

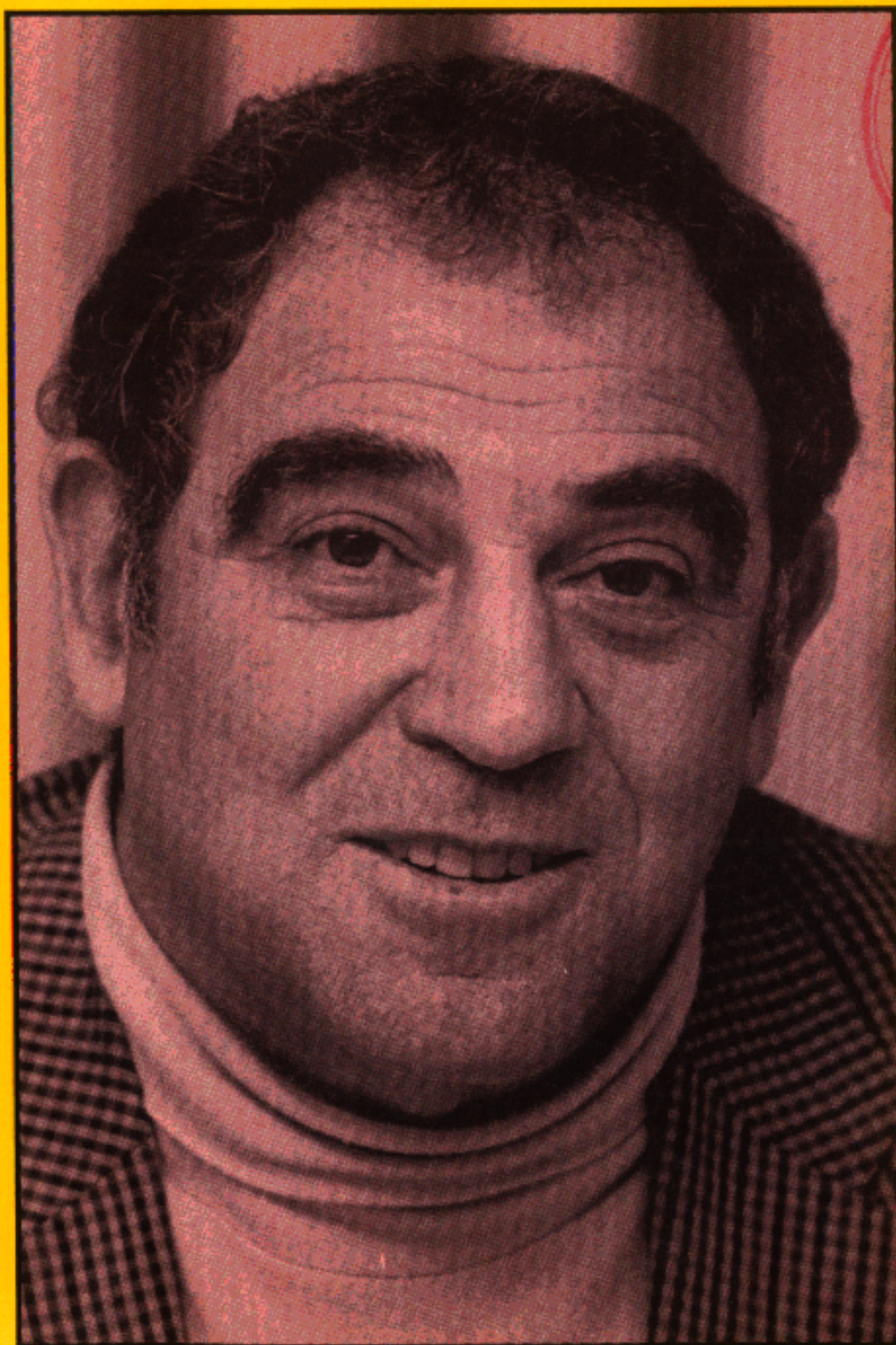
WORK IN

J320.968 W6  
DUP

WIP 72 • January/February 1991

# PROGRESS

## RONNIE KASRILS



CURRENT ISSUE

### A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF THE LEFT

The state of play since  
February 2 1990  
focusing on  
the ANC, SACP, PAC,  
Azapo and Wosa

INCLUDING  
Ronnie Kasrils and  
Mandla Khuzwayo on  
why mass struggle is  
the key

## VOICE FROM THE UNDERGROUND



**WORK IN PROGRESS**  
January/February 1991 No 72

Published by the Southern  
African Research Service  
PO Box 32716  
Braamfontein  
2017  
South Africa

2nd Floor  
Auckland House  
corner Smit and Biccard  
Streets  
Braamfontein  
2017  
Johannesburg

Phone: (011) 403-1912  
Fax: (011) 403-2534

Acting Editor:  
*Howard Barrell*  
Editor Designate:  
*Devan Pillay*  
Labour Correspondent:  
*Robyn Rafel*  
Researcher:  
*Mbulelo Sompetha*

General Manager &  
Advertising:  
*Paul Maseko*  
Senior Administrator:  
*Ingrid Gardiner*  
Bookkeeper:  
*Khose Mvabaza*  
Sales Coordinator:  
*Simon Matoma*  
Distribution Coordinator:  
*Lawrence Ntsamai*

Cover pic: The Star

Picture Credits:

Afrapix: Pages 1, 17, 19, 20,  
22, 25, 32, 33 and 34  
Bee Berman: Pages 28 and 29.  
Dynamic Images: Pages 12 and  
48.  
William Matlala: Page 26  
The Star: Pages 6, 9, 10, 15,  
16 and 36.

Illustration on Page 4: Dale  
Best

# EDITORIAL

**W**hatever the pretensions to science of some schools of political thought there are few, if any, inevitabilities in the way history unfolds. And 'victory' for the left in South Africa is no inevitability.

If it comes, it will be the product of hard political work, clear strategic thinking and flexible tactical manoeuvre.

So it is that we welcome signs of a new seriousness and sense of purpose among the liberation movements and their allies one year after their unbanning.

These indications come not a moment too soon — as our review in this edition of these organisations' sometimes lamentable performance over the past year would suggest.

The brief unity of purpose between the ANC, PAC and black consciousness groups achieved in marches demanding a constituent assembly on February 1 is particularly hopeful.

Might it signal an end to childish sectarian posturing which has in the past so harmed the prospects for achieving the aims these organisations apparently share?

The Communist Party's amenability to becoming a focus for broad socialist unity bodes well. So, too, does the voice of residual ANC underground structures carried in this issue, which reminds the ANC leadership of the source of its strength — the organised mass of ordinary people.

Seriousness demands, among other things, a keen attention to detail and tactics in dealings with the government in the coming months.

This has, hitherto, been inadequate among the liberation movements.

In the absence of an all-out confrontation, the 'war' is likely to be won or lost in skirmishes over detail.

Put another way: the big print giveth, the small print taketh away.

In this issue we focus on a number of these sites of skirmish — the mechanics of cooperation between popular organisation and the government at local level, the notion of interim government, black access to land, and private capital's interventions on the black housing crisis.

Small incremental victories in areas such as these could, cumulatively, decisively contribute to the character of the eventual outcome.

---

After a period of transition at SARS/WIP, we announce several staffing changes.

Paul Maseko, prominent East Rand activist and former member of the *Weekly Mail* management, has joined SARS as general manager. Devan Pillay, long involved in student and community struggles in the Cape before gaining a doctorate in sociology from Essex University, joins WIP as editor with effect from the next edition. He was formerly at the *Labour Bulletin*. Pillay takes over from Howard Barrell, who has edited WIP during the transition and now returns to Britain to continue his studies.

We regret to announce the departure of Ingrid Gardiner, who has been a mainstay of SARS and WIP for the past four years. We wish her every success in the future.



# CONTENTS

## LETTERS 2

## COMMENT 3

The Gulf War

## BRIEFS 3

The new Potwa leadership

## A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF THE LEFT 4

- Apartheid isn't dead, it just smells funny — *David Niddrie*
- Constitutional Assembly demand hits centre stage — *Devan Pillay*
- The ANC: Marrying mass action with creative leadership — *Jenny Cargill*
- Voice from the underground — *Ronnie Kasrils & Mandla Khuzwayo*
- The PAC: No negotiations, and no bullets either — *Joe Thlooe*
- Wosa: Who's left? Who's right? — *Pippa Green*
- Azapo: From fringe to fossil? — *Patrick Laurence*
- Entryism: Learning to live with factions — *Special Correspondent*
- Trotsky, entryism and the Marxist Workers' Tendency — *Devan Pillay*
- Waiting for the great leap forward — *Jo-Anne Collinge*
- Negotiating the shape of future local government — *Jo-Anne Collinge*

## HOUSING 28

- Shacking up with private capital — *Alan Mabin*
- Another brick in the wall — *Jo Dunstan*

## THE LAND 32

The Urban Foundation hits back

## LABOUR 36

- White workers of the world unite — *Robyn Rafel*
- Labour trends: One small leap for farmworkers — *Robyn Rafel*
- The Fawu dispute: Food for thought — *Robyn Rafel*

