the most-popular-guy-in-class prize. Breathing down their necks are survivors from the *Krokkedil's* reign, ideologues with careers on the line, incompetents addicted to power and the good life, securocrats nervous about human rights probes, and other, even nastier, specimens.

Much of the NP's predicament is compressed into — and read from — the rise of dissent within the caucus. Typically, the lines of tension are said to separate hawks (Hernus Kriel, Kobie Coetzee, Danie Schutte et al) from doves (Roelf Meyer, Dawie de Villiers, Leon Wessels).

It's a deceptive metaphor, because other birds are rattling the cage, too. Some set on feathering their nests, some with their heads in the sand, some with the jitters, and a flock that whistles every tune within earshot.

The Nats are a pretty disparate bunch — united in their belief that a settlement has to be reached, but divided by notions of exactly what that settlement should look like and how it can be achieved.

In the past the party managed to deal with factions, Friedman points out, "by electing strong leaders who decide which one they're going to go with". In De Klerk, the Nats chose a conciliator, good at balancing acts, but poor at laying down the line.

Remember how US and Soviet



PHOTO: MARK WOLFFER (THE PICTORIA NEWS)

### ■ DRINKS ARE ON ME: The Nats are working on how to win (black) friends

leaders used to butt heads at the bargaining table and make it look like a piece of courtly theatre? Only, in the back of their minds was this awesome awareness of MAD — Mutual Assured Destruction, the thousands of nuclear warheads they had aimed at each other. Like bargaining at the edge of Hell. MAD proponents say it focused minds, discouraged brinkmanship and recommended compromises.

### Threats of civil war

We have our own version, only it's really *mad*. And while some minds are focused, others are flapping in the wind. Ulundi's threats of civil war are not idle ones. The far-right is stoking itself up for its bout of orgasmic terror. Like

boozers on a binge, the security forces still surrender to the habit of senseless crackdowns that produce inflamed passions rather than prosecutions. Townships are war zones, or worse.

In this atmosphere, our transition rattles and lurches into uncharted parts.

We see, amidst all the hands snatching at the steering wheel, the Nats, still squabbling over where they're heading, bickering about how to get there.

We see De Klerk and his avant-garde routinely turn to the camera, looking calm as ice cubes on a hotplate, announcing: "Not to worry! Everything's under control!"

We hold our breath. ■



# Back to the future?

## *A Brazilian Workers' Party in SA?*

Many advocates of an independent workers' party gaze fondly towards Brazil's PT. To look and learn is fine, writes **JEREMY CRONIN**, but closer inspection advises against a local copy of the Brazilian model

**O**NE OF THE FOUNDING FATHERS OF social theory, Vico, believed that history proceeds in ascending circles — a bit like the “SpiralPlan” an insurance company is trying to flog on TV nowadays.

I'm not sure about Vico. I'm less sure about the Spiralplan. But the political debate on the left in South Africa certainly resembles Vico's history. We keep coming round to familiar themes, over and over ... and I'm not sure that we are always ascending.

We tackled the “workerism/populism” debate in 1984; the “two caps” one in 1990; “civil society” in 1992. And now we've seen the “independent workers' party” debate resurrected at the National Union of Metalworkers' (Numsa) July congress. In fact, all these debates are in their respective ways part of the same issue.

I have listened to many Numsa comrades, and I have heard several different versions of what this workers' party is meant to be. It is good that the debate has resurfaced. But what we absolutely cannot do is confine it to the level of allegiances to logos or manoeuvres in congresses. We must take it for-



■ **RED FLAGS IN THE SUNSET: A workers' party belongs inside the majority project, not outside**



**W**hen Brazilian president Ferdinand Collor was booted from office late last year his successor, Itamar Franco, decided to take the route of compromise.

He began cobbling together a new government by pulling figures from across the political spectrum on board. At least one ministry was offered to the Workers' Party (PT), sparking heated debate within the party.

Since 1990 the PT has experienced an internal 'crisis of hegemony' due to its advance into governing institutions and the crisis of the international socialist movement. The presence of organised factions within the PT has seen the debate being waged openly around relatively 'packaged' positions.

Franco's offer, and disagreement over tactics for the 1994 presidential elections, sparked a new wave of debate between what can be stripped down to four basic positions in the PT leadership.

● On the right are supporters of participation in government with the aim of defending and advancing their policies 'from inside'.

● In the centre, the 'independents' urge the PT not to enter government but rather to work with it in various fields, pushing its own proposals and opposing measures it disagrees with. There would be a 'constructive' relationship between the PT and government, with the PT helping preserve 'governability'.

● On the left there is also 'constructive' opposition to government. This tendency argues against participating in a government that contains so many conservatives, whose policy is confused and which is not firmly opposed to neo-liberalism. If the PT does enter government it should be as part of a coalition with a programme of social change. It worries about 'governability' and doesn't advocate the Franco government's defeat, which it fears will only aid the most conservative forces.

● On the far left one finds firm opposition to the government, which is viewed as both bourgeois and conservative. This current is not concerned with 'governability'.

Naturally, there are views which all the tendencies in the PT share. Even those who defend participation in the government pose this as a form of confrontation that is aimed at bringing the weight of the social movement to bear.

At the same time, the divergences around the party's strategic vision run deep. ■

— International Viewpoint/WIP

Our popular and Left movements suffered major reverses in the 1960s. Just one year after the Rivonia trial here, the military in 1964 seized power in Brazil. During the rest of the decade our societies suffered severe repression under the tightening grip of authoritarian regimes.

## New unionism

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, partly encouraged by low wages and "political stability" in our two countries, a global capitalist system (in the process of major restructuring) began making considerable industrial investments. There was a significant expansion in Brazil, SA and in a handful of other semi-peripherals (among them South Korea and Taiwan) of auto plants, chemical and textile industries, and the like. This semi-peripheral industrialisation was the seedbed for a (relatively) new trade-unionism in both Brazil and SA.

More broadly, with minimal national political space, the popular movement in both countries re-emerged in the 1970s from the grassroots in the shape of social movements. The struggles began around issues like sewage collection or shop-floor protective clothing. The trade unions were the most powerful, but a host of other formations emerged, principally but not exclusively on the urban terrain — civics, women, youth, students, black consciousness (yes, there is a BCM in Brazil), religious, human rights, and many more. This was bottom-up mobilisation, principally from the shopfloor and squatter camp.

In the early 1980s, the apartheid regime and Brazil's military regime both began responding to mounting popular pressure with a combination of ongoing repression and partial reforms. In SA we saw the tricameral parliament and black local authorities. In Brazil, around the same time, the military conceded indirect presidential elections.

These similarities underline why it is important that we, as South Africans, should study and learn what we can from Brazil. But we should also be alert



ward *theoretically* and *practically*.

Part of the reason why this debate remains unresolved is the fact that we have not adequately *theorised* what it is we have been doing since the mid-1970s. Practice overtook theory, as it should. The trouble with that, however, is that practice keeps colliding into unresolved matters. It keeps bumping into its own false self-consciousness.

The difficulty with *understanding* what it is we are doing, is that our models — of socialism, political parties and national liberation movements, trade unionism, of governing — are all only partly helpful. They all require major renovation. And, crucially, they need to be reconnected and interrelated.

Three major organisational traditions are at work within the broad left in our country. The eldest are the national liberation and the communist/socialist traditions. The third tradition, arguably, can be dated to 1968 (or 1973 Durban/1976 Soweto on the South African calendar).

## Street-fighting years

During these years, first mainly in the North, then rapidly worldwide, there erupted relatively new (some would say not-so-new) social movements — students, anti-war, anti-racist, environmentalist, new trade unionism, feminist, liberation theology, civic, human rights, black power, and many more.

The relationship between these social movements and traditional Left political parties and liberation movements has been complex, often tense, and always deeply marked by specific national situations.

Which brings me to Brazil.

When the idea of an independent workers' party was floated in SA in the first half of the 1980s, at least some of the advocates were thinking along the lines of the Brazilian Workers' Party (the PT). (They were also mindful of the now disintegrating Solidarity in Poland — but therein lies another story.)

Indeed, the parallels between recent South African and Brazilian history are compelling. Both of our countries are semi-peripheral societies in the great divide that has replaced the old Cold War division - North and South, first and third worlds. We are both socio-politically in the South, but relatively industrialised.

to the differences.

The emerging social movements in the two countries found themselves on somewhat different political terrains. In Brazil, the traditional left parties, fairly or unfairly, were discredited by their awkward participation in a flawed political system. In SA, the often distant ANC and SACP saw their popularity and legitimacy grow apace with the blossoming of social movements.

In Brazil, the social movements, led by the metalworkers' union, forged themselves into a new (and novel) political party — the PT. The PT still bears the pluralistic marks of its social movement roots. It enfoldes several different organised political platforms, and insists that individual membership (a bit like membership in the UDF) can only come via active participation in one of the social movements.

Those organisational arrangements have given the PT vitality and breadth. But sometimes they have also restricted its political effectiveness. There have been changes in and ongoing internal debates around its organisational character. Its strength has characteristically been at the local, municipal level. This has pros and cons. One danger, as Ruth Correa Leite Cardoso writes of this bottom-up politics, is that: "Mass mobilisations and meetings are most effective when they put pressure on those responsible for distributing already existing services ... Within the rules defined by [another party's] government policies, small communities fight among themselves over the available resources."

Micro and macro-politics need each other. Which brings us to the most significant difference between Brazil and SA. It is, of course, the national factor. There are oppressed national



**The late '60s saw the eruption of relatively new social movements — students, anti-war, anti-racist, environmentalist, new trade unionism, feminist, civic, black power, and many more**

minorities in Brazil, and throughout Latin America. But here, as in the rest of pre-independence Africa, there is national oppression of the majority, and it is this oppression that has been most tangible and immediate.

### **Populism replaces work**

In one respect, African liberation movements in the phases before and immediately after independence have had it easy. Anti-colonial, even anti-white mobilisation, is fairly simple to foster. Establishing a majority movement has been more or less a straightforward task — populism (in many guises) easily replaces hard sectoral and

organisational work. But this relative advantage quickly becomes a major disadvantage in the post-independence struggle for fundamental national democratic transformation.

In Latin America, popular struggles against neo-colonial regimes have generally had a much harder task to build a majority political project.

Because of the indigenous colonial and the third world but industrialised character of our society, we have had the best (and the worst) of both continents.

Like the PT in Brazil (and many other liberation movements in Latin America — notably in El Salvador and Nicaragua) we face the challenge of combining popular social movements and political formations in some kind of pluralistic unity, a unity of "multi-festos".

The main challenge in Brazil is to transform a democratic project into a majority politics. In our case the challenge is to ensure that the majority political project remains democratic.

That means at least two things:

- We must understand that the powerful social movements that we built in the 1970s and 1980s were not mere substitutes (the B-team) for an absent ANC/SACP
- These autonomous social movements must not abandon the majority political project — they are integral to it. In other words, a party of the workers belongs *inside*, not outside or alongside, the majority political project.

We can certainly learn from the Brazilian PT, but it would be misguided to mimic it. To do so would be to repeat history, not in the manner theorised by Vico, but in the style Marx warned against — the second time round as farce. ■

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## The story so far...

Is there still a path towards socialism in South Africa? Shortly after the death of Chris Hani, *Work in Progress* matched Argentinian theorist ERNESTO LACLAU with a room full of South African socialists to discuss this question. The first part of that debate appeared in *WIP90*.

In it, Laclau laid bare his belief that the struggle for socialism is on a road to nowhere if we insist on mapping it with classical Marxist theory.

He raised eyebrows by insisting that democracy is not simply an element of socialism. It's the other way around: socialism is actually a 'moment' in the much larger programme of democratic revolution.

Then he accused classical Marxism of leading socialists into the wilderness. It bungled the theory about the structural laws of capitalism and produced a faulty set of strategic principles. The concept of class, he argued, no longer takes us anywhere.

In fact, social classes are splitting up, fragmenting into other units and identities. And it is around these identities that people tend to mobilise and struggle. For Laclau, the only path towards socialism lies along radicalising and expanding these different sets of democratic demands in society.