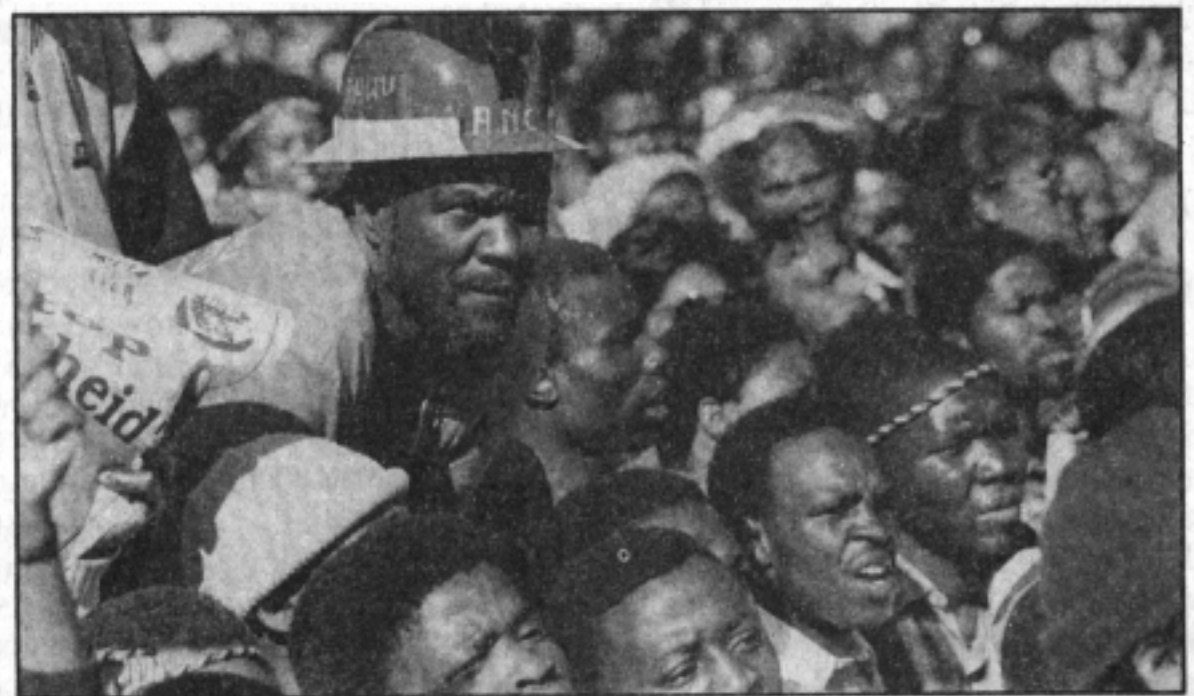
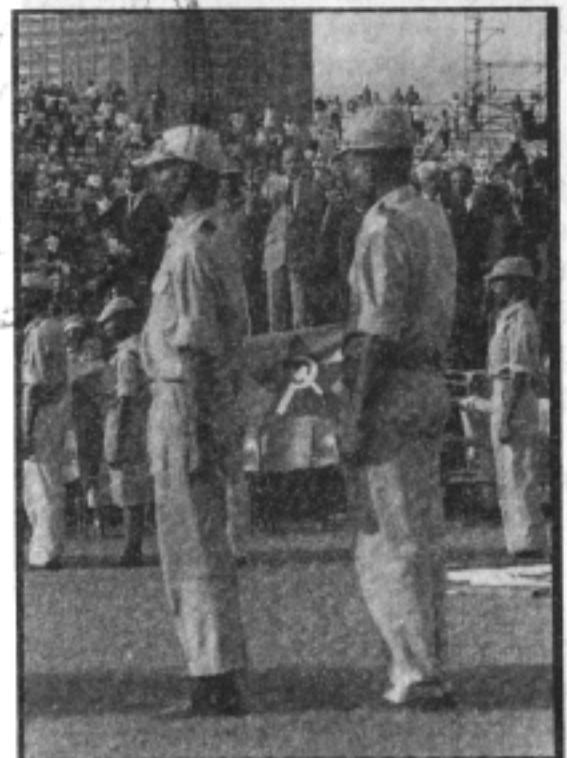
## BOOKS 45

- *Jeremy Cronin: 'Boeta John' Gomas*
- *Jacklyn Cock: Waste not, want not*
- *Howard Barrell: Julie Frederickse on non-racialism*



## A Year in the Life of the Left

Twelve months after the unbanning of political organisations, we look at the strengths and weaknesses of organisations on the left — including special focuses on the ANC, SACP, PAC, Azapo and Wosa, and a contribution by Ronnie Kasrils and Mandla Khuzwayo on the importance of mass action



## Food for thought

Robyn Rafel looks at the long-running dispute in the Food & Allied Workers Union — in particular, allegations that 'Stalinist' leaders imposed an authoritarian political culture in the union





## Spot the whites

Dear Editor

I have read your article on the PAC in *WIP* 68 (August 1990), and would like you to supply me with more information on Barney Desai's involvement with the PAC.

I am an ANC member, and in discussions with PAC members, I have always defended the participation of white comrades in the struggle. I find it hard to believe that the same PAC can contradict itself by saying 'one settler, one bullet', and yet also have 'settlers' as members.

Will you please investigate for me whether there are any white members of the PAC, especially in their external structure, and supply me with their positions, names and photographs if possible, as I would dearly love to correct my PAC brothers.

**Sakhunzi Bongco**  
University of Fort Hare

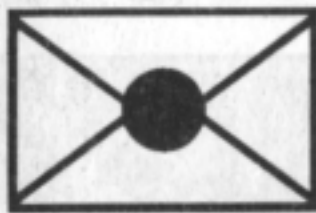
• Information about the PAC can be obtained from its information officer, Barney Desai, at 202 Malta House, Malta Rd, Salt River, Cape Town 7925 (Tel: 021-417 1442) - Editor.

## A crisis of conscience

Dear Editor

I once more salute the unwavering dedication of the magazine I like so much. I am one of the 1990 matriculants, and would like to give the point of view of a student as to why the pass rate dropped from 42% in 1989 to 36,4% in 1990.

The 1990 matric results exposes the worsening crisis within 'black education' as compared to others, especially white education. The government claims to be financially weak, but it is financing the expensive schemes of the Department



## LETTERS

**Write to: The Editor**  
**Work In Progress**  
**PO Box 32716**  
**Braamfontein 2017**

of Law and Order. In the meantime four or more students have to share one book - for some subjects there are no books at all! It is therefore pure stupidity to expect matriculants to write and pass examinations.

The handful of study aids supplied by the Department of Education and Training (DET) at the beginning of last year helped very little, if at all. In addition, the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) resource packs reached a low percentage of students due to poor coordination of the distribution process, and the reluctance of the school staff to make copies. The few who did get them either did not use them, or used them in the wrong way due to lack of advice. There is a severe shortage of teachers, but instead of hiring more teachers, DET is retrenching them at a very alarming rate. It is wrong for DET to withdraw 'unqualified' teachers, and for students to demand that they be expelled or resign. Instead the DET should look at ways for these teachers to improve their capabilities while still teaching, and students should be encouraged to cooperate.

Education is structured in such a way that teachers and students cannot cooperate, which results in students regarding teachers as part of the 'enemy'.

The NECC and others have for some time been calling for democratically elected Parent-Teacher-

Student Associations (PTSAs). This is a good idea, but the PTSAs must not just be the rubber-stamps of other formations, in particular the militant students.

It is high time that the NECC went beyond words and came to the people on the ground. The collapse of education coordinating committees in a number of locals makes the NECC seem to be a national committee only, with the people left behind.

The Minister of Education, Stoffel van der Merwe, has said that the poor performance of black matriculants was the result of 'disruptions', including the teachers' 'chalk down', student boycotts and stayaways. To blame the above is to blame the result rather than the cause - why didn't the DET respond to the teachers' and students' demands (before they took action)? In any case, how is it that schools, in particular those in small areas, which had a 'normal' school year experienced the worst failing rate?

1991 should be a year in which all organisations forget their ideological differences, and unite in action over the education crisis.

Firstly, they need to look at how the 'back to school' and 'intensive learning' campaigns can be made to reinforce each other, and how pressure can be mounted to ensure that the DET commits itself to solving the crisis (which it created). Secondly, organisations need to review and define their slogans, as some (like 'schools are battlefields') can be manipulated and used at the expense of learning, even by those within these organisations.

Thirdly, the slogan 'liberation before education' is very ripe amongst militants, and popular organisations need to intervene beyond mere words before the situation reaches a total moral

collapse.

The meetings between the NECC and DET last year were historic. The DET had at long last acknowledged publicly that it could no longer continue to unilaterally decide on educational matters.

But the NECC went to the talks as 'beggars', and were forced to compromise - it had not mobilised enough pressure on the ground, and was as a result unable to withdraw and challenge the DET in the streets.

Throughout the talks there was a 'gap' between the NECC and the students, who were highly demoralised by the outcome.

While 1990 saw a number of gains made by the ANC, it is a pity that it seems reluctant to take the education crisis up with the government. The ANC should give the crisis the attention that it deserves now - instead of just expressing shock at the results and releasing dozens of press statements.

**Samuel Motlohi**  
Botshabelo

## Does Inkatha have a vision?

Dear Editor

Chief Buthelezi must resign from homeland politics, because he now refuses to identify himself as the kwaZulu chief minister, but rather the president of the Inkatha Freedom Party. As a non-aligned, potential member of any anti-apartheid organisation, who believes in non-ethnicity and non-tribalism, I do not see myself joining Inkatha as long as it is still associated with the bantustan.

In addition, Inkatha should inform its prospective members of its vision for the future, instead of only telling people about how the ANC wishes to monopolise power. That is a boring and tired parrot song.

**Lucky 'LT' Tshepo**  
University of the Witwatersrand



# No settlers, no bullets!

Iraq invades Kuwait. The US takes it upon itself to 'defend democracy', to force Iraq out of Kuwait. It draws support from all Western countries and others, including the Soviet Union and Syria. It gets the United Nations Security Council to back a resolution setting 15 January as the deadline before war is declared. Only Cuba and Yemen vote against, while China abstains.

The US and its allies are now at war with Iraq. What was forecast as a quick, clinical operation has turned out to be an escalating, bloody war. Saddam Hussein is clearly well-prepared for a long fight. The body count has only just begun.

But what is it all about? The forces of democracy and decency (the West) versus dictatorship and demonism (Saddam)? That is the substance of what is fed as 'news' to the US public. So most Americans - for now - apparently support the war. What is conveniently ignored is that, at the time of the Iraqi invasion, only 4% of all residents in Kuwait had the vote and women had none. According to *Time* magazine (24.12.90), public rallies were prohibited in Kuwait, demonstrators were dispersed by force, political parties were banned, the press was censored and parliament was suspended. Moreover, Kuwait only abolished slavery in 1963! The oil-rich country is a creation of the British ruling class, which handed over power to the Sabah family which controls most of the country's wealth.

Had Kuwait been a democracy, we would be compelled to ask: since when has the US felt moved to defend the rights of the majority? Seldom. Its track record shows it has propped up brutal dictatorships throughout the world. These include the hated Batista regime in Cuba; Somoza in Nicaragua; Pinochet in Chile; Marcos in the Philippines; and, lest we forget, the apartheid government in South Africa.

The list is long.

And what has the characteristic US response been to fledgling democracies, to genuine attempts by small nations to break out of cycles of poverty and deprivation and assert their sovereignty? It has, often, attempted to frustrate or destroy them. It succeeded in Chile. It has virtually succeeded in Angola. It might succeed in Nicaragua. Cuba, 90 miles from the US coast, clings to its sovereignty.

So who is fooled by the US' claims of moral motivation for its intervention in the Gulf?

The major immediate reason for the US action in the Gulf is

## COMMENT THE GULF WAR

OIL. Moreover, the US apparently feels free to assert its dominance in the world arena after the demise of the Soviet Union as a super-power. Read Bush's lips: Win this war, and the world is ours for the taking.

But should the response of the left be to support Saddam? That seems to be the thinking of some. It is based on crude and doubtful reasoning: my enemy's enemy must be my friend. While very few in this country have actually sung the praises of Saddam, many 'anti-imperialists' have, by omission, pinned their colours to his scuds. They range from the ultra-right Boerestaat Party to Azapo, the Unity Movement and Wosa on the far left. Many (but not all) Muslim groups have been impressed with Saddam's insincere linkage of his invasion of Kuwait to the establishment of national sovereignty for Palestinians.

The PAC, Call of Islam, ANC and SACP, on the other hand, while opposed to the war and the hypocrisy of the US, have also condemned Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The SACP goes further: Hussein is a 'dictator and violator of human rights'. During his war with Iran (backed by the US), Saddam used chemical weapons against the Kurds in his own country. He has relentlessly persecuted the Iraqi left and has stripped women of basic rights. No champion of the oppressed can support Saddam. He is a thug and a fraud.

We call for peace in the Gulf. Those dying on its desert battlefields are not the sons of the rich and powerful. They are, by and large, the sons, brothers and fathers of the poor and underprivileged. In whose interests are they sacrificing their lives? Certainly not their own. Our position goes beyond mere opposition to the war. Iraq must get out of Kuwait, the US must pull out of the region and, crucially, Israel must get out of the occupied territories.

Saddam opportunistically linked the Gulf crisis with the Palestinian question. He implied he was willing to withdraw from Kuwait if Israel withdrew from the occupied territories. In doing so, he ironically, pointed to a way to avoid war. But, because of its hostility to the rights of Palestinians and its assertive intentions in the region, the US refused to exploit this opportunity.

Lasting peace in the Gulf will come only through a resolution of all major elements of the Middle East crisis. If there are to be no bullets, there must be no settlers. •

## New Potwa leadership

The third Potwa congress held in Johannesburg from 7 to 13 January saw sweeping changes in the leadership, most notably the election of a youthful 'militant', 26-year-old Mlungisi Hlongwane, to the position of general secretary.

A past student of the former general secretary, Vusi Khumalo, at the Post Office College in Booyens, Johannesburg, Hlongwane matriculated at Lobone High in Soweto in 1982, and was active in Potwa right from its

start in 1985. He worked at the Bryanston yard of the post office at the time and was elected chairperson of the shop steward's committee. In August 1987, while still in detention, he was appointed Potwa national education officer.

An executive member of the Klipspruit branch of the ANC, Hlongwane has paid dearly for his involvement in community struggles.

In 1986, for example, he was forced to go underground for two months following a massacre in White City, Soweto, in which municipal police opened fire on a group protesting against rent evic-

tions, killing at least 21 people. Hlongwane had been instrumental in building organs of peoples' power in the area.

His six months-long detention in 1987 was the result of police suspicions that he was involved in building Umkhonto we Sizwe. Potwa president Kgabisi Mosunkutu and a shop steward, Mandla Mahlangu, were also detained at the time.

Mosunkutu was the only member of the previous leadership to retain his position on the executive at the congress. Potwa media officer Sizwe Matshikiza was elected assistant general secretary.

The previous first and sec-

ond vice-presidents, Bob Mabaso and Floyd Mashele, are now the chairperson of the national education committee and national campaigns coordinator respectively.

WIP sources say the displacement of Khumalo did not involve 'ideological considerations'. Rather, it had to do with a perception that he had become too embroiled in international trade union affairs.

How does Hlongwane feel about replacing his former lecturer?

'Khumalo was a very good leader and is still part of us. The NEC is presently considering a post for him,' he says.

- Mbulelo Sompetha



THE FIRST YEAR



2 FEBRUARY 1991  
**POLITICAL  
ORGANISATION**  
ONE YEAR ON

# Apartheid's not dead, it just smells funny

*David Niddrie argues that De Klerk, by declaring a 'free and democratic political system' and shifting resources to alleviate some of the worst areas of deprivation, hopes to demobilise the ANC and achieve his real object - the entrenchment of white political influence in a 'new South Africa'*

**A** quick glance at FW de Klerk's vision of the future makes it difficult to see what all the fuss is about - or what remains to be negotiated.

In a slick and far-reaching speech on 1 February, given a boost of legitimacy by an outraged Conservative Party walk-out from parliament, De Klerk said he would be removing the key apartheid laws in a matter of months. The remainder would survive only until a new constitution was negotiated and in place. If it is based on De Klerk's manifesto, this constitution will provide much of what his major political foes are demanding:

- a fully democratic political system in a unitary state;
- a 'free and equitable' economic system.

But De Klerk's speech went further, acknowledging that the simple removal of apartheid laws would not achieve the equality of economic and political opportunity his foes demand. State funds, his manifesto asserted, would be used 'with special regard to the socio-economic backlog existing in our country'.



## THE FIRST YEAR

Thus government agricultural subsidies will be granted to would-be black farmers and there will be a major initiative towards extending access to education, housing, health services and other social welfare facilities to all South Africans.

In the next five years billions of rands in government and corporate funds will be poured into 'social programmes'.

**A**ll these are undeniably huge steps away from the deprivation created by 43 years of National Party rule.

Is the process of transforming apartheid into democracy yet irreversible? Not quite.

Undeniably welcome as all these decisions are, they are being taken by white politicians.

And the raw military might which has underpinned and protected white rule for centuries remains in place untouched and, De Klerk made clear, untouchable. 'If the authority and integrity of our police are undermined, all of us will have to pay a heavy price', De Klerk warned.

The many jubilant exclamations that apartheid is dead cannot disguise the fact that real power remains in white hands.

And De Klerk clearly plans to keep it that way for at least the duration of negotiations over a new constitution - as his solid opposition to the idea of an elected constituent assembly demonstrates.

There is a contradiction here: De Klerk has committed himself to a 'free and democratic' political future. It is difficult to find an interpretation under which this means anything but an end to exclusive white access to political power.

So if he's ready to agree to that in the near future, why hold on so tenaciously now?

De Klerk wants to demobilise the ANC so that his final objective - entrenched white privilege in a 'new South Africa' - remains intact.

De Klerk has argued the pointlessness of 'fighting something which will disappear in any event'.

It is a persuasive argument, especially when it is backed up by the ANC's own slogans that 'victory is certain', and predictions from senior ANC officials that it is only a matter of months away.

This logic has played a key role in the erosion of international sanctions. Domestically, it has seen a massive dilution of the militancy which forced De Klerk to begin reforming in the first place.

The 'Constituent Assembly Day' protests on 1 February attracted less mass support than the defiance campaign in 1989 and the rallies to welcome Nelson

Mandela from prison.

But De Klerk is not relying on this alone: He has ushered in a programme of massive state and corporate social spending and ceded much on the issue of local government.

In doing so he is undermining precisely those areas of political grievance which have generated his opponents their greatest levels of political support: housing, education, health and other social services, and local government.

On the latter his concessions stop well short of deracialising local government. He has agreed to voluntary coordination of decision-making and financing of black townships and white cities.

The fact that this is, for the present, guarantees that the hundred-plus Conservative Party-controlled local authorities (and probably many National Party controlled councils) won't take up the offer. And, stripped of the flanking support of campaigns in the big cities - where Democratic Party councils will accede to the demand - smaller communities will battle to achieve their demands.