But does that mean class becomes redundant? What about the blockages that hold up fundamental change — the concentrations of power in the economy, for example? How are they democratised? And what prevents these separate social movements from struggling only for their own, 'selfish' goals? Is socialism just a kinder, gentler capitalism?

*WIP* is proud to publish this edited transcript of the conclusion of the discussion. ■

# Socialism's identity crisis

*More low-downs on high hopes:*

*The Laclau Debate —  
Part 2*



## STEVE FRIEDMAN

Centre for Policy Studies

I can understand that new social movements might give successful lead to a broader democratisation of society, but there doesn't seem to be any particular reason why they should lead to a different social system, to a different way of ordering the economy.

It seems many of the demands of the new social movements are absorbable into the present social structure — Bill Clinton campaigns for the rights of homosexuals in the US Army, but that doesn't make him a socialist. And if you question the notion of class and you talk about transfer of power — transfer of power to whom? Who are these popular classes? Who is engaging in popular struggles if you're dealing with such social heterogeneity?

## BILL GIBSON

Institute for Social and Economic Research

Do you see the possible vindication of classical Marxist predictions in the social marginalisation that we've talked about? I can think of an excellent example: Sendero Luminoso in Peru. That seems to be the kind of thing SA needs

■ WHO AM I:  
Worker, unionist  
or human being?

PHOTO: PAUL WEINBERG (SOUTHLIGHT)

to avoid — where the predictions of classical Marxism come about in a highly marginalised black population that, even after the transition to a democratic government, stays marginalised.

## STEVE GELB

Institute for Social and Economic Research

Ernesto points to three characteristics of socialism (as it may come to exist in the present era) which are, to some extent, being realised in SA.

They are:

- The general expansion of democratic demands
- The proliferation of negotiating processes in order to direct the market, essentially, and in the form of the various negotiating forums
- The idea of socialism as a hegemonic project which one can also argue is in some ways part of the nationalist project.

But Karl von Holdt's point about the power of capital and the private sector within the context of these forums raises serious questions about achieving some sort of post-nationalist hegemonic project.

Within these negotiating forums there is a large

potential for a contradiction: between a *hegemonic project* on the one hand (trade union movement, women's movement, rural people, youth and so on) and, on the other hand, the process of negotiation *between various interest groups* in the society in order to steer the market or economic development. How is that contradiction resolved?

## MIKE MORRIS

Centre for Social and Development Studies

We see in SA the restructuring of the state. In terms of forums like the National Manpower Commission, we see the possibility of extending and

transforming some of the state apparatuses in order to have a restructuring of democracy. We see civil society emerging.

But what we can't see and can't answer is the problem that classical Marxism answered very simply: the question of economic and class control over the economy. That's the critical question we have to be able to deal with.

## ADRIENNE BIRD

National Union of Metalworkers of SA

I see SA as being at a point of rupture, of trying to restructure all the institutions in ways that enhance democratisation, and structuring the negotiating forums in ways that give voice to as many constituencies as possible.

The aim is to put in place a new set of institutions, a more democratic arrangement which sets the stage for the next phase of accumulation, which would empower different groups in society to fight in their own interests and in alliance with others for a deepening of democracy. And this puts them in a stronger position to fight the next phase.

If those institutions that constitute a new "regime of accumulation" can be moved in a democratic direction, then that will address the question of blockages. If we can empower them in new ways, where the democratic forces are stronger, then we can unblock the blockages.

## KHEHLA SHUBANE

Centre for Policy Studies

I'm worried about the mention of these negotiating forums as arenas of victory for the Left. I participate in two of them and I know two others quite well. And my feeling is that the Left is losing in them.

It is relying on the Right for its hard information — on business and various established interests. Take the National Housing Forum: the Urban Foundation is doing very well, precisely because they know what questions to pose. The Left doesn't feature at that level. It scares me that that people are mentioning some of these forums as something great for the Left, something that advances the struggle for socialism.



■ SO MANY FORUMS, SO LITTLE TIME:

## KATE PHILIP

National Union of Mineworkers

I agree with Khehla. In a range of forums, the Left and the democratic forces are getting wiped out.

Is the problem our notion that it is possible to shift the balance forces in these forums? Or does it come down to how the democratic forces are organising themselves to operate in them?

We relied on mass action to create those forums, to make it unacceptable for decisions to be made unilaterally on many issues.

That's a major victory. But, unfortunately, the democratic forces have been unable to take those opportunities and translate them into a struggle over the *content* of the issues. The Left has put a lot of emphasis on process, but very little energy and effort into the content of the programmes being motivated in those forums.

That brings us back to a practical and programmatic challenge: are we able to use those forums in the way they were conceived? At the moment we're not. I don't think this means the forums as constituted are an incorrect strategy — it's whether we are organised to take advantage of them.

**In all these forums, the Left has put a lot of emphasis on process, but very little thought into content**



PHOTO: WILLIAM MANTLA

Enoch Godongwana tries to get his point across at the NEF report-back in July

## ERNESTO LACLAU

On the question about socialism and economic control. Karl (von Holdt) says it is clear that victories over a variety of fronts in the next few months will not bring socialism. The obvious question then is: What is socialism? Because unless we have a clear concept of socialism we cannot say whether we have it or not.

Let's start with the classical concept of socialism. All the ethical claims which were linked with the notion of socialism, and the whole ensemble of struggles around which these ethical claims were organised, were supposed to be ensured by the public ownership of the means of production.

Now, if today we don't think that public ownership will ensure all these socialist and ethical aims, then there is every reason in the world for the struggles around these ethical claims to organise themselves as relatively independent struggles — and not to depend on this ("central") question of public ownership.

Secondly, if we know that total state ownership of the means of production leads to disastrous results (as it does — not because it was applied wrongly in Eastern Europe, but because it is

incompatible with a democratic society), then what remains of socialism?

That is why I propose to redefine socialism. It is the bringing together of a variety of already relatively autonomous struggles, with some kind of social organisation which enables the best advancement of these respective demands at a particular moment. That is why I speak about a Gramscian conception of "war of position": socialism is nothing more than this process.

OK, let's suppose that Nelson Mandela is president of SA next year. This will involve changes in the balance of forces. And many democratic demands traditionally linked with socialism will be fulfilled. But does this mean the elimination of capitalist relations of production in SA? Obviously not. They will try to create the best possible conditions to attract foreign investors. We may see some kind of improvement in several areas, to make capitalism less savage.

Now, will we one day arrive at a situation in which capitalism will be totally eliminated, where the market economy will be done away with? I don't think this is desirable or likely.

This is why I think socialism as a process means:

- Limiting the effects of a market economy on society through social control
- Increasing the democratic character of this social control, with the balance of forces changing continuously. At this stage of the 20th century, socialism is nothing more than that. We will never arrive at a society that is radical from top to bottom. What we'll have is this constant displacement of forces.

If it reaches power, to what extent will an ANC government have *real* power? The battle has started before it becomes the government and it will continue beyond it. Because in all respects such a government's room for manoeuvre will be larger than it is today. But it will not be total.

On Friedman's points. Social movements, as far as they are issue-oriented, are not going to bring about a change in the system. But they *are* going to bring about other types of changes — for instance, feminism really transformed the kinds of relations between the sexes in Britain (and other countries) over the last 20 years. But if the aim is to bring about a more radical transformation, and we start with these separate social movements or agents, then we have to try and create a convergence between these forces.

Sometimes this is achieved. The 1980s' campaigns for nuclear disarmament brought together forces which were not directly related with that issue. But their own objectives came to form a whole of which the issue of nuclear disarmament was a part. The miners' strike in the mid-1980s (in Britain) created a similar kind of collective galvanisation.

This is how we can create an historical bloc which can achieve increasing union between different issues — some kind of popular pole can be constructed that makes changes in the balance of forces possible. Even violent revolutionary processes proceed in this way: they are simply the condensation, at a particular moment of rupture, of many separate demands which operate together.

So, there is a first moment when the struggle is dispersed, and this is necessary for autonomy. And there is a second moment, when out of these dispersed struggles is created some kind of popular pole that enables them to politically act together.

## The rapid marginalisation of black people can create a 'no-man's land' ... people can disperse in ways which have nothing to do with socialism or democracy

### KARL VON HOLDT

Editor of SA Labour Bulletin

Ernesto's comments about the dispersal of struggles and the problem of finding a unifying point or pole are very interesting.

Historically we managed to combine those two things. We had a range of different struggles (and a theory to back it up), different organisations in different sites of struggle, unified in the struggle against apartheid, and unified organisationally in the UDF and then in the MDM. What's happened since 1990 is a fragmentation, with struggles dispersing rather than unifying.

That dispersion does have some positive effects. In each sector, organisations can go back to particular concerns and build on them, without spreading their energies to the central struggle against apartheid.

But it's had another effect: a range of local or specific struggles have split off from others. And that's one of the big problems when we talk about the spread of negotiating forums — there's a ridiculous number of them. And we don't have a coherent programme or strategy with which to approach that situation or the question of governmental power. (The latter is beginning to emerge with the Reconstruction Accord, but it remains a central problem.)

On Kate Philips' point about the negotiating forums: it doesn't seem possible to say that the forums themselves are a blockage, that we shouldn't be in them. But these forums (and I include parliament in this) have new effects which we haven't planned for and thought about properly. They raise new problems, and they also raise new rela-

tions — between elements in the democratic movement, but also relations with those forces that now occupy the centres of power.

Having won the battle of setting up these forums, these spaces and possibilities, how do we engage in them in ways that actually take our struggle for transformation further — in ways that don't demobilise the Left completely?

That's a major question. Not only because we face concrete problems as organisations. Historically there is no other society in which participation in these types of institutions has opened the way for further, radical transformation. I may be wrong, but in most cases these institutions lead to the demobilising of a Left project and the incorporation of the popular movement — and to the stabilisation of society on the whole and a kind of end to the process of transformation. We need to look very carefully at this.

### MIKE MORRIS

The nub of what Ernesto was saying is that the problem of classical socialism is that it's a stage, a stage after capitalism. Which means you have a programme which is related to a particular stage. He offers an alternative position, which says socialism is not a stage. It's a series of struggles around the extension of demands for equality and democracy.

If you apply that to SA, then we have a fundamental problem. We approach this problem with legacies that are bound up with classical and very statist conceptions of socialism, cloaked in rhetoric that have nothing particularly to do with equality and democracy. There are strategies and concepts from the 1980s which are not appropriate to the kinds of issues that Karl, Steve (Gelb) and Adrienne (Bird) have been posing here. Therefore, the strategies are no longer only conceptually inappropriate, they're often also practically inappropriate. And lastly we inherit the culture of coercion, of a lack of democracy in our popular movement.

These are all really serious problems if want to rethink socialism — not as a set of stages but as a process of radical redistribution of wealth (that is *equality*) and of power (that is *democracy*). We have to start finding the answers to them. ■

But there is no *essential* unity between these different demands. They can go their separate ways and even ally themselves with reactionary forces. History offers us no guarantees. Which is why there has to be a *political struggle* to avoid this happening.

Now, if the question is the transfer of *power*, then, obviously, there can be *no* transfer of power because there is a complete dispersion of power.

There are transfers of power which involve some kind of popular rupture, when suddenly a set of forces can force a qualitatively deeper transfer. This is probably what we'll see if the ANC succeeds in its struggle. Such a transfer of power is politically much more radical, but it is never total.

There used to be a Jacobean dream where a revolution remakes society from the bottom up. Processes are never like that. Even revolutionary power which has conquered power by violence finds civil society structured in ways that require the struggle to continue later.

The comment about Sendero Luminoso detects what *can* happen when there is a process of radical marginalisation. That is a process in which people do not occupy a clear post in society and consequently live in a situation where they lack — but desperately need — a clear-cut social identity.

When a radical ideology enters such a field of experience, something that describes the world in a coherent way for these people — that gives them some sense of identity — people can be taken in by that ideology. Often this is not because of the content of the ideology, but because of the kind of new identity that it provides.

I have seen many such cases in Latin America. In some places, people have become *Senderistas*, but in others they become some kind of religious group or sect. Or they resort to banditry. But the process through which their identities are created is exactly the same in all these cases.

I imagine that the process of rapid marginalisation of blacks in SA can create a "no-man's land" in which people can drift elsewhere. There is no guarantee that they are going to be pro-ANC all the time; they can disperse in ways which have nothing to do with socialism or even democracy.



# Middle road or cul de sac?

Last time around ('Beware the Shining Path!', *WIP* 90), COLIN BUNDY took it on the chin for contending ('Theory of a Special Type', *WIP* 89) that the SA Communist Party still has not risen to the challenges that confront it. Now he bounces back. Seconds out! Round Three ...

**P**ETER HUDSON AND STEPHEN Louw deal sternly with what they dub an "ultra-left" critic of the SACP.

This loony lefty (they huff) believes local and international conditions favour a revolutionary anti-capitalist strategy in SA — or considers them irrelevant. He operates (they puff) in the realm of fantasy, heedless of "the hard rock of real history", and ignores complex social realities. He anticipates an imminent "mass-based insurrection from below" which will in-and-of-itself smash the state and usher in self-sustaining socialism (they blow the house down).

But does this lumpen Leninism correspond to anything I actually wrote? My piece began by commending and emphasising Richard Levins' warning that the current context is profoundly hostile to the Left; that there is no prospect of quick victory; that the challenge of coming to terms with defeat *and* of finding new forms of struggle is "an agenda of years and decades". How different is this from Hudson and Louw's view that the South African Left must "prepare itself for a very long haul" with no guarantees of success?

Nor did my article anticipate or champion insurrectionary optimism. Indeed, its longer version — condensed to meet *WIP*'s format — explicitly criticises and rejects the naive belief that the road to insurrection is paved by militant intentions.

It would be tedious to review in

detail Hudson and Louw's caricature of my position. But it is worth noting their method.

The cartoon of the insurrectionist guided by millenarian logic is laboriously drawn, with such devices as: "the gist of Bundy's argument would appear", "one may surely be excused for believing that his argument", his silence "could reasonably be interpreted to suggest" and (*re* insurrection) "which is the only possible way in which Bundy's paper can be read". Result: Hudson and Louw 1, Straw

Opponent 0.

Presumably this distortion of my argument was based on a misreading rather than on malice. If so, my original piece was more cryptic than intended. Accordingly, I would like very briefly

■ **SPOT THE DIFFERENCE:** The difference between the Party programme and the rest of the alliance? Oh, about *this* big ...



PHOTO: WILLIAM MATLALA

## Does the SACP still value Marxism for its insistence that an oppressive social order can be transformed?

to restate my main points; and also to respond to some aspects of the interesting and important SACP strategy document written recently by Jeremy Cronin.

The nub of my critique of the party's record in recent years is that it has failed, within the politics of alliance, to develop an independent position. Such a position would support the struggle for national liberation and, simultaneously, press against its limitations and pitfalls.

A party describing itself as "the most respected and most coherent *socialist* political party in the country" (my italics) must sustain and develop a critique of South African capitalism.

Such a critique becomes more, not less, important in the context of a negotiated transition premised upon a deracialised capitalism. This seems very close to Cronin's call for an independent party identity that will "avoid trying to do everything the ANC does, only with a slightly more left inflection". And it is entirely compatible with his reference to a "real and ongoing struggle" within the alliance "over the class bias and character of the ANC".

Moreover: it will also be necessary to contest the class bias and character of the corporatist tripartism welcomed on some sides as a viable route to socialism. My scepticism about the prospects of "structural" or "radical" reformism is not a stubborn hostility to reforms. It is a concern that, *by the very criteria which are proposed* to qualify reforms as "structural", the envisaged forms of corporatism neither implicate further reforms nor leave a residue of empowerment.

### Deepening democracy

Instead, as Laurence Harris noted ("One step forward", *WIP* 89), "the agendas pursued in tripartite bodies are basically those of rational capitalism". They implicate a more secure accumulation of capital; the residue they leave is that of state/business/big union rapprochement.

Hudson and Louw argue it is crucial "that the struggle against capitalism be understood as a struggle for democracy". Of course: *but* central to such a call must be the prior recognition that democracy can be deepened in different directions. It might be deepened along classic liberal lines, or in a libertarian

way, or in ways favoured by the radical right — or in ways that run counter to the distribution of power and wealth in a bourgeois social and political order.

They took exception to my shorthand reminder "that a socialist transition means the replacement of rule by one class by that of another". I am unrepentant. Socialist politics is about contesting the ways in which one class exploits and dominates another. This does not mean that the dominant class is a monolithic entity. And it certainly does not mean that the dominated class(es) is/are an undifferentiated bloc.

It does mean that an unavoidable starting point for socialist politics is to analyse and understand the concrete, specific and historic class composition and identity in a society. To that end, one can only welcome Cronin's thoughtful discussion of the restructuring of the South African working class in the past 20 years, and his warning of how difficult it is to reach the "marginalised 70% of the working class".

Yet Cronin's analysis of the working class would have been strengthened by closer attention to the labour movement's record of combativity, its objective and subjective tendency to an anti-capitalist stance, and its distinctive political culture. Over the past 20 years a central change in this society has been the ability of organised black workers to win substantial gains.

### Link the struggles

The 1991 survey of attitudes among Cosatu shopstewards (*Beyond the Factory Floor*, ed. S Pityana and M Orkin) conveys how the militancy of trade union struggles has translated into con-

sciousness. Ideas of worker control and even ownership were "deeply entrenched in the labour movement", and an overwhelming majority favoured nationalisation of major industries.

The challenge confronting the SACP (or a workers' party like that called for by Numsa) is how to link the struggles of unionised, semi-skilled industrial workers with those of unskilled, rural, and informal sector workers and the unemployed.

Cronin proposes to forge this link through the "reconstruction pact". He distinguishes this approach from "a traditional tri-partite, social contract" entered into by unions, capital and the state. It will be more socially inclusive, drawing in also "many other MDM formations (women, rural, youth, educational, religious, cultural, etc.)". The pact also would be characterised by "a whole range of institutions of participatory and direct democracy".

### Corporatism

This sounds uncomfortably like the emergent corporatism of 'structural reform', criticised by Harris, "only with a slightly more left inflection".

Hudson and Louw point out that Cronin's position seems overly optimistic about the extent to which popular demands for redistribution can be met when combined with the demands for employment and economic growth.

The party position also raises the question I posed in *WIP* 89. Does Cronin believe that a milder, better behaved (or more constrained) capitalist order can secure a decent future for the majority of South Africans? Will a reconstruction pact hold out long term prospects that the aspirations of exploited and oppressed people can be met?

And does the SACP still value Marxism — both for its ability to lay bare dynamic social realities, and for its insistence that an oppressive social order can be transformed?

Marxists face enormous problems at the close of the 20th century — not least that they must rethink quite radically much that was assumed.

But their refusal to believe that capitalism is the final destination of history remains a vital intellectual and political resource for those who demand a future geared to the needs of people rather than to the needs of capital. ■







# The Tete offensive

You no longer need a bulletproof vest to cross through Mozambique. But, as **HEATHER HILL** found when she travelled 'home' with domestic worker Rives Mafuta, the road to Tete is still one hell of a journey

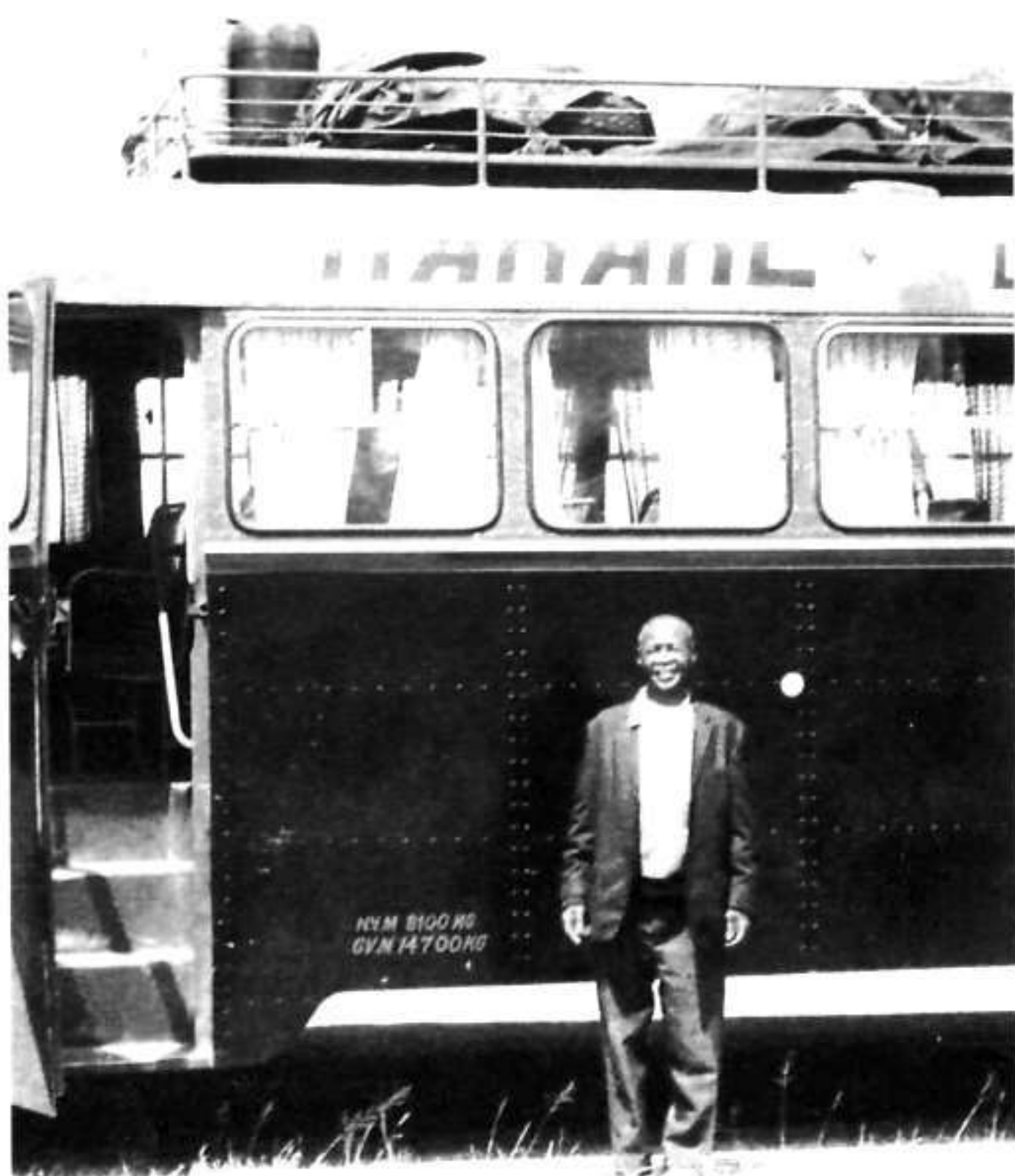
**I**N THE BAD OLD DAYS IT WAS CALLED the "gun run" or the "hell run" and its name was synonymous with terror. For nearly 10 years, the Tete corridor was a 262-kilometre-long ambush alley used by transport trucks, military vehicles and the occasional crazy backpacker. A strategic transportation route linking Malawi to Zimbabwe and the sea, the corridor was shut off to the normal world for most of Mozambique's 16-year civil war.

And for the three years before the ceasefire was signed in Rome last October, the highway resembled a Mad Max movie in overdrive. Convoys up to 20 kilometres in length, brokered by provincial strongmen, made a daily nerve-wracking run through the fearful countryside — shattering its silence with the continual blare of horns.

But because of the nature of the war in Mozambique — low-budget and regionalised — the ceasefire ended Renamo ambushes along the Tete corridor almost overnight. The local political godfathers put out the word and the bandits who haunted the highway melted into the bush, where they now get food and some cash from newly productive *shamvas* (rural farming plots).

To the surprise of many, peace has taken hold in this province of the poorest country on earth. The 700 Botswana soldiers guarding the Tete corridor since April 12, part of the 7 000-member UN peacekeeping force in Mozambique, are almost window-dressing in the new political order.