This demobilisation lies at the core of De Klerk's thinking. It reflects a decisive shift in government negotiation tactics.

**F**or the past three years the National Party has been putting forward proposals for a post-apartheid constitution which entrench this white political veto.

Initially, first under PW Botha and later under De Klerk, this veto was explicit, taking the form of racial representation in parliament.

By last January De Klerk had realised no-one was buying the idea. He therefore started packing it differently, arguing first for 'group rights', then for a group and regional veto in an upper house while the lower parliamentary chamber would give the impression of straight democratic representation. Last February he argued that this was similar to the Congress-Senate structure in the US, again without convincing those who mattered, namely the ANC and Western powers.

Much of 1990 therefore saw De Klerk and his constitutional strategists under Gerrit Viljoen offering further refinements on this basic model. By year-end they had still not come up with a saleable model. Unwilling to change his commodity, De Klerk has now changed his sales pitch. He has done so partly as a result of the lessons he and his startled Cabinet drew from the ANC's 16 December consultative conference. Despite a year of talks with the ANC, De Klerk and his Cabinet were entirely unprepared

for both the militancy and the degree of influence exercised by rank-and-file delegates.

In advance of the ANC gathering, for example, Cabinet-level government officials were confidently expecting an ANC about-face on sanctions. They retained their confidence through a mounting storm of pre-conference protest from within the ANC on a position paper arguing for a tactical retreat on sanctions.

The extent of this government blind spot can be measured by De Klerk's assumption, throughout their many meetings last year, that Mandela was simply playing for time when he delayed decisions to give himself 'time to consult'. A National Party partiality for apartheid-rooted notions of black politics as converging on individual 'strongmen' able to command complete obedience appears to have encouraged this view.

De Klerk has also been driven by a second sobering discovery, drawn from a series of government-commissioned opinion surveys last year: that prospects of a successful National Party-led 'moderate' alliance to challenge the ANC, an idea much beloved among Nat strategists, is hamstrung by one vital fact: the Nats' potential allies - Gatsha Buthelezi's Inkatha and Alan Hendrickse's Labour Party for example - enjoy less support in the constituencies they are supposed to deliver to the alliance than the Nats themselves. And compared to the Nats' 11%, ANC support levels towards the end of last year were running at more than 55%.

**T**hus De Klerk and his Cabinet met on Robben Island in mid-January to plan the year ahead and address the need for a revision of their tactics. They had calculated that ANC participation was necessary to legitimise the negotiations process. But they had now established that it was also the only force with the necessary support to ensure acceptance of the end product. Having calculated that negotiations would create a relationship of mutual need, De Klerk and his Cabinet now saw a situation in which they needed the ANC more than it needed them.

And the 16 December conference suggested that the ANC knew this - and was evolving a tactical approach to derive maximum benefit of this advantage. Whatever the ANC's shortcomings in practice, the idea behind a sustained campaign of mass action was that it would wrest control of the pace and form of negotiations from De Klerk and subject him to precisely the kind of manipulation



to which he had hoped to subject the ANC. Instead of forcing concessions by holding out the threat of delayed exile repatriation or prisoner release, for example, De Klerk could himself be forced to make concessions under threat of an ANC withdrawal from the talks. And the gallery of minor parties and bantustan luminaries with which De Klerk hoped to pack an all-party talks process would - as the campaigns of early 1990 demonstrated - suddenly begin defecting to the other side of the table as it became clear that he was no longer calling the shots.

By declaring for 'a free and democratic political system', De Klerk is in effect saying that victory is certain and reinforcing the pointlessness of 'fighting

something which will disappear in any event'.

This will both limit the energy the ANC and its allies put into their mass action campaigns, and encourage in the movement's leadership a perspective which defined much of its actions early last year: with victory certain, the small print of the agreement on how to get there is relatively unimportant. Distracted by the explosion of debate in early 1990 over the details of life after the inevitable victory, the liberation movement allowed vital concessions to slip by unnoticed, blithely confident that nothing could go wrong. These included a government monopoly on deciding who got indemnity and when (with the result that thou-

sands of prisoners and exiles are still waiting to come home), and an ambiguity in the terms of Umkhonto we Sizwe's ceasefire which has enabled the government to link the pace of indemnities to further concessions on the ANC's military capacity.

De Klerk is further seeking to deprive the democratic movement of issues around which to mobilise by putting forward his own variant of an interim government. Described variously as a super-Cabinet or a council of state, this is intended to draw in both the ANC and representatives of other political formations to a joint structure with executive powers greater than those of the existing Cabinet, to oversee a transitional period

## Constituent assembly demand

By Devan Pillay

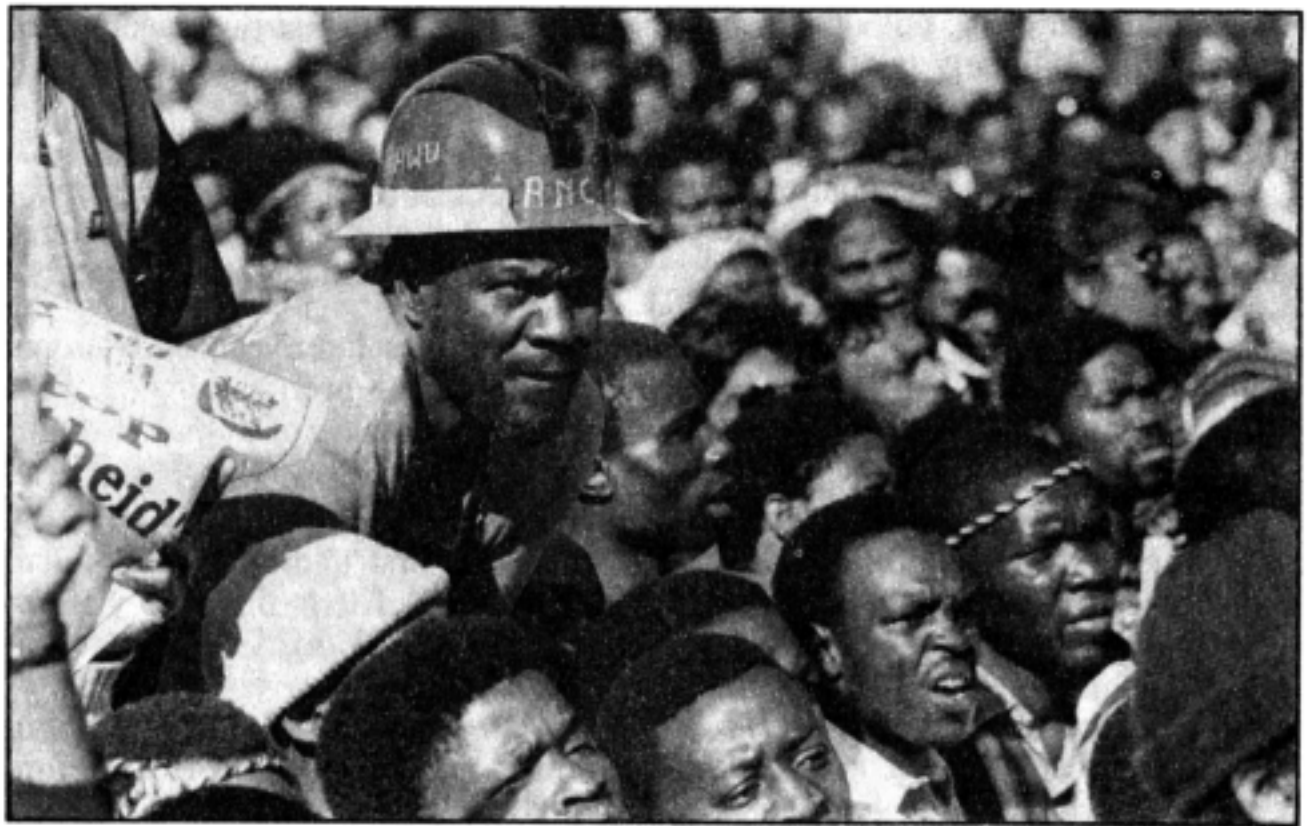
**T**he demand for a constituent assembly has reached centre-stage, following its endorsement at the ANC's December consultative conference, and the successful Constituent Assembly Day national mass action on 1 February.

While Cosatu and the SACP (along with the PAC, Azapo, Wosa and others) have at least since mid-1989 held firmly to the demand for a sovereign, elected constituent assembly, it was only during the latter half of 1990 that the ANC began emphasising this demand. But some leaders gave stronger emphasis to it than others. At the consultative conference, however, the movement's leading activists supported the demand.

Many ANC activists felt decidedly uneasy when the movement's January 8 statement left open the possibility that an all-party conference, consisting of the full range of political forces in the country, could transform itself into a constitution-making forum. This was in direct opposition to the idea of an elected body, with delegates subject to recall, which has the sole task of drawing up a new constitution. By the end of January, however, the ANC leadership re-affirmed its commitment to an elected constituent assembly, and this was further endorsed by a meeting of the national executives of the ANC, SACP and Cosatu on 27 January.

But why is a constituent assembly so important? And why is it so vehemently opposed by establishment forces?

The motivation behind a constituent



• **A constituent assembly allows the people, through elected and accountable delegates, a say in drawing up a new constitution**

assembly is that it is supremely democratic. This works at two levels:

Firstly, no substantive negotiations on a new constitution should take place between parties until each party has tested its support in a non-racial election. Such an election will decide the composition of the negotiating table.

Secondly, the people, through elected and accountable delegates, should have a say in drawing up a new constitution. Such a process will give legitimacy to whatever constitution finally emerges.