As a result, commercial traffic has



■ **BABYLON BY BUS:** Rives Mafuta manages a smile as he prepares for the trip to Tete

increased dramatically on the Tete corridor since January, and in the steady flow of vehicles one can see a return to the patterns of movement that existed before the proxy cold war began shortly after independence.

One example is the regular passenger service launched by two Harare bus companies earlier this year. Between them, Tauya Coach Services and Shamwariya Kanaka ply the Tete corri-

dor every day between Harare and Blantyre — a post-war phenomenon as astonishing (and welcome) to Southern Africans as the return of the beach weekend in Beira.

Thus it was that an aging Zimbabwean "houseboy" could envisage a trip to find the sister in Mozambique he had not seen in 30 years. Rives Mafuta, a domestic worker in Harare's northern suburbs, set out to retrace the journey he

## The separation of three decades dissolved, just as the banditry had faded with the stroke of a pen

made in 1963 along with thousands of Mozambican and Malawian men who left their homes to work in the then Rhodesia.

Mafuta, who reckons he is in his 60s, started his quest with the flimsiest of documentation. Like most Africans, he has no passport and had to struggle for months with the intractable Mozambican bureaucracy until he was granted an "emergency travel document."

To find Filiosa, his sole remaining relative, he has a couple of worn envelopes inscribed with his brother-in-law's postal address: Jose Samuanibuino Cherene, Caixa Postale 52, Tete.

### Infancy

In April, he boarded a ramshackle bus which contained a dozen other passengers, most of them bound for Malawi. Although Harare and Blantyre are less than 400 kilometres apart, civilian travel via the Tete corridor is still in its infancy — as we were soon to discover.

Our bus broke down halfway to Mozambique and resisted every effort to restart it. The long-distance travellers were shunted to a local bus which went no further than the Nyamapanda border post. From there, we were on our own and at 4 pm, when cross-country traffic thins out, the prospect is most disheartening. The fact that Mafuta's "emergency travel document" had been snatched from him because it was deemed invalid for the return, enhanced our sense of doom. Mozambique is a rough and uncertain country to be stranded in.

Our *deus ex machina* was an army jeep, identical to those used by the Botswana troops guarding the Tete corridor. The vehicle, driven by a wild-eyed Mozambican in tropical patterned shirt and blue jeans, was doing service as a pirate taxi. It was the sort of semi-official arrangement similar to the "military" escorts

for convoys that took over the road when Zimbabwean soldiers withdrew down to the Beira corridor in December 1990.

It was an open secret that the convoy fees were split with the guys in the bush, one of the more dramatic illustrations of how faint the line between Frelimo and Renamo had become.

After paying Zim\$20 a head for a place in the jeep, we were soon rolling along a well-maintained highway that threaded beneath power lines from the Cahora Bassa hydro-electric dam. The power lines were built over the 1970s to service South Africa; in the early 1980s, Renamo blew up every pylon south of Chimoio. Up here, the lines are intact, one of the reasons Tete was rarely without power during the war while Beira and Maputo had frequent blackouts.

### Hammer blow

Now we are in Tete and darkness has fallen. Mafuta wants to sleep in the railway station waiting room but discovers that the station shut down 15 years ago. A hotel is the only resort although he fears the financial strain on his Zim\$200 budget for the trip.

The next morning, the difficulty of finding Filiosa falls like a hammer blow. The post office yields no physical address to match the box number and the

telephone records (hand written in an ancient ledger book) contain no Jose Cherene. Neither the hotel proprietor nor the shopkeepers have heard of him, although Mafuta says senior Cherene is a shopowner in Tete.

After several depressing hours of handshakes and blank looks, we go to Radio Mozambique to put paid bulletins on the air. For Zim\$18, the announcer agrees to read out five hourly requests for Mafuta's family to find him at the Hotel Kassuende.

By now it seems truly hopeless, but we hadn't counted on the power of the electronic media — as well as pure chance. Alberto Samuanibuino Cherene, one of Filiosa's seven children and the only one living in Tete, happened to be listening to the radio and, like a needle jumping out of a haystack, popped up at the Hotel Kassuende to claim his uncle.

### Fled fighting

It was a small miracle: during the war, Jose and Filiosa and Jose's second wife, like every family in Mozambique, had shifted from place to place to flee the fighting. Currently they are living 18 kilometres outside Tete in a rural compound of huts and kraals. The grocery Jose Cherene owns is also outside Tete.

In any case, the streets of Tete have lost their names. The shifting sands of war have covered over most of the tracks.

But when, two days later, Filiosa made it into town from her *shamva*, the mysterious power of the African family was vindicated. Brother and sister greeted by formally shaking hands, and the air was loud with hand-clapping and cries of joy. The separation of three decades dissolved, just as the banditry along the Tete corridor faded with the stroke of a pen. There is, it seems, a chance for ordinary Africans to resume an ordinary life.

Postscript: Rives Mafuta made it back over the border despite his lack of documents when a truck driver — transport truckers being the new kings of the road — eased him past immigration officials. He now plans to apply for a passport so he can go back to Mozambique and bring his sister for a visit to Zimbabwe. ■



■ FOUND: Rives' sister, Filiosa Cherene



# The skeleton in the cupboard

*Cemetery of Mind: Collected Poems* by Dambudzo Marechera, compiled and edited by Flora Veit-Wild, Baobab Books, Harare, \$11.50, 1992.

Reviewed by **LISA COMBRINCK**

**T**OWNSHIP LIFE, THE WAR OF liberation and the effects of independence form the backdrop to much of Zimbabwean literature. This literature has been largely an attempt to express individual life stories and struggles — and, in so doing, to engage in a dialogue with history. The writing of Dambudzo Marechera follows this pattern.

But his is a distinct voice. He manages to capture most succinctly,

most eloquently, the search for a coherent approach to the “chaos” of history. With extraordinary insight, he penetrates the boundaries of his country, and even the continent, in an effort to address the whole world.

Marechera saw poetry as “the art of making invisibility visible”. This related to the way he saw literature as a whole: “From early in my life”, he once wrote in an essay, “I have viewed literature as a unique universe that has no internal divisions. I do not pigeon-hole it by race or language or nation. It is an ideal cosmos — existing with this crude one. I had a rather grim upbringing in the ghetto and have ever since tried to deny the painful reality of concrete history. If, as it is said, we all have something to hide, then my whole life has been an attempt to make myself the skeleton in my own cupboard.”

## Looting the truth

This process of rendering the invisible visible meant he had to search for the truths — and even the fantasies — hidden beneath reality. His poetry does this by stripping away the disguises and poses of society, aiming “to loot the truths for so long packaged in lies”.

A distinctive feature of Marechera’s poetry is the constant probing and interrogation of identities. For him there are no absolute identities; they are disguises. There are poems where he clearly writes from the perspective of a male in society, who finds himself “stuttering, trembling, ejaculating at the edge of a ruthless dream”. On other occasions, he articulates a female identity and describes “the dark region of the mind / Foetus-sheltered / By the womb’s poetic skin ...”



In a poem entitled "I Am the Rape", Marechera reveals the psychological make-up of an oppressed black male, brutalised to the extent that he takes revenge by enforcing sexual mastery over the body of a white woman. In this way, he shows not only that the supposedly innocent victim of a system has in fact turned the tables and become the torturer, but he also parodies white fears about the sexual prowess of the black man who has the "white body writhing underneath / All the centuries of my wayward fear".

### Love poems

Marechera does not always associate sexuality with such violence. In a series of love poems entitled "Amelia Sonnets", he pursues love into a relationship and discovers that "to become one with another is simultaneously to lose and acquire one's identity". Yet even there exists a tension between spiritual love and physical lust. By writing about love Marechera hoped to confront the kind of attitudes he grew up with in the townships — where men were taught that the display of love was an act of weakness and that male sexuality was dependent on conquering "passive" women.

In poems exploring political identity, Marechera shows that even here nothing is fixed. One finds the poet in the act of changing from one position to the other: "I shift my weight from the right foot to / The left's radical compassion; from faith to / Cynical resignation; from furious debate on atheism to / drunken gibberish."

He was an outspoken critic of party politics, believing that a serious writer should be free to criticise the ills of society. "Writers are usually recruited into a revolutionary movement before that revolution gains whatever it's seeking," he wrote in one essay. "Once it has achieved that, writers are simply discarded either as a nuisance or as totally irrelevant".

And he argued against "the idea that a writer should always be positive", an expectation that's "always being crammed down one's throat". "A writer is part of society; a writer notices what is going on around him, sees the poverty every day. How can you whitewash poverty?"

In post-independent Zimbabwe, Marechera found a great deal to criti-

cise. In a poem about the Lancaster House settlement, he announces: "All that's left to resign / Is this whirlwind role / This radioactive image / Of African mutants in transition."

Elsewhere even the landscape, the trees in Harare, seem to "wearily wave away / The fly-ridden promises issuing out of the public Lavatory".

### Mangled workers

He describes the trappings of the new Zimbabwean society: "The fast expensive imported cars / leave in their wake mangled workers / Deranged peasants and crazed radical intellectuals". In a poem entitled "There's a Dissident in the Election Soup", Marechera even compares the souring of desire in an intimate relationship between two lovers with the uneasy balance of power in a shaky political alliance. The multiplicity of possible meanings turns his poems into rich texts that keep yielding further discoveries.

Despite all his explorations of political identity, the poet himself still remains proudly individualistic and even anarchic when he writes: "I am against everything / Against war & those against war." In another essay, he makes this self-indulgent statement: "I do not like this century. I do not like any other century, past or future. I do not like to live under the backside of a medieval god or a nuclear bomb, which amounts to the same thing."

### Honest writers

Above all, Marechera believed that the task of the writer in a changing society was to be honest, true to him- or herself and never hypocritical. Young South — and other — Africans who read Marechera will probably, like their Zimbabwean counterparts (some of whom regard him as a cult figure), embrace his works as those of a militant young lion who bravely criticised the government in the post-uhuru period.

But, as a deeper reading of his work will show, Marechera's importance lies also in his constant questioning and undermining of absolute, fixed notions of identity — in a world which has done its utmost to divide people along such lines. ■

● Lisa Combrinck is assistant editor of the *Southern African Review of Books*.

## Who is Dambudzo Marechera?

Dambudzo Marechera was born in Rusape's Vengere township 41 years ago.

As a young boy he and his friends would scratch in nearby rubbish dumps looking for comics, toys and books. These were the first books he claimed to have read avidly, books which had been by discarded by whites in the nearby town.

In 1972 he enrolled for a degree in English at the University of Rhodesia. A year later he was expelled because of his involvement in student politics. He left the country and received a scholarship to New College, Oxford. There, too, he defied the 'rules of academic life', and was forced to leave in early 1976.

Until 1982 he lived the life of a vagrant and squatter in Oxford and London.

In 1978, Marechera's first book, *The House of Hunger*, was published and earned him *The Guardian Fiction Prize*.

His second book, *Black Sunlight*, published in 1980, was deemed obscene and blasphemous in Zimbabwe, where it was banned. In 1982 he returned home to Harare and spent the next five years pursuing his writing until his death in 1987.

It was Marechera's prose that was acclaimed during his lifetime (*Mindblast* was published in 1984 and, posthumously, *The Black Insider*, a novel, in 1990). His poetry only recently began receiving critical attention — thanks largely to the scrupulous collecting and editing of his poems by Flora Veit-Wild. ■



## Desecrating Hani's memory

Moeletsi Mbeki's article in WIP89 (Death of a socialist) raises interesting issues. The essence of his piece is an attempt to pay tribute to the memory of Chris Hani and this is to be welcomed. There are, however, some incorrect and disturbing features in the article.

Mbeki writes about an old and a new Chris, the "old" Chris who was the military commander and the "new" Chris who was the socialist thinker. This obsession with the dichotomy of Chris's life in the old and the new is reaching ludicrous proportions.

Chris did not suddenly become a socialist thinker when he was elected general secretary at the SACP's eighth congress in 1991.

While Chris was serving in the High Command of MK, first as political commissar and later as chief of staff, he was a member of the SACP Central Committee and the Political Bureau.