This, the argument goes, is in contrast to the liberation movement being forced to compromise on basic demands in negotiations behind closed doors - 'under the guns' of the present apartheid-capitalist state.

Crucially linked to this demand, then, is the view that the present government cannot be both player and referee at the same time. Thus, during both the process of electing a constituent assembly and for the duration of its (short) life, the present government is replaced by either an 'interim government' or some other neutral body (see page 22).

For the liberation movement, objections to a constituent assembly arise out of the fear that an ANC- (or working class-) dominated constituent assembly is likely to fashion a constitution which would take away many existing rights and privileges (especially from big capital) and empower the poor and rightless.

De Klerk and others have insisted that all parties with 'proven support' should



during which a new constitution will be drafted.

Below the council the National Party Cabinet will remain in place, as will the civil service, although possibly supplemented by formal or informal advisory commissions - for which Cosatu's participation in the National Manpower Commission, the National Education Coordinating Committee's role in revising new education, and the presence of individual ANC members on the committee overseeing the replacement of GST by VAT serve as precedent. Ideally, for De Klerk, this will lock the ANC into ever greater reliance on its relationship with the government, and discourage political pressure, via mass action, on an admini-

stration of which the ANC increasingly sees itself as part. None of these will be decisive in regaining him the initiative: combined, the assumption runs, they could sap the ANC and its allies of the will and the energy to campaign aggressively for an elected constituent assembly. Instead, the logic continues, the ANC and its allies would concede to what is the government's key demand: that negotiations proceed through a non-elected, multi-party structure in which the ANC's major card, its popular support, is neutralised.

And once the ANC is tied into that process, De Klerk can then produce the white-veto constitutional blueprint he quietly shelved after 16 December. •

# Marrying mass action with creative leadership

*Jenny Cargill assesses the state of the ANC after its December Consultative Conference*

**P**resident FW de Klerk's opening of parliament address on February 1 sent an important message to the African National Congress: setting the political agenda is a terrain of struggle about which the government feels both confident and assertive.

De Klerk largely ignored the ANC's current agenda outlined at its consultative conference in December last year. He made no mention of precisely those issues which bothered the 1 600 delegates at the historic gathering — the return of exiles and the release of political prisoners.

Clearly, De Klerk intends to maintain control of the current process of political transformation by moving fast enough to outpace the increasing grassroots militancy waving its banners outside parliament's doors as he spoke.

Quite how the ANC will fair against him depends on organised mass action, but not that alone. A creative leadership is crucial in ensuring that the benefits of mass activity are not dissipated during talks.

Questions about the current leadership's ability to do so was a feature of the consultative conference.

For the first time since the ANC embarked on negotiations, membership represented at the conference made a clear imprint on the policies and direction of the organisation. A break was made with past practice in policy formulation. In the past this occurred through small-scale consultations with various groups, organisations and individuals, often in secret.

While intended as merely consulta-

## hits centre-stage

negotiate a new constitution, which would then be either accepted or rejected via a referendum. For some who support this view, there is a fear that a (non-racial) election for a constituent assembly may exclude a number of parties, in particular the far-right. Their absence at the negotiating table could fuel a counter-revolutionary offensive against a new order which they played no part in creating.

If the elections were held on a racial basis, then of course this problem would not arise - but that would be totally unacceptable to the liberation movement.

A further consideration is whether a constituent assembly is necessary to achieve the basic minimum: a completely non-racial constitution which guarantees certain crucial democratic rights. If this can be achieved via another route, the argument goes, then a constituent assembly is negotiable. A constitution need not, for example, entrench all worker rights (such as a minimum wage), or place limits on the private accumulation of wealth. A new government operating under a non-racial and democratic constitution can do that.

While there may be substance to this argument, the question remains: can a truly non-racial and democratic constitution be arrived at through compromises behind closed doors? Would such a negotiating table not be so weighted against the liberation movement that, as in Zimbabwe, it would be forced to concede certain rights and privileges to the white minority - thus severely limiting the possibilities of fundamentally addressing the problems of inequality and poverty?

Elections to a constituent assembly

can take place in a number of forms. They can be constituency-based, where a delegate is elected by and directly accountable to a specific geographical constituency (as in the present system). Or they can be run according to proportional representation, where each party is accorded a number of seats in proportion to the total number of votes it receives nationally (as in most European countries).

A complex mix of the two systems can ensure both the accountability of delegates to particular constituencies, as well as the representation of all parties with a significant level of support.

Thus for example the Conservative Party might get 7% of the total vote cast, and thus be allocated, say, 14 seats out of 200. This would give them sufficient representation for their voice to be heard - thus undercutting argument that they have been excluded from the constitutional process.

This debate is likely to rage for much of the year, as the various options are given more substance. By linking the demand for a constituent assembly and interim government to mass action, the ANC can force De Klerk to give in. As Niddrie has argued (see page 4), since the ANC's consultative conference De Klerk has already conceded some ground. Already Buthelezi has moved from outright rejection of a constituent assembly (before meeting with Mandela), to being 'open to persuasion' (after the meeting).

The Patriotic Front congress of all liberation forces, due on 21 March, could be crucial in deciding whether a working unity can be built behind the demand for a constituent assembly. •



## THE FIRST YEAR

tive, the character of the conference was, in effect, more than that. Delegates were both actors in, and constructors of, their organisation and its political course. Their input on negotiations was more compelling than that of delegates to the 1989 Conference for a Democratic Future (CDF), the last time the ANC's negotiations perspective was put before a wide forum. At the CDF, the Harare Declaration was simply put to the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) for approval though not any reworking.

Crucially, the ANC's national leadership and structures did not change at the conference. A suggestion that members of regional leadership structures join the NEC did not get through. Thus, while conference marked a change in the process of ANC policy formulation, the same cannot be said for implementation of it. The old NEC, now comprising about 36 people, remains responsible for pushing through an expanded and more clearly defined set of tasks, with deadlines against many.

But it was precisely the leadership's ability to do this which was questioned, sometimes directly, in the discussions of the six commissions in which conference delegates spent the bulk of their time.

In his opening remarks to conference, deputy president Nelson Mandela implicitly appealed for greater understanding from delegates. The past year had not been easy for reasons often outside of the control of the leadership. The organisation was attempting to combine a membership made up of various groups with different strands - Umkhonto we Sizwe combatants, exiles, ex-prisoners, underground and MDM activists.

Violence designed, said Mandela, to 'incapacitate leadership' and cause 'a loss of mass confidence in the ANC' had been a further complication.

But the delegates, sometimes unconvinced, opted for less understanding and more hard talking about leadership's performance. It stung Mandela. Instead of - as might have been expected - emphasising in his closing remarks the new bond that had been created between the various strands in the three days at Soweto's exhibition complex, he strongly criticised delegates for having had nothing positive to say about the leadership. **Bitter or not, the message to the leadership was clear: you have to earn, as Mandela himself put it, 'the title of leaders of the people'.**

In a situation of political transformation, the issue of maintaining the strategic initiative is a particularly pressing demand on a leadership. It has to ensure

that its constituency and supporters - often more comfortable with old ways and perspectives - stand with it. However, as last year progressed, ANC members were increasingly niggled by a sense that it was the 'wrong' leadership, namely De Klerk's, that had succeeded in grabbing the initiative.

The NEC left conference without an open mandate on how to conduct negotiations - although 'flexibility' was highlighted. It was given the go-ahead to proceed with talks about talks only and not negotiations proper. Conference also wanted 'appropriate mechanisms for consultation' with the membership on talks. 'Secrecy and confidentiality' were spurned.

But last year was perhaps one of the most trying tests for an ANC leadership. This year kicks off with some important differences. The NEC now has better back-up. Elected regional leadership structures are to some extent tested and, so, more practical organisational tasks can be left to them. Other structures like the land commission, youth league and the education committee are sufficiently in place to be able to take responsibility for resolutions relating to their spheres of activity. The women's league looks less promising. But overall, greater depth should free the national leadership to deal with issues that more properly fall within its domain.

**S**o far, a sense of urgency about fulfilling the demands of conference is apparent. The implementation of the programme of action adopted at conference is being dealt with at two levels, says ANC spokesperson Joel Netshitenzhe.

The first is at regional and local level. The task of these structures is both to give substance to and run the programmes appropriate to their areas.

The second is a national campaigns committee. Here, there has already been something of a hiccup: the only confirmed appointment to it has been veteran NEC member Mazwai Piliso as its head. It has been a controversial appointment given Piliso's history of poor health and long absence from any involvement in mass mobilisation.

Netshitenzhe said the other key demands of conference on negotiations were also being addressed. Those involved in the talks process have started looking at:

- setting up a comprehensive negotiations team composed of chief negotiators, working groups, researchers (with there being a fair representation of women);
- establishing a mechanism ensuring

that branches were adequately consulted about the negotiations process.

The alliance of the ANC, Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) and South African Communist Party (SACP) held meetings in January at regional and national levels. Conference had put particular emphasis on a working alliance, with the violence in particular being addressed.

ANC spokespeople could not say what the state of play is on one of the most insistent demands of the conference - the establishment of a national committee to ensure that defence units were put in place. A pamphlet giving guidance to communities on how to set up defence units was drawn up late last year, with some copies surfacing in those townships thirsty for assistance in defence. It is not yet clear what is holding up official publication and distribution.

But according to ANC sources, there are varying degrees of support for defence units within the ANC leadership. There are obvious political problems associated with the ANC spearheading the establishment of a structure whose military character threatens to cut across the new democratically-elected structures.