As a Marxist in exile he would bring his unique analysis of the political processes unfolding in SA to feed into the military strategy of the High Command. The notion presented by Mbeki — that Chris' work in the military and in the party were mutually exclusive — is devoid of truth.

Furthermore, Mbeki points out that as soon as Chris was elected SACP general secretary he went about the country to raise support for the party. The impression created by the writer is that it was only after the party congress that Chris began to visit the various regions of our country. Nothing could be further from the truth. In the very first days of his arrival from exile Chris never rested. He toured the country drumming up support for the alliance.

Another area in which Mbeki displays ignorance of our policies is on the question of armed struggle. He writes that at the Kabwe conference of 1985, Alfred Nzo (then secretary-general of the ANC) conceptualised the armed struggle as armed propaganda. This, of course, is incorrect. Kabwe confirmed that armed propaganda was just a stage in what was generally known as a people's war. We might not have defeated the enemy militarily but the role of the armed struggle in combination with other pillars of the struggle should never be underestimated.



■ **GENEROUS: Chris Hani welcomed contributions — from anyone**

In one of the paragraphs of the article Mbeki indicates that the Movement had failed to study conventional wars between countries and the relationship between insurrection and political protest. He is not clear on the question of conventional wars. On the second issue of insurrection, again Mbeki betrays his unfamiliarity with the material of the alliance. In the last chapter of the *Path to Power*, the 1989 programme of the SACP, there is an elabo-

rate exposition of the theory of insurrection as it applies to SA conditions. In the document, the SACP saw the path to power as lying in the building and accumulation of political and military forces on the side of the revolution to progressively engender a general crisis of the apartheid system — until a particular moment is reached where the regime becomes unable to govern and is dislodged. Of course the political situation has changed since then and negotiations, in combination with the political actions of our people, has become the main site of struggle.

So much for general points. Perhaps the most distasteful feature of the article is when Mbeki asserts that Chris Hani "was especially critical of white intellectuals in the trade union movement for what he said was their lack of understanding of the class character of the ANC." This statement is a gross misrepresentation of Chris's political outlook and practice. It is a desecration of his memory.

Those who knew Chris well, who had lived, fought, laughed and wept with him while in exile and in the underground, know that he was an exceptionally generous person. He always welcomed constructive contributions to the struggle from whatever quarter — black or white, intellectual or non-intellectual.

One can't help feeling that Moeletsi Mbeki is invoking the prestige of the late Chris Hani to fight some personal grudge.

— *Skenjana Roji, Johannesburg*

## Enlightening

I was pleased to receive my first copy of WIP. It is the most stimulating magazine I have ever read. I wish to thank the person who so thoughtfully directed a copy to me for my enlightenment.

— *Mike Moses, Geluksdal*

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given to letters under  
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## A LIVELY TERROR

Like every South African, Gary Player knows just what it will take to make ours a swell land — again, Gary? Unlike most, he gets to bore more than the local pub's regulars with his reverie.

Which goes like this, according to *Business Day*, quoting Player recently: "If only we could find a Churchill, we could have a country which would be an example to the rest of the world on how black and whites can live in harmony."

Now, we hate to drag history into this — it being a thing of the past, and us looking forward an' all. But ...

In the summer of 1920, as the British Army bombarded rebelling Iraqi tribespeople with poison gas shells, Winston Churchill commiserated thus: "I do not understand this squeamishness about the use of gas. I am strongly in favour of using poisoned gas against uncivilised tribes ... gasses can be used which would cause great inconvenience and would spread a lively terror and yet would leave no serious permanent effects on most of those affected."

Now, Gary, you were saying ... ?

## MORE THINGS YOU WON'T SEE ON AGENDA...

mainly because the cameras weren't running when this conversation took place in mid-June.

'Tis the eve of the anniversary of the Soweto Uprising, and *Agenda*, with John Bishop hosting, has invited a circle of people with first-hand experience of the rebellion to reminisce on-air.

But hairs rise on the neck of TV1 current affairs chieftain Freaky Robinson when he is alerted to the monochrome complexions of the guests.

Before the programme starts, Bishop is summoned to explain this departure from journalistic principles. "What," enquires Freaky, failing to halt the supercilious smirk that settles on his face, "about balance? You know, is this not a bit ... biased?"

Bishop feels his moustache twitch once, reflexively, and asks, "What do you mean?"

"I mean — can't we have someone from the other side on, too?" says Freaky, or words to that effect.

"Like who?"

"Well, like the minister of education at the time, uhmmm ..." Mentally, Freaky shuffles through the flipcards, names pop up, but they're not the right ones ...

"You mean, MC Botha," offers Bishop, staring disapprovingly at the pen Freaky is tapping spiritedly against the desk. His moustache twitches again. "He's dead," he helps. He's beginning to enjoy this.

Freaky loosens the knot on his power-tie, its cascade of bold colours accenting the warm glow rising in his cheeks. "Of course. Or the deputy..."

"Andries Treurnicht," snaps Bishop, measuring the pause perfectly before saying: "He's dead, too."

Freaky's pen is tapping *tremello* when he checks it and starts doodling.

"Freaky," his prey wounded, Bishop backs off, "You know, the Soweto rebellion is an important thing for a lot of South Africans..." "So's Bloed Rivier," Freaky whips back, spitefully.

"And, Freaky," says Bishop, as he moves in for the coup de grace, "they're all dead."

*(Epilogue. Bishop lost in extra time. Tony Leon became the token whitey on the programme, making Rajbansi sound like an introvert as he prattled unstoppably. Time ran out before he could announce the Malaysian soccer results and share his fool-proof pancake recipes.)*

## FLIGHTS OF FANCY

These are distressing times. The government unbans Karl Marx's *Wages, Prices and Profits* on the same day Cyril Ramaphosa shares the Man-of-the-Year award with Roelf Meyer, courtesy of Engen. Benetton's offers Fidel Castro a job as art teacher in Italy.

And SAA names its newest Boeing 747 Vulindlela. It

means "to unveil new things", "symbol of strength" and "pathfinder". It was also, of course, the full name of the SA Communist Party's Operation Vula, that faint echo of insurrectionary by-gones uncovered in 1990.

Was a time when people dreamt of seeing Mac Maharaj or Joe Slovo in the cockpit. Nowadays it looks like we'll have to settle for Ronnie Kasrils serving complimentary cocktails in the business class section. ■



## SEPARATED AT BIRTH?

Former Canadian prime minister Brian Mulroney  
CCB handyman Staal Burger

# Reconstruct

A Work in Progress supplement

Issue no.12

AUGUST 1993

## Humanise the hostels

**A** FEW YEARS AGO, MOST ACTIVISTS spoke with compassion about the terrible conditions endured by hostel residents.

Today — mainly as a result of violent clashes between township and hostel residents — much of that compassion has gone. Many community activists, especially in the PWV, are demanding that hostels are demolished. Those making such demands have no alternative accommodation lined up for the hostel residents who will be displaced.

However, given that our country faces a massive shortage of housing, it is unlikely that all hostels will simply be destroyed.

An ANC study (See Pg 4) shows that, with proper planning, it is possible to integrate townships and hostels. In addition, the study shows that, by making single-storey hostels into double- or triple-storey they would be transformed into family and single units without displacing a single hostel resident.

But little is happening on the ground to improve hostels country-wide. This lack of progress can, in part, be blamed on the fact that hostels have become areas of political contest. Various hostels are being claimed by political parties — usually the ANC or Inkatha. Once a hostel is identified with a party, hostel residents are often disempowered. The party demands the right to speak on



PHOTO: ROY FRANCO (SOUTHLIGHT)

■ **A QUIET MOMENT:** Privacy and space are luxuries for hostel residents

the hostel's behalf, and development is often stifled by politicking.

However, the National Housing Forum's (NHF) draft agreement with the government on joint coordination of funds for upgrading hostels is a good sign. All major parties with members in hostels are represented on

the NHF. Hopefully, these parties will be able to agree on a plan to make the hostels fit for humans.

Once conditions are improved and hostel residents are integrated into surrounding communities, hostels will no longer be easy recruiting grounds for warlords. ■

### FOCUS ON HOSTELS

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### CONTRIBUTIONS

*Reconstruct* was initiated by the Urban Sector Network to raise issues related to urban development. Contributions should be sent to:  
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Braamfontein 2017

# National agreement must be translated locally

The National Housing Forum and government recently agreed to joint control over hostel upgrading initiatives. But reaching such agreement was a bumpy ride, explains **DAN SMIT** and **VIDHU VEDALANKAR**

**T**HE OUTBREAK OF HOSTEL RELATED violence in early 1991 catapulted hostels from relative obscurity to the centre stage of the South African political scene.

At first, the violence drew caricatured responses from actors across the political spectrum. Some elements within the tripartite alliance called for the demolition of the hostels, while Inkatha argued strongly for their retention at all costs.

As tensions eased, polemics were

replaced by a more serious, developmentally oriented debate. A national discussion forum on hostels was convened in August 1991. The initiative came from the Independent Development Trust (IDT) and the Development Bank of SA (DBSA), who had been inundated with funding proposals for hostels upgrading initiatives.

## Policy framework

Given the controversy surrounding hostels, these agencies felt that a wide-

ly agreed policy framework for hostel initiatives needed to be formulated, which could be used as a basis for making funding decisions.

Represented at the meeting were members of the government (central and provincial departments of housing, black local authorities), extra-parliamentary groups (ANC, Inkatha, Azapo, PAC), civic groups (Sanco and hostel dwellers' associations), unions (Cosatu and Nactu), the private sector (Saccola, chamber of mines, CBM,



■ **SLOW PROGRESS:** The NHF has to ensure the agreement means better conditions for all hostel residents, like these men from Apple Farm, Southern Cape



Anglo American, AHL, Bifsa, IHSA), development agencies (DBSA, IDT, Kagiso Trust) and others.

The meeting acknowledged the seriousness of the hostels problem, but noted that it had to be addressed within the context of a broader national development and housing strategy.

In the interim, the meeting agreed on the need to formulate short term guidelines for hostel initiatives. (See block). The meeting also appointed a working committee to formulate proposals for the possible establishment of a broadly based and representative housing forum. This saw the beginning of a process which led to the formal constitution of the National Housing Forum (NHF).

Government was initially part of the discussions, but withdrew prior to the NHF's launch, arguing that it was against "interim government by stealth". However, it indicated that it wanted to be part of the NHF's hostels working group. This was rejected by the NHF.

### State initiative

Shortly afterwards, the government announced a R325.6-million hostel upgrading initiative. As far as policy was concerned, government argued that it accepted the NHF's short term guidelines and would proceed accordingly.

While the government committed itself to abiding by the short term guidelines, a nationwide monitoring exercise conducted last year by Seneque, Smit & Associates for the DBSA revealed that compliance was, at best, patchy. In a number of instances, government initiatives appeared to wholly ignore the guidelines.

The government initiative in Natal was the one exception. Here, a substantially inclusive process was adopted from the outset and Natal's regional hostels forum is one of the most successful of its kind in the country - even though progress has been painfully slow.

Everywhere else, concern was expressed about the lack of compliance with the guidelines and unnecessary politicisation of the hostels initiative arising from government's insistence on using black local authorities as initiators.

## Short term guidelines

The NHF's short term guidelines for hostels include the following:

- **Hostels initiatives must be negotiated at two levels: by those directly affected by the initiative (eg hostel dwellers, hostel owners and surrounding communities) and by regional structures with an interest in hostels (eg political organisations, civics, trade unions, business, local governments, employers etc).**
- **Initiatives should recognise that single people and families need accommodation.**
- **Provision is made for people displaced by the development.**
- **The government should provide housing assistance to those in hostels at the same level as others in an equally disadvantaged position.**
- **Appropriate institutional mechanisms get set up to implement projects and ensure broad participation.**
- **A moratorium is placed on hostel demolition, unless sanctioned by all parties.**

The NHF was concerned, not only with the lack of compliance, but also argued that the short term guidelines were not meant to be a substitute for a hostels policy.

Moreover, concern was expressed about the tendency to treat hostels initiatives as "physical maintenance" exercises in many parts of the country.