**N**evertheless, defence units have a logic in the current violence if they are integrated with bold and creative political initiatives.

Outside of conference resolutions, the ANC is busy re-organising the president's office (effectively Mandela's) by, for instance, establishing a group of speech-writers. Next in line is the secretary general's office, widely criticised for failing to be the pivot around which the organisation functions.

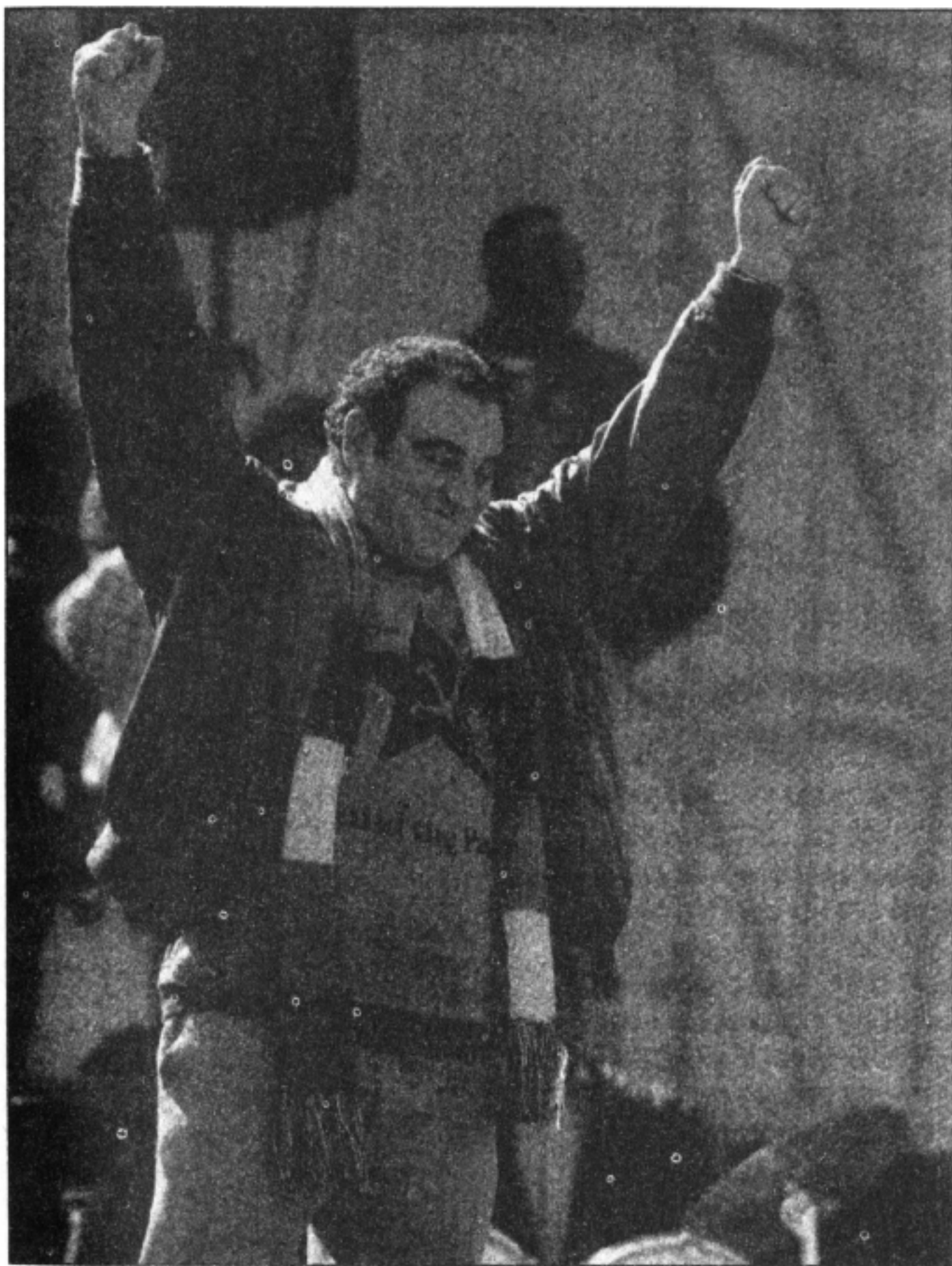
The multi-party congress proposed in the NEC's January 8 address has also grabbed some of the political centre-stage for the coming year.

It is one example of the ANC leadership employing flexibility to effectively direct the political process.

But implicit in conference resolutions on negotiations was a concern about a contradiction between consultation and flexibility.

Establishing a balance between these two is the challenge for the NEC, as is the need to re-instil a confidence among members of the leadership's ability to transform talks into a process that is controlled by the broadly based liberation movement. The current deadline for the NEC to meet the challenge is not far off. In June, if plans for a national conference stay on course, the leadership will face the test of an election. •





• Ronnie Kasrils at the SACP rally last year

## Voice from the underground: Mass struggle is the key

*Two senior cadres in residual ANC underground structures, Ronnie Kasrils and another using the pseudonym Mandla Khuzwayo, reject the view of negotiations which downplays the contribution of other forms of struggle. They argue that mass mobilisation and struggle is crucial to achieving a transfer of power to the democratic majority. And they call for a detailed, concrete programme of action under coherent, centralised ANC leadership*

**A**t its December 1990 Consultative Conference, the ANC declared that 'only our organised and militant people can write the final chapter of our struggle'.

The outcome of the conference was a clear statement by the membership and leadership of the movement that a negotiated transfer of power can only occur by increasing mass pressure on the National Party government.

To ensure this, the conference adopted a programme of action designed to make 1991 a year of mass action for the transfer of power to the people. It is imperative that we are able now to translate these paper resolutions into concrete actions.

We argue that, for the liberation movement, gaining and holding the strategic initiative is directly linked to the kind of leadership provided to the mass struggles of our people.

The term 'strategic initiative' implies two things. The first is the ability to relate the issues that are being struggled over to the strategic goal of the movement - the transfer of power to the people. In our situation, virtually all aspects of social and economic life are being contested politically. While all these aspects will be affected by the transfer of power, not all of them are crucial to ensuring that power is actually transferred.

We need to focus our attention primarily on those issues which will open the doors to a transfer of power. We need to be able to determine which struggles we need to fight and win at any point in time and which we can leave to another time. Our strategic goal determines the content, the actual meaning and importance of the issues we are battling over.

Secondly, there is the question of initiative in political struggle: are we on the offensive and actually determining when to fight and on what terms the fight will take place? Holding the initiative has to do with our ability to set the timing and forms our struggle takes. By forms of struggle, we mean the methods of struggle we choose and how these are combined.

The strategic aim of the regime is to ensure the continuation of white minority rule in a new form - that is, the exclusion of the majority of the people from wielding power. One of the ways in which they can best do this is to immobilise the participation of the masses in political struggles.

From this, it follows that the way in which political battles are fought, the form these battles take, is important and closely linked to their content. The initiative also has to do with the timing of



struggles. The side that has the initiative is able to determine when and on which issues to go onto the offensive, and where to retreat in order to rebuild or protect its forces. The side that loses the initiative will be continually forced to respond to the actions of the other side, and never be able to advance and win new positions.

By the strategic initiative we thus mean the ability to take command of a situation in order to determine and control the issues that need to be contested, and the form, timing and content of political struggle.

To determine whether we hold the strategic initiative, we need to look at the weaknesses that emerged in our attempts to provide revolutionary leadership to the masses in 1990. An assessment will enable us to correct the weaknesses which delegates focused on at the Consultative Conference, and lay the basis for an all-round advance of the struggle.

In the months since the Groot Schuur minute, the political situation in the country has changed rapidly. Until August-September 1990 and the terror that was unleashed in the Reef townships, the ANC clearly had the strategic initiative in the negotiations process. The regime was being forced step by step to accede to the process outlined in the Harare Declaration. Since the terror, it is no longer clear whether this is still true.

A number of worrying signs seem to indicate that we are losing the initiative:

- the ANC was unable to protect township residents against the terror;
- the ANC has been unable to hold the regime to the terms of the agreements it has signed. The regime seems able to decide for itself when and how it will implement the Pretoria minute;
- De Klerk has scored a number of international breakthroughs and the overseas anti-apartheid movement is being increasingly marginalised in its respective countries;
- the National Party is increasingly managing to set its timetable as the timetable for negotiations. The regime talks about the process lasting until the next white election;
- our branches and mass organisations are relatively weak and have little effect on the direction of the negotiation process.

A revolutionary vanguard movement aims to lead, to channel and direct the actions of the masses so that spontaneity is avoided or harnessed, and the united strength of the people can be forcefully targeted at the enemy. The vital potential strength of the ANC in the current situation is organised mass action. By developing this strength, we can transform the



• 'Mass action is the only concrete power which the liberation movement possesses against the strength of the state'

negotiations process into a democratic transfer of power to the people. The alternative is a powerless ANC reduced to the role of just another political party vainly attempting to negotiate change with the cards stacked against us.

Many of the recent tactics of the regime, such as the terror, caught us by surprise. At the same time, because of the prevalent orientation to the negotiations process, which has not fully explored the development of all-round mass struggle, we have not made full use of the opportunities that the tactical situation has presented us with.