The NHF argued that any gains derived from physical rehabilitation would soon be eroded if key social relations, which gave rise to problems, were not addressed (eg administration problems, bed allocation procedures, long term development vision etc). In the short term, the NHF argued that the hostels initiative needed to be informed by a much more fundamen-

tal development strategy.

By the end of 1992 almost no progress had been made on the ground. This, together with the fact that the ANC and the influential Transvaal Hostels Association - reputed to be sympathetic to Inkatha, although the association denies any party political affiliation - were calling for the NHF to take charge of the national hostels initiative, provided a basis for a new round of negotiations between government and the NHF.

### Agreement reached

Squarely on the agenda was joint control of the hostels initiative. A detailed agreement was drawn up, incorporating a much more fundamental and developmental approach to the hostels initiative. The agreement envisages joint "de facto" control of the initiative between government and the NHF at national and regional levels.

Reaching the agreement was not easy. One problem has been to get the diverse actors within the NHF to agree on its content and to get mandates from their constituencies. To the credit of the NHF, these extremely difficult problems have largely been resolved recently.

Another problem has been the inability of NHF partners to resolve differences on the ground, particularly as tensions mount around national constitutional negotiations. The collapse of the important Wits-Vaal Forum provides a good example of such difficulties.

In the meantime, progress on the ground has remained slow. Whether the NHF will have a major influence on the trajectory of events in the hostels will depend critically on the ability of its members to translate agreements reached at national level into agreements among factions in the hostels and between hostel residents and surrounding communities.

The challenge is a daunting one, but there is a strong sense within the NHF that real progress may be on hand.

● *Smit is professor of architecture at the University of Natal and a partner with Seneque, Smit & Maughan-Brown (SS&MB). Vedalankar is a town planner, also based with SS&MB.* ■

# Redevelopment, ANC style

**Y**ou are the ANC's representative on the National Housing Forum (NHF). What led to recent NHF-government agreement on joint control over state money allocated to improving hostels?

Last year's budget set aside R326-million for hostel initiatives. But central government and the provinces have spent very little because they don't have a developmental policy, they have no policy framework and they clearly have their own interpretation about what constitutes consultation.

In our submissions to the Goldstone Commission [in September 1992], the ANC identified two priorities that need to be addressed if hostel conditions are to be improved. First, the black local authorities (BLAs) should not be the implementing agents of upgrading. Secondly, the funds set aside for improving hostels must be put under multi-party control.

This agreement now makes provision for multi-party control over the funds. The agreement only deals with the public sector. But there are hundreds of private hostels whose development requires attention.

## **How will the agreement work?**

There will be an 18-person National Hostels Coordinating Committee, comprising of nine people nominated from government and nine from the NHF.

Mirror images of this committee will be set up in the four provinces. Sub-provincial structures can also be created if necessary. For example, most of the country's hostels are in the PWV [27 state-owned hostels with some 77 000 beds] and there may be a

The ANC's national coordinator on regional and local policy, **BILLY COBBETT**, speaks to KERRY CULLINAN about his organisation's view of redeveloping hostels

very good case for a PWV structure.

These structures will be set up as soon as possible, starting with the national structure, which will have to flesh out the rules and procedures laid out in the agreement.

The idea is that decisions about what should happen to a hostel should be taken as low down as possible, but not so low that no one else is consulted.

## **What are the ANC's priorities as regards hostel upgrading?**

For us, upgrading is not the only option. The priority is to deal with the developmental and social questions associated with hostels.

In the short term, the basic living conditions in hostels must be restored where they don't exist — where toilets aren't working, water is intermittent, there is no electricity etc.

This should be done on an emergency basis so it does not preempt long term developmental options.

Socially, the priority must be to remove hostels from physical and party political contestation. There is a general assumption about the political affiliations of hostel residents. This is wholly incorrect. Hostel residents are aligned to a variety of political organisations. We would like to move away from the situation where hostels are used as sites of physical and social confrontation.

Rather, the aim should be to integrate hostel residents into surrounding communities. Whether this happens in the physical form of a hostel is what



■ **BILLY COBBETT**

has to be discussed in each hostel.

Ideally, an initiative around any hostel should happen both within the hostel and in the surrounding community. Hostels are a reflection of overcrowding etc, just like their surrounding communities. We should be resolving the two simultaneously. Hostels shouldn't be given special treatment; either specially good or specially bad. Any solution has to address the overall housing crisis.

We also mustn't forget that the whole hostel crisis stems from the migrant labour system. This is a structural feature of the South African economy, which needs to be dealt with economically.

## **How are the hostel dwellers involved in the NHF?**

The NHF is a national structure. There isn't a national organisation of hostel dwellers so, in a sense, their interests have been represented by political parties, trade unions, the civics etc.

But the national structure is only meant to provide the national structure within which different interests can be represented. At a regional and local level, structures representing hostel dwellers as hostel dwellers, not on a party political basis, do exist. These organisations would obviously be key players. ■

**In preparation for its 1992 submissions to the Goldstone Commission, the ANC commissioned an architect to design possible scenarios for redeveloping hostels.**

**The architect developed three possible scenarios, based on converting single-storey hostels. The plans showed that, by converting some hostels and township houses into double- and triple-storey and developing the land within hostel complexes, not a single hostel resident needed to be displaced by redevelopment.**



■ **MILITARY BARRACKS:** The TPA's upgrade failed to address basic needs

# No success without hostel residents

**F**OR THE UPGRADING OF ANY HOSTEL to be successful, the active participation of hostel residents themselves is essential. This is clearly shown in an assessment of the recent upgrading of Thokoza's M1 (Madala) hostel, conducted by the Transvaal Provincial Administration (TPA).

Although the TPA spent over R3,5-million on upgrading the 2 000-bed hostel, very few residents are satisfied with the results.

According to Social Surveys, which was commissioned by the National Housing Forum (NHF) to assess the upgrade, only 1,4% of people interviewed felt the process met their needs. The assessment involved 169 interviews with hostel residents.

The TPA's upgrade concentrated on:

- improving storm water drainage;
- installing central boilers to heat water;
- replacing corrugated iron roofs with asbestos;
- installing electricity points in rooms and kitchens;
- improving toilets and showers;
- cleaning the hostel and removing rubbish;
- replacing broken windows;
- fencing off the hostel.

In contrast, hostel residents listed the upgrading of bedrooms, bathrooms and kitchens as priorities. The

By Kerry Cullinan

most pressing problem, the lack of bedroom privacy, was ignored by the upgrade. There are still 16 people per room, no doors, no storage place and little security. There is also a shortage of bathrooms, no sinks in the kitchens and, after electricity points were installed, coal stoves used for cooking were removed — but nothing was put in their place.

"Many of [the hostel residents'] requirements were not properly addressed in the actual upgrade, with more attention being given instead to elements that residents considered to be of lesser importance, such as roofing, or which they actively did not want, such as security fencing," notes the assessment.

"Furthermore, a considerable part of the upgrade budget went to general cleaning and maintenance which should more properly have been seen as an ongoing essential service rather than part of a major upgrade."

A serious spin-off of the upgrade for hostel residents is that they face a 230% rent increase from R15 to R52 a month. No hostel residents were prepared to pay this, although 66% said they were prepared to pay more than R15.

The rent hike is a serious blow to hostel residents, who earn very low wages and send a large proportion of

their earnings home to their families, generally living in rural KwaZulu. The average income in M1 is R739 a month, and on average each man sends R319 to his family.

## Consultation

The way in which the TPA consulted hostel residents probably accounts for why so few of those interviewed said they were happy with the upgrade.

The TPA simply presented hostel leaders with a document outlining three options and told them to choose one. All three options had controversial elements, such as the security fence. None addressed the hostel residents' most pressing need: to decrease the number of beds per room. Thus residents had no opportunity to actually contribute to planning the upgrade.

In addition, the document was fairly complicated and written in English. This effectively excluded 56% of the hostel residents, who are illiterate.

## Conclusion

While both Social Surveys and the NHF have avoided interpreting the results of the assessment, it is abundantly clear that the TPA's approach was top-down and completely inadequate.

However, a coherent national approach to improving the quality of hostel residents' conditions has yet to be developed. This is one of the many urgent tasks facing the NHF in the next few months. A key step in this direction is an agreement being negotiated by the NHF with the department of national housing to jointly oversee the way in which the state's national upgrading programme is run and funded. ■

The National Union of Mineworkers is playing a leading role in converting single-sex hostels into family units. But it isn't an easy task, as **KERRY CULLINAN** reports

# NUM tackles living conditions

**O**NE OF THE MAJOR CHALLENGES facing the National Union of Mineworkers' housing department is how to improve conditions in hostels, with the aim of converting them to single and family units.

Hostel conditions have always been a source of bitterness for mineworkers. In the past, many miners were allocated to hostels according to their ethnic group. This encouraged conflict and often led to violence.

In the aftermath of the 1987 miners' strike, the NUM charged that mine owners were using the hostels as prisons. Visitors, including wives and NUM officials, were prevented from entering the hostels. There were regular raids by mine security and the police.

Certain mining companies now appear more amenable to improving conditions in their hostels. The NUM is also tackling the problem more systematically.

Two NUM housing workshops have been held this year to look at strategies and gauge progress. The second of these workshops, held in July, was attended by 22 delegates from 11 regions.

The delegates reported on progress made in both democratising and upgrading hostels. While some NUM branches reported that retrenchments and rival unions had taken up most of their energy, there were a few areas where progress had been made.

## Family units

The Witbank region had made substantial progress in improving certain hostels. At Amcoal mine in Kriel, some hostels were already being converted into family units. These are expected to be finished by September.

However, the union had not yet established hostel committees in all hostels to oversee the upgrading; those who want to occupy the family units simply apply to management.



■ At Doornfontein mine hostel, Carltonville, home is a single bed

At Rand Mines, also in Witbank, the NUM has succeeded in getting management's in-principle agreement to convert the hostels to family units [See block]. A hostel committee has been elected to drive the conversion.

Iscor's Grootegeeluk mine in Rustenburg is setting up a hostel board of elected block representatives and two officials from the hostel administration. In addition, at a branch meeting in June, workers reviewed a constitution drawn up by Iscor. Branch members proposed a number of changes to management's document to ensure workers would be drawn into decision-making.

Klerksdorp region has won agreement from management to con-

vert one of the large Vaal Reefs hostels to family units. However, branch office bearers pointed out that 45 000 workers were employed at the three Vaal Reefs mines. Transforming all the hostels into family units might mean that some people will be misplaced.

The Northern Cape region is in the process of establishing hostel structures. However, in Kimberley, Westonaria and Secunda, no progress had been made as the union has been preoccupied with other issues.

A problem identified by a number of branches was that management had taken to moving other workers into the hostels, particularly contractors employed to do certain jobs on

## Single sex hostels are 'immoral'

**A** key concern at the National Union of Mineworkers' (NUM) housing conference was how the campaign for the conversion of hostels to family units should be conducted.

A delegate from Rand Mines in Witbank, reported that mineworkers had enlisted the help of their girlfriends in the campaign. A number of women had moved into the hostels to show that the workers were no longer prepared to live in male-only barracks.

Mine management had initially reacted harshly, calling the police who arrested a number of the women. Mineworkers then embarked on a protest march. After the march, management agreed in principle to convert the hostels to family units. The delegate stressed, however, that the campaign had not been taken up under the NUM's banner.

Some other delegates disagreed with this approach, saying that mineworkers alone should be involved in the campaign for family units. Two delegates felt the NUM should not be seen to be encouraging women in hostels when hostels were not yet converted to accommodate them. The presence of women in the already overcrowded hostels could lead to tensions, said one mineworker. "We must first negotiate the right to family and single units with management. Then workers can bring their families or girlfriends into proper accommodation."

All delegates agreed that all workers wanted the hostels to be converted, into either single or family units. As one delegate summed up: "It is immoral to keep a whole lot of men crowded together in the hostels."



■ **EXCLUDED:** Mine hostels make no provision for women

the mines. In Phalaborwa, even Koevoet members had been moved into one hostel.

Management argued that these workers brought in extra money, which helped to pay for mineworkers' food. However, it also meant it was difficult for any upgrading to take place as the hostels were full.