The negotiation process involves an intense struggle for the strategic and tactical initiative, the moral high ground and international support and pressure. Its intense nature can easily become all-consuming. The danger always exists that struggle in the negotiations process can absorb all our energy and come to eclipse other forms of struggle. This is because:

- Negotiations take up the time and energy of large numbers of our leadership. Key individuals at senior level are forced to concentrate on meetings with the regime and the development of strategies in this area rather than on action at a mass level.
- The danger of the process aborting continually hangs over our heads. Part of the business of maintaining the strategic initiative means keeping the negotiations

process on track. The regime, Inkatha, the media and quasi-liberal forces are continually trying to blame our mass action, when it happens, for placing obstacles in the way of the negotiations process, for putting the process under strain. They seek to infect us with these ideas in the hope that we will become ultra-cautious and shy away from mass action.

- The regime is trying to avoid mass pressure as far as possible. It is trying to get us to accept the notion that it cannot resolve any issues now or change its policies because it does not want to preempt the results of the negotiations.
- The rewards of a successful and 'smooth' negotiations process can be made to look more appealing than 'the high cost of struggle'. This give rise to the inclination to 'give De Klerk a chance'.
- ANC branches are still weak and finding it difficult to give leadership to struggles on the ground. Because the branches are not yet fighting organs of struggle they have not been able to help reorientate the ANC to our people's daily mass struggles.

The only real source of our strength is the masses. Since 1976, and especially in the 1980s, mass struggle has been the key to the growth of the ANC. This is not to downplay the role of the armed struggle, which was seen as secondary to mass struggle. It is our perspective of



## THE FIRST YEAR

mass struggle (linked to armed struggle) and our concrete experience in developing the strategies and tactics of mass mobilisation and organisation that has distinguished the ANC and its allies from other organisations of the oppressed. This has actively drawn the majority of our people to the ANC, to our perspectives of struggle and to our view of the future. Mass struggle has created a vast reservoir of organisational and mobilisational experience amongst tens of thousands of activists and millions of our people.

Through mass action we have achieved significant victories in struggle. The isolation of the tricameral puppets, the destruction of the local council structures in the townships, the abolition of pass laws and influx control, the defiance campaigns against segregated hospitals and beaches, the new Labour Relations Act and the unbanning of the ANC and SACP are just some of the victories won by our people through mass struggle. The late 1980s showed that even under a state of emergency the regime was forced to concede virtually every issue that became the target of coordinated and directed mass action. In the current situation, with the armed struggle suspended, mass action is the only concrete power which the liberation movement possesses against the strength of the state.

If we look objectively at our strength, mass action remains the only pressure we can still exert on the regime. This, however, is not a weakness. In fact it has the potential to become an enormous strength which, if properly deployed, will significantly alter the balance of forces in the negotiations process. As we have argued above, we have a wealth of experience in mass struggle. This experience includes struggles at local, regional and national levels. We have struggled in the past under very adverse conditions. We have experience of organising mass action under a state of emergency, in conditions when our organisations were banned and holding meetings was illegal, and when the security forces had a licence to use any means to destroy our organisations. We managed to survive and advance the struggle under severe difficulties. The potential now exists for struggle without such extreme constraints.

The regime's meeting our preconditions for negotiations should have created the conditions in which mass struggle is both legalised and able to grow. But our experience is that this has not occurred. An opening for mass action was created by the De Klerk faction of the National Party after the 1989 election. They allowed, even encouraged, marches

and other protests in order to make a clear distinction between themselves and the 'PW Botha style of rule', and to try and demonstrate their seriousness to negotiate.

Since the September terror, this space has been closing rapidly. In their propaganda, all forms of mass protest are now, again, being portrayed as violent and destabilising. By encouraging the terror they hoped to scare the liberation movement away from mass action. While our mass action was largely uncoordinated before the terror, since September it seems that we have been put off balance, and mass action has been greatly reduced. It remains to be seen whether the resolutions of the ANC consultative conference will alter this.

**T**he reduction of this space for mass struggle arose out of our own weaknesses. At the same time as demonstrating their seriousness to negotiate, the De Klerk faction was forced to consolidate its political control over the various elements of the state apparatus and win white support for its new policies. It was also still formulating its political direction and strategy, and a number of severe tensions existed in its own ranks, reaching even to the level of the cabinet. It was doubtful whether the new political leadership exercised clear control over security forces. By our own inactivity and organisational weaknesses we allowed this period of uncertainty to pass. De Klerk has consolidated his support within the cabinet and the rest of the National Party. And, crucially, by being allowed to protect the security forces politically during the terror, he has won back support and control over the repressive apparatus of the state. Since the terror the regime has become more confident - even arrogant - about its political programme and is beginning to clearly state its own view of the negotiating process which is significantly different from our own.

What was missing from the whole period was action by the liberation movement to widen the democratic space that De Klerk was forced to create. Since the gap has started to close we have done little to defend the space that did exist. The regime is now free to decide for itself when to allow marches and when to ban them, and it is apparently protecting the activities of the police in harassing and attacking our people through vigilante terror and direct police intimidation. The illegalisation of mass action is a natural tendency for the racist state. By its very nature it lacks legitimacy and hegemony over the oppressed. Five years of emer-

gency rule reduced whatever legitimacy it possessed to ruins. The only way in which it is able to maintain control is through direct force or the threat of force. Sensing the weaknesses on our side the regime strives to press us back and minimise the space in which we act. We have to go on the offensive and expand the legal space.

The perspective of the liberation movement on the process of transition is one that involves the mass of our people in the transfer of power. But first we have to create and win the ability to struggle, free from the constraints that the government is setting on mass struggle and the negotiating process.

Maintaining the strategic initiative must mean that the ANC - and mass struggle under the leadership of the ANC - determines the pace and process of negotiations. It should be borne in mind that negotiations are only a reflection of what is happening on the ground; that the negotiations table is not the real battleground. Legal space still needs to be won for mass action. This is only possible through a combination of mass action to force the space open and negotiations to hold the regime to the democratic process. Our strategies at both levels of struggle need to be coordinated. If we do not coordinate these two areas of struggle we will be led into a situation where we are tied to a negotiating process defined and controlled by the regime.

**I**n agreeing to suspend the armed struggle we were saying that, if certain conditions were assured, there was no longer any need for armed actions. If peaceful mass mobilisation is possible and guaranteed, the suspension would have achieved results. But, if it is not, then the suspension becomes an unacceptable compromise. Thus the rules we need to set and hold the regime to are:

- **All peaceful action is legal:** the regime continually tries to obscure this issue. When peaceful action does take place, the state illegalises it by banning marches and by provocative actions by its security forces. In many cases the police take action which is illegal, but are then staunchly supported by the government. A few days of verbal war then takes place through the media before the issue is lost, only to be repeated again when another clash occurs. The only way out of this vicious circle, which constantly puts us on the defensive, is to put the issue of peaceful protest on the political agenda through mass action, and then to hold the regime, through mass action, to an agreement on this issue. Nelson Mandela's statement that 'mass action is a fundamental prin-



ciple of democracy to be enjoyed by all, even those with the vote', and the decisions of the December conference, must be vigorously struggled for.

- **Freedom of political activity:** the activities of the security police continue unabated. There is no open control over or accountability for their actions. Freedom of political activity and the building of a mass ANC is impossible without open control of the activities of the security police and an end to their hit squads and counter-insurgency tactics.

- **The state must be responsible for the activities of the security forces:** we continue to collect evidence of illegal SAP and SADF activities but we have failed to make the government accountable for this activity. Since collecting affidavits is insufficient the next step must be mass action and protests around these issues.

All these conditions are part of the 'normal democratic process'. That process does not exist at present and it is inconceivable that we can consider negotiation, an interim government or a constituent assembly without these conditions being met. These conditions will not arise out of thin air or from the current state of our negotiations with the regime. We have yet to hold the government to the agreements that they have signed, such as the Pretoria minute. It is unlikely that any other agreements will be worth more than the paper they are written on unless we can exert sufficient pressure to force their implementation. One just needs to consider their flagrant breach of faith in allowing the security police to arrest the 'indemnified' Mac Maharaj or their hypocrisy on the issue of Chris Hani's indemnity.

Numerous documents of the ANC talk about the need to involve the masses in the negotiating process. We need to be clear this will not occur spontaneously. We have the opportunity now, as we begin to build our structures, to orientate our organisation to particular styles of work and struggle. If we do not seize this opportunity, we face the danger of spending years repeating the same mistakes that the MDM made in the past.

The objective conditions for mass action are continually deepening. The economic crisis is getting worse and state services to the oppressed are collapsing. These two tendencies can only deepen in the coming period, sparking off increased mass anger. Spontaneous mass action is continually being thrown up at a local level throughout the country. From the point of view of a revolutionary vanguard movement this activity has particular characteristics:

- **It is spontaneous:** even where ANC



• Mac Maharaj



• Chris Hani

branches exist they are still largely unable to direct this activity, transform it into organisation and win concrete demands through struggle.

- **It is localised:** there is little coordination of mass action between different townships and regions, even where the issues being addressed are identical. This is illustrated by the cutting off of electricity and water to townships. Throughout the Transvaal, organisations are dealing with the same issue, but individually. Localised struggles are easily kept off the national political agenda and are easier for the security forces to handle with impunity.

- **The impact of these struggles is being diffused through negotiations at local level, where we are weakest:** the whole thrust of the regime's political solution is to 'decentralise power' so that the essentials of the present system can be maintained. Because of a lack of coordination we are allowing this process to happen.