NUM housing coordinator Henry Chawane stressed that the branches should not be deterred by the contractors. However, he said the union had to take into account workers who would be displaced by conversion. "We need to look at what other accommodation should be in place to house these workers," said Chawane.

When discussing how hostels

should be run, most delegates opted for joint worker/management control over hostels. However, a number of delegates were uneasy with the idea of participative management as they felt the union would have to become involved in firing workers hired to work in the hostels.

### Representation

"These people could become union members, and when they are fired the NUM has played a part in firing them, but the NUM also has to represent them," a delegate pointed out.

The union is presently looking into hostel constitutions in order to draw up a standard document that all branches get adopted.

While the NUM does participate in the National Housing Forum (NHF), the NHF is concerned largely with the upgrading and conversion of state-owned hostels.

Employers represented by the SA Co-ordinating Committee on Labour Affairs (Saccola) attend NHF meetings, but have so far refused to endorse the NHF's short-term principles on immediate measures to deal with the housing crisis. The NUM — along with other Cosatu unions — is now faced with the challenge of persuading employers to put their weight behind the NHF's initiatives.

However, Cosatu has yet to take this up vigorously with employers. ■

**M**OHHLAKENG IS A FAIRLY small township adjacent to Randfontein on the West Rand. A hostel complex was first built in 1948. Since then, the complex has grown to 243 units containing 3,892 beds.

Originally administered by the local authority, different sections of the complex are now owned and controlled by private developers and various companies.

The local authority sold off 105 units to a private 'developer' in a deal whose legitimacy is fiercely contested. This part of the hostel is in disrepair. Toilets no longer work, water is inadequate and a recent independent environmental health report highlighted serious health problems. (Overall, 66% of the hostel units lack any form of ablutions.)

Women and children have also moved into this section. Open rooms designed for 16 men are often inhabited by over 25 people with men, their partners and sometimes their children occupying spaces intended for an individual. There are no facilities for women. Rape, assault and child abuse are common problems.

Certain units in the privately owned section have been sold off to individuals at prices ranging from R16 000 to R20 000 each. Again, the legality of these sales is in doubt.

The company owned section remains more tightly controlled single sex accommodation with better, but still hugely inadequate, living conditions.

The Mohlakeng Hostel Dwellers Association (MHDA) developed out

# Transforming a hostel – one step at a time

In Mohlakeng, hostel residents are tackling the transformation of their living space methodically, reports **RICK DE SATGE**

of these conditions. Its original brief was to:

- challenge tariff increases imposed by the black local authority (BLA) in 1987;
- contest the proposed privatisation of the hostel;
- improve relations between the township and the hostel;
- campaign for better living conditions.

The complex situation in the privately owned section makes it extremely difficult to organise there. This section is home to illegal migrants, a rapidly expanding shebeen sector and criminals.

Despite these constraints, the MHDA has developed a clear mission to represent all hostel dwellers, improve living conditions, transform the hostel into a decent living environment, integrate it into the broader community and contribute to solving problems facing other hostel dwellers nationally.

The MHDA strongly opposes the privatisation of the hostel and is

organising to ensure its return to state ownership and subsequent transformation to social housing.

The MHDA is making every effort to bring as many interest groups as possible, both within the hostel and from the township, into planning the hostel's transformation. It sees consensus among hostel and township residents and their maximum participation as the keys to unlocking the obstacles to meaningful transformation.

## Understanding the interests

The MHDA's starting point has been to develop a detailed hostel profile through workshops within the hostel, interviews with residents and in-depth research into social organisation within the privately owned section.

Ten broad interest groups have emerged from this process:

- Workers who want their families to stay with them.
- Workers who want their families to stay in the rural areas but be able to visit them.

## Men without shadows

**T**O MANY PEOPLE, HOSTELS HAVE BECOME SYMBOLS OF violence. Hostel residents are defined by where they live and not who they are. They are reduced to men without shadows.

Politicians have drawn sectarian lines around hostels and attempted to reduce the complexity of hostel problems to crudely competitive positions. This has led to calls for the immediate demolition

or fencing of hostels. Such calls have only made real solutions harder to find.

Undoubtedly, there are differences between hostel and township residents. But these tensions emerge even when the two groups share political affiliation.

These differences developed out of apartheid policies. Hostels developed out of the migrant labour system. Working people were divided into those with rights to stay in the city and those who migrated from rural areas on job contracts and were forced to live in hostels.

Social divisions developed between urban people and those who with a rural base. These relations have often been antagonistic, stemming from



■ **MAN'S WORLD:** Women living in hostels are vulnerable to rape and abuse

- Single migrants who want bachelor accommodation.
- Low paid workers who cannot afford the increased charges which would result from upgrading.
- Unemployed people who are staying free in the hostel due to a collapse in the administration.
- Illegal migrants who are renting beds from workers who have moved into informal settlements.
- Business people, like taxi and spaza shop owners and self employed mechanics, barbers and tailors.
- Women and children already living in the hostels.
- People who have bought units from the private developer.
- Old people or retired migrants who

no longer have homes in the rural areas.

### Guiding principles

The MHDA has developed a set of principles to guide the process of bringing different interests together. These include:

- Peace and security through negotiations: Any planned development must be negotiated with all interested parties.
- Community control: Hostel dwellers must control the upgrading the hostels.
- Accommodation for all:
  - The upgrading must guarantee accommodation for all hostel residents, including the unemployed, either within the upgraded hostel or at alternative sites.
  - Accommodation and services must be affordable and decent.
  - There must be different types of accommodation, including family and single units.
  - Hostel residents must have the choice to buy or rent improved accommodation.
  - Alternative land and housing should be provided for people wishing to leave the hostel.
- The needs of women and children:
  - Any development must take into account the needs of women and children and ensure their safety and well-being.
- Community facilities:
  - Hostel residents must have adequate facilities such as schools and recreational facilities.
  - Business people should have proper facilities.

### From plans to action

Currently, the MHDA is concentrating on block by block discussions. However, there is a danger that there is too much talk and not enough action. This has meant that the MHDA has had to develop short term and longer term strategies.

The short term strategy involves pressing for emergency repairs. Currently a forum is planned which will bring together hostel residents, township formations, the owner, the local authorities and the Transvaal Provincial Administration (TPA).

The forum will address immediate issues as well as a longer term process to transform the hostels within the context of a Mohlakeng development plan.

Preliminary estimates show that the transformation of the hostels to a mix of family and single accommodation would mean that 50% of the current residents would have to move to alternative accommodation.

A carefully negotiated process must thus be developed to identify those who will stay and who will move. This will have to be done in tandem with township planning to avoid conflict. The issues of illegal immigrants and privatisation will also need to be tackled.

Clearly, there is no shortcut to resolving hostel problems. The only viable solution is a local process controlled by people themselves, supported by national level negotiations with respect to resource allocation and enabling policy and legislation. ■

### fierce competition over access to the city.

Urban dwellers frequently demean migrant workers as "amaoveralls" - men who do the shit work, are uneducated and unsophisticated.

Hostel life is hard and alienating. To survive, rural migrants tend to cluster together in 'home boy' networks. A classic 'us and them' scenario develops which, once overlaid by manipulative politics, can become the conduit for violence.

In some hostels, problems have been complicated by illegal immigrants who want to remain invisible. Attempts to upgrade and transform hostels and informal settlements run contrary to their interests.

How do we deal with these issues?

- Hostels must be depoliticised.
- The diversity of interests among hostel residents must be recognised.
- Urban dwellers need to critically assess their attitudes to migrant workers.
- Local development forums need to be convened to engage hostels and surrounding communities in developing short and medium term responses to problems.
- Policy options addressing the future of hostels must be linked to broader issues of rural and regional reconstruction, and address the issue of illegal immigrants in a constructive way. ■

# Representative body guides upgrading

**T**HE NATAL HOSTELS INITIATIVE (NHI) was initiated by the government, operating through the Natal Provincial Administration (NPA). The initiative currently involves 19 hostels and is focused on those administered by the NPA.

The programme began in the second half of 1991, when meetings were held between NPA officials and two private sector organisations intended to provide project management services to the larger and more complex upgrading projects in the Durban area, namely Thokoza, Dalton Road, Jacobs, Umlazi Glebe and SJ Smith (Wema). The upgrading efforts in the remaining hostels are being managed directly by the NPA or, in one case, through a local authority.

Arising from these early meetings and the reservations expressed by project managers, the NPA decided to convene a meeting of "interest groups".

## Evolution of structures

In terms of the national guidelines for hostel upgrading initiatives, it was essential that decision-making be inclusive. The definition of "inclusive" is variable, however, given the differing locations of hostels. It also depends on group representation within each hostel.

## Hostels in Natal get organised, reports a **Special Correspondent** involved in the process

As initiator of the upgrading programme, the NPA chaired the meeting of interest groups. It was an open meeting, attended by participants from across the political spectrum as well as hostel representatives. Discussion focused on the local interpretation of the national guidelines. These were accepted as the point of reference by participants.

Various sub-committees were formed, one of which focused on structures needed to steer the upgrading process.

A two-tier structure emerged — a regional steering committee, to provide an overseeing and policy-determining role, and hostel-specific working groups which would make decisions regarding the upgrading of specific hostels. The manner in which the working groups have come into being has varied, depending on the hostel concerned and its context. In essence, however, communication has been through mass meetings, smaller group meetings, individual contact and written information directed to hostel residents.

Decision-making on both structures is through consensus. The NPA, although occupying the chair, acts primarily as a facilitator.

The steering committee was initially an open forum. Over a short period of time, it grew significantly. This made consensus difficult to achieve. After agreement in the committee, this structure was reduced to accommodate only two representatives of the interest groups. Representation at meetings is from the NPA, IFP, ANC, civics, Ningizimu Town Committee, PAC and SAHDA. The Durban city council and project managers also attend. Other parties can request representation by motivating to the committee.

The working groups are concerned mainly with the details of redevelopment. They are therefore made up primarily of hostel residents who are appointed after elections within the hostel, or following nominations ratified by hostel residents.

## Progress and problems

Progress has been variable, ranging from redevelopments already underway to almost complete inertia. The degree of political contest around a particular hostel is a key factor determining progress. In the case of the Durban hostels, three have made significant progress with implementation scheduled for later this year. One of these has sufficient funding to complete the upgrade. In the case of the other two, funding for significant initial endeavours is in place.

In line with the variable rate of progress, problems have also varied. The long term funding and administrative future of hostels are probably common issues that require attention.

Direct access to residents, beyond that afforded by the working groups, is also problematic.

From a broader perspective, the hostels in inner city locations stand as reminders of the need to house people in a dignified manner, where normalisation of living circumstances is also an imperative. Overcrowding and the demand for space need serious attention.

The current initiative is not likely to be able to address these bigger social and financial issues. ■



**GETTING TOGETHER:** Natal organisations are addressing hostel conditions





■ Sanco's Welcome Zenzile addresses a Western Cape Hostel Dwellers' Association meeting

# Umzamo realises dreams

**U**MZAMO DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (UDP) has become the vehicle through which the dreams and aspirations of the Western Cape hostel community are being realised.

The UDP is the culmination of a number of hostel organisations, starting with the Western Cape Mens' Hostel Association, which was formed in 1985. It then changed its name to the Western Cape Hostel Dwellers Association in mid-1986. In May the following year, the Hostel Dwellers' Trust was formed. The main purpose of the trust was to create a Section 21 company that could implement hostel development.

In 1990, the Western Cape Hostels Housing Development Company was formed. Last year, a board of directors was elected and changed the Trust's name to Umzamo.

The UDP defines itself as a housing and social development organisation. Its main aims are to:

- improve living conditions in hostels through the provision of family accommodation;
- facilitate the transfer of skills and job creation;
- provide appropriate facilities aimed at empowering hostel residents and integrating them into the broader community.

The UDP's activities centre around pilot upgrading projects in Langa, Gugulethu and Nyanga where old hostels are being converted into family housing.

A tripartite "Hostels to Homes" agreement between the UDP, Cape Provincial Administration (CPA) and Ikapa Town Council has resulted in

by Willem du Toit

29 demonstration units being built in the three areas. Another 300 units are to be upgraded per area.

Much of Umzamo's work has been devoted to building the foundations for sustainable development. This has involved:

- involving community structures in planning the pilot projects;
- integrating local planning and technical decisions;
- establishing an information flow on housing policy and shelter provision.

## Sustainability

Project committees in Langa, Nyanga and Gugulethu are driving the upgrade, and provide the most crucial link in attaining sustainability. While the committees have built residents' confidence and self-reliance, executive members feel there is much capacity-building to be done before the residents can participate meaningfully.

The project committees have set up sub-committees to run a community programme to address a range of social and health needs. The main focus is on ensuring a viable social development programme consisting of:

- child-care facilities;
- feeding and nutrition programmes;
- health programmes;
- community awareness and parent motivation;
- training and organisational development;
- income generating programmes

(saving, tiling and block-making, sewing etc).

The programmes are linked with a resource centre based in Gugulethu. Although still in its infancy, the management of this project is a high priority to Umzamo, as community facilities are vital to the viability of the housing upgrade.

Umzamo has been able to mobilise technical support and expertise from a wide range of experts. This has meant the pilot projects have been able to make rapid progress.

There is a rising need to address the position of private hostels in the area. A number of owners of private hostels have approached Umzamo to assist them with upgrading. Umzamo has enlisted the help of a consultant to put together a feasibility study.

Umzamo believes that planning and decision-making is at the heart of its development approach. Without these, sustainable development is not achievable. Constant monitoring and evaluating day-to-day activities of the projects allows the project to adapt according to community needs. At present, this monitoring is done by an outside body, UPRU. However, this will become a vital management process once Umzamo's capacity is increased.

Umzamo aims to establish viable models for future development which it can share with other communities. With the support Umzamo is receiving, the project has a dream that these development models could work and pave the way for community self-reliance and self-sufficiency. ■

● Du Toit works for Umzamo



# TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

The Children of Soweto Action Centre (COSAC) Drama Academy is a project being run in the needy township of Soweto. It is a project serving the congested township through which many young people of our deprived community can find their cultural worth. Without assistance by donors from sympathetic countries this valuable initiative will be lost to the community.

The African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa, after assessing the project, and the services which it provides to our people, hereby requests that the project should be rendered any such assistance – material, financial, or any other – which will be deemed necessary to ensure its continuation.

Yours in the struggle for democracy

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be 'Nelson R. Mandela', is positioned above the printed name.

NELSON R. MANDELA  
PRESIDENT

African National Congress  
Johannesburg  
2 December 1992

# "I am a Child of the ghetto and I am going to dance"

*"My name is Lerato. Lerato Xaba.*

*I am 8 years old and I am a pupil of  
the Children of Soweto Drama Academy.*

*I have many interests – singing, laughing, acting,  
but I love dancing most of all.*

*I dance all the time, everywhere. I dance to school, in my  
mother's little kitchen, and I dance as I play.*

*Even as I sleep, I dance. Some day,  
I am going to dance on stage. "*



## COSAC

EDUCATIONAL AND ARTISTIC TRUST

*You can help make Lerato's dream come true by  
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many other children receive lessons in drama,  
singing, dance, etc. in temporary quarters in the  
Market Theatre area.*

*Individuals and business can send donations to:*

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COSAC Trust,*

*Reg. No. 91/05831/08*

*Box 107 Newtown 2113*

*Tel: 838-2642/3/4 Fax: 833-1408*

*Trustees: Adv Jules Browde S.C., Dr N Motlana, Mr SS Morewa, Mr M Nxumalo, Mr CS Rachilo, Mr H Hachler,  
Mr W Mokoape, Miss Barbara Masekela, Mrs Fieke Ainslie, Mrs S Lebthe, Mrs J Kanyago, Mrs L Xaba, Mrs J Mavimbela,  
Mrs VG Gcabashe, Mr L Maisela, Mr Peter Fincham. Secretary: Miss Pearl J Smith*

PHOTO: KNOTSO KEKANA (CHALLENGE)



■ **PEACEMAKERS:** The ANC's German Mlatsheni and Inkatha's Jacob Dlomo

# Hostel residents make peace

A unique peace pact has been negotiated between residents of 29 PWV hostels. And it works because hostel residents negotiated agreements themselves, reports **KERRY CULLINAN**

**H**OSTEL! THE VERY WORD strikes terror into the hearts of many township residents in the Reef. Communities like Tembisa, Thokoza and Katlehong have held stayaways and protest marches calling for hostels on their doorsteps to be closed.

But PWV hostel-dwellers themselves have started a Hostel Peace Ini-

tiative (HPI) which may lead to better relations between themselves and township residents.

The initiative started late last year when a peace letter was sent from Jeppe hostel to Selby hostel, both in Johannesburg. The Zulu-dominated Jeppe hostel and the predominantly Xhosa Selby hostel had been at war for almost a year before the letter was

hand-delivered by a brave but scared Jacob Dlomo.

Since then, 29 hostels have been drawn into the peace process. Hostels that still have to be persuaded to join the peace initiative include those in the Vaal and some East Rand hostels.

Reverend Mvume Dandala, who is facilitating the process, says the initiative has already achieved a great deal. "Since the start of the initiative, we have not had any inter-hostel conflict — whereas a year ago conflicts were very sharp," says Dandala. "The no-go areas have been eliminated. People are visiting one another freely in the hostels and drinking beer together."

For Dandala, the HPI's strength lies in the fact that the initiative came from the hostel residents themselves, rather than being brokered by outsiders.

"The level of commitment to peace from the hostel residents is extremely high. They meet and take decisions as residents. I am simply the facilitator, an outsider almost."

## Labelling avoided

Party politics is kept out of the process as much as possible: "We try to avoid characterising hostels as Inkatha or ANC supporting, because we don't want a situation where residents can't take decisions, but have to refer decisions to political parties," says Dandala.

"All parties may try to keep their principals [political leaders] informed, but this is different from saying hostel residents can't take decisions."

The greatest problem the HPI has had to face is building trust. "It is not easy for people to trust one another after all the pain," says Dandala. And sometimes people's hopes have been raised too high, which meant participants were disappointed when their expectations were not met.

The HPI recently arranged an inter-hostel soccer tournament as part of building better relations between all residents. Plans are also afoot to implement general developmental programmes, but the HPI has deliberately avoided entering the debate about hostel upgrading and the fencing of hostels.

"The principals have already

# Bringing banking to the people

By Kerry Cullinan

**“T**o the majority of people, formal banks are seen to be denying them opportunities. A bank must be an entity that enables a person, not negates him,” says Dr Ellen Khuzwayo, who is the chairperson of the community banking trust.

The trust aims to change this by “taking banking as close to clients as possible”, explains trust chief executive Bob Tucker. “This means the location of branches, the services the bank offers, the language it speaks and managerial decisions” must be community-based.

At present, the trust is conducting detailed investigations into where branches of community banks are needed, what interest rates should be charged on loans and whether community banks are financially viable. If the outcome of the investigations is favourable, the foundations of a community bank could be laid by September.

“International studies have shown that community banks are only effective in low income communities if a very close relationship is established with the community. Only then can trust develop and can the credit-worthiness of people be assessed,” says Tucker.

While the community bank aims to develop low income communities, it will be a commercial enterprise. “It has to operate profitably. The bank must take savings from the community it serves. World experience has shown that [low income communities] have vastly more savings potential than previously realised,” says Tucker.

He stresses however, that a community bank will not try to replace stokvels and burial societies. Rather, the community bank sees itself as somewhere between formal banks and informal saving schemes, like stokvels.

“Our communities have survived on relationships. There are no contracts with stokvels, but there is hardly a scandal. The community bank will open the door to more growth,” adds Kuzwayo.

Aside from Kuzwayo, the trust brings together a wide range of prominent individuals countrywide. Significantly, half the trustees are women. As trustee Lillian Baqwa points out, “the mobilisation of savings tends to be done by the women”.

■ ELLEN KHUZWAYO



taken a position on these things. We would simply plead with them to ensure that hostel residents are engaged in decision-making,” says Dandala.

However, he adds that the terrible conditions under which hostel residents live have made the hostels “fertile ground for conflict”.

He warns, however, that the most important lesson he has learnt from being involved in the HPI is that people affected by decisions have to be involved in shaping those decisions.

## White elephants

“Politicians can take decisions to upgrade the hostels, but if people at the grassroots are not proactively engaged in joining hands and working together, monies set aside [for upgrading] will simply be white elephants.”

Now that fairly strong foundations have been laid for peace between different hostels, the HPI is moving on to its next — and more difficult — challenge: building peace between the hostel-dwellers and residents living in informal settlements and townships near the hostels. Meetings between various communities and the HPI have already begun. ■

# Union-community clash avoided

**A** GROUNDBREAKING RECENT agreement between Sanco, Cosatu and the civil engineering industry has averted conflict between the labour movement and unemployed communities.

So said Cosatu's Alec Erwin at the launch of the framework agreement for labour intensive public works projects. The agreement is aimed at stimulating job creation and breathing new life into the recession-battered construction industry.

A key element of the agreement is that workers employed in such schemes will be paid for the tasks they do, not the time they take to do so.

Erwin said Cosatu's decision to concede to the task-based system of payment meant potential tensions between communities desperate for employment and Cosatu, which wanted to maintain the wage and working standards of its members, had been averted.

But Cosatu general secretary Jay Naidoo said this concession had cost the federation "considerable strain and trauma". He said the task-based pay-

**By Kerry Cullinan**

ment system would have to be carefully monitored. In addition, warned Naidoo, the agreement "should not be seen as a precedent in any other industry".

"We would have massive problems with task-based payment in general industry, but the situation is different with job creation schemes," said Erwin.

Sanco president Moses Mayekiso said this was the first time that Cosatu and Sanco had come together to broker such an agreement, and that cooperation between the two organisations was essential "to develop the country and kickstart the economy".

The National Economic Forum (NEF) has been asked to assist in implementing the agreement by funding pilot projects. A five-person accreditation panel, including two people forwarded by the manpower department, will identify labour intensive projects. These projects would then be exempted from certain regulations, such as wage determinations.



■ **MOSES MAYEKISO**

Graham Power, who chairs a committee made up of the five employer bodies party to the agreement, said at present about 10% of construction costs went to labour. "This could easily be pushed up to 35 to 40%," said Power.

Employment in the construction industry has fallen from 135 000 eight years ago to 55 000 today, said Power. "The civil engineering industry is best suited as the testbench for the wider use of labour intensive production methods ... because we can take a person with little or no formal schooling and, with a limited amount of schooling, we can help him/her to become a productive wage-earner with long-term earning potential," he added. ■

# Rural network launched

**A** NETWORK OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN THE CAPE was launched at Saren in the Boland on July 5.

Projects from about 30 towns and villages in regions like the Karoo, Namaqualand, Southern Cape, West Coast and Overberg joined hands to form the Plattelandse Ontwikkelings Netwerk vir Eenheid van Gemeenskapsprojekte (Ploeg). The first initiative of its kind, Ploeg aims to strengthen the voice of neglected communities in the rural areas, so often ignored because of urban bias.

Apartheid local authorities, which control access to water and land, are the biggest bottleneck to rural development, Ploeg members told Reconstruct.

"They're not consistent in their approach to upgrading communities and prioritising needs. They say they'll provide a rugby field, even while there's no running water in people's homes," says Ben van Staden of the Southern African Labour and Development Research Unit (Saldru), which facilitated the unity process.

Many community projects – such as literacy projects,

**By Portia Maurice**

cooperatives, advice offices and preschools – battle to make ends meet in an antagonistic funding environment and with few skills. Ploeg hopes to empower such projects through providing support and training, as well as lobbying to influence policy on rural development.

"The network will be open to all sectors in the areas where we work – workers, women, youth, the disabled, the aged and people from all language and religious groups that share our developmental aims," says Ploeg in its mission statement.

"We will strive to work with existing organisations in our local areas as well as national bodies."

Ploeg's chairperson, Dominee George Cloete, adds: "There is an urgent need for a voice from people in the rural areas. We don't want people on the outside to decide things for us." ■

● Cloete can be contacted at: Posbus 6, Saron 6812, telephone (0236) 400772 and fax 400771.

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