These weaknesses can be overcome. In developing mass campaigns and building mass organisation the following are just some of the issues that need to be taken into account:

- **Building organisation without campaigning around concrete issues can change our structures quantitatively, but not qualitatively.** Without clear activities and campaigns in which they can be actively involved, branch membership will remain paper membership. The demands of offensive mass action, struggle and campaigning creates purposeful and powerful organisation. Through campaigning, the structures of organisation are tested and consolidated. Campaigning also tests the leadership of the structures through the setting of concrete goals and tasks, and holds them accountable for their fulfilment. The organisation as a whole - from local to national level - can be united around common goals and perspectives of struggle and develop its identity. Campaigning gives membership tasks and activities to participate in, and harnesses mass spontaneity. And it shows the broad masses the fruits of struggle, so giving impetus to recruitment and development of broader structures of people's power.

- **A concrete and detailed programme of action (POA) is necessary at all levels, but most importantly at national level.** At a national level the POA needs to be based on a few clear slogans which unify the wide range of local and regional issues. The national POA should also time national events, like marches and stayaways, so that they are the culmination of regional and local campaigns. The POA needs to start from what is possible in the regions. It must take into account the potential for the campaign to transform the political situation and develop new levels of struggle. National campaigns should be structured so as to give protection to local activity and to focus intense pressure on the central organs of state. Waves of local struggle are relatively easily channeled into national campaigns. But, without these local waves, national issues will never become the subject of mass organisation.

- **A clear understanding of the different forms of mass struggle needs to be developed.** A tendency has emerged in our ranks to focus on the weapon of stayaways to the exclusion of other forms of protest. Certain forms of mass struggle such as stayaways can be extremely effective in certain circumstances. But, if they are not used tactically and with caution, their effectiveness is blunted. Stayaways need in the main to be the culmination of a campaign linking different forms of struggle. In developing the POA, we need to integrate a combination of meetings, propaganda activity, marches, placard protests, days of action, defiance and stayaways. We also need to develop



## THE FIRST YEAR

creative shows of strength. These could include candlelight protests that were used in the black Christmas campaigns, human chains, one-hour national work stoppages. These forms of protest would need to be phased so that a campaign shows a clear development in the intensity of mass action.

One of the major potential strengths of the ANC is that it is the only national mass-based political force. This gives us the ability to coordinate the timing of events nationally so as to maximise their impact. For example, if huge marches were to be held simultaneously in all the major centres, the impact would be far greater than the sum of all the individual marches.

A plan for the creation of people's self-defence units must be part of this programme. This is the only way to replace spontaneous and inadequate efforts to repulse police and vigilante onslaughts by effective and disciplined means. The right to self-protection by our people must resound throughout the land, and defence committees and structures must be energetically created.

The development of a national POA implies some degree of centralisation and specialisation in organisation and leadership. The extent of centralisation

required can only be worked out in practice and is dependent on the ideological unity of the whole organisation. This was an issue that continually arose in the UDF. But, at the very least, a national campaign coordination structure representative of the ANC, SACP, Cosatu and UDF is necessary in order to provide:

- national publicity and access to the media;
- national propaganda and agitational

### 2 FEBRUARY 1991

## POLITICAL ORGANISATION

### ONE YEAR ON

material addressing particular campaign issues and creating a national 'feel' to the campaign;

- alliance leaders to tour the country, address rallies, participate in marches and protests.

In this article, we have not counterposed mass struggle to the negotiating process. Far from it.

Our movement has always stated that mass struggle is necessary to strengthen the negotiating hand. Negotiations are an additional area of struggle. Just as the

armed struggle, or international solidarity, alone cannot win power, neither can negotiations.

There is and has only been one method of winning freedom, and that is by all-round struggle on all fronts. Negotiations mirror in words the struggle taking place on the ground. They do not win our freedom but codify the victories we have already won on the ground.

Although it might not be fashionable, it is worth quoting Mao Tse Tung: 'You cannot win at the negotiating table what you have not won on the battlefield'. What we win in the arena of mass struggle will be reflected at the negotiating table.

Nor are we pessimistic about the current situation. We feel strongly that the strategic initiative can be seized through centrally directed mass struggle. It is through mass struggle that the ANC and our vital alliance of democratic forces will grow powerful.

The De Klerk government is becoming more and more arrogant and gaining the impression that they can push us around. The intensification of mass struggle will shock them back into reality and lock them into a negotiated agreement for a genuine, democratic transformation. •



Find out how *you* can start a co-op or community business! This 44 page booklet provides basic information on co-ops, how they work, how to go about setting up a co-op and where to get help.

Price: R8.00 to organisations; R5.00 to individuals (this includes packaging and postage within Southern Africa).

### Order Form

I would like to order \_\_\_\_\_ copy/copies of *What is a Co-operative*.

I enclose a cheque/postal order for R \_\_\_\_\_

Name: .....

Address: .....

Please make cheques payable to: Co-operative Planning & Education, and send order to:

COPE  
P.O. Box 93540  
Yeoville  
2143

Tel: 339-6752



# No negotiators - and not many bullets either



2 FEBRUARY 1991  
**POLITICAL ORGANISATION**  
ONE YEAR ON

*The PAC has outflanked the ANC at the levels of radical posture and rhetoric over the past year. But can it produce a serious political programme, gather mass support and occupy centre-stage? Joe Thlooe assesses recent developments in the PAC*

## THE FIRST YEAR

Is the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania ready to take centre stage following its first national congress since it was banned in 1960?

At the congress in December, the PAC called on its national executive council 'to intensify the struggle for liberation on all fronts'. It was also asked to 'appoint by January 31 a campaigns committee to decide on and implement strategies for mass mobilisation in the political, economic, educational and other arenas, with specific attention on campaigns for a constituent assembly and for the unconditional release of political prisoners and return of exiles'.

The PAC was bracing itself for action on a terrain on which the only person with an apparently clear idea of where he was going and how to get there was state president FW de Klerk. It also bolstered its leadership with new faces that suggested a year of action.

Since the government unbanned the organisation, along with the African National Congress and other organisations, a year ago, the ANC has hogged the limelight by moving quickly into talks-about-talks with De Klerk and simultaneously mobilising demonstrations.

Acting president Clarence Mlamli Makwetu opened the PAC congress with a simple exclamation: 'What more can I say except that the hour has come'.

It was an unexciting start - hours behind schedule, with many delegates still on the road to Shareworld just outside Soweto because it was a working Friday.

Some restless youngsters, rebellious members of the PAC's youth wing, the Azanian National Youth Unity (Azanyu), were outside the meeting place, condemning leaders of the external mission who were at the congress after getting temporary indemnity.

The same youngsters also chanted slogans condemning the call for a constituent assembly, chanting 'one negotiator, one bullet'.

It was a tiny, vocal group that did not see the tactical value of the PAC's demand for a constituent assembly, even though it was officially adopted at a congress in Bloemfontein in March last year.

The PAC was reaping the fruits of its radical rhetoric. It was the same group of Azanyu members that had embarrassed the PAC at the funeral of its president Zephania Mothopeng last October, demanding that SACP general-secretary Joe Slovo be evicted from the service.

This group was, however, kept under tight rein and did not disrupt congress proceedings.

The agenda appeared manageable, but the organisers had not reckoned with the effects of an interval of 31 years since the last congress. At the 1959 congress the PAC had decided to launch the anti-pass campaign that culminated in the Sharpeville massacre and the banning of itself and the ANC in 1960.

Thereafter the PAC had gone underground and for decades had operated with its exile headquarters in Dar es Salaam. It was led by a central committee whose chairperson at the time of congress was Johnson Mlambo.

Mothopeng was elected a symbolic president while he was still in prison. He emerged in 1988, sickly but determined to take over the effective reins.

Released on humanitarian grounds because of cancer, Mothopeng defiantly announced that he was carrying on from where he had left off when he was arrested in 1976. He waved the PAC flag inside the country even before the organisation had been unbanned. He became the face of the PAC - a frail but brave face.

Mothopeng was instrumental in creating the Pan Africanist Movement (Pam) in December 1989 to carry the standard for the Africanists. Makwetu was elected as leader of Pam.

There was an uneasy relationship between Pam and the PAC. For one, the PAC was still a banned organisation, committed to conducting an armed struggle against the rulers of this country, while Pam was an overt political party. Some of the problems were ironed out by the unbanning of the PAC and the March 1990 decision of Pam to reconstitute itself as the PAC. This meant that the PAC could surface on the foundations laid by Pam. But there were still relational problems: was the central committee based in Dar es Salaam senior to the national executive committee in Johannesburg? What was the status of the PAC's armed wing, the Azanian People's Liberation Army? And did its armed struggle not incriminate the national executive committee?

The initial solution was to retain the two committees, with the internal PAC responsible for internal political work while the central committee was responsible for the armed struggle and the branches abroad.

The central committee was also responsible for guerilla operations inside the country and recruited its own people internally.

These problems had derived from the PAC's decision to 'continue the struggle on all fronts, with the armed struggle as the principal means'.





• Benny Alexander

The PAC had argued that the preconditions for negotiations with the National Party set out in the Harare Declaration were not adequate. If De Klerk met all of them, he would merely be returning the country to conditions before 1960: before the political organisations were banned, before the State of Emergency was declared, before there were detentions and political trials. More than this was necessary for negotiations. De Klerk had to show clearly he was prepared to democratise the country, said the PAC.

But after Africa and the United Nations had accepted the limited Harare Declaration's preconditions for negotiations, the PAC argued that the liberation movements should not talk to De Klerk until he had met those terms fully.

The PAC said it would talk to him only if he agreed to the creation of a constituent assembly elected on the basis of one person one vote. This position was adopted by the Pam and the PAC executives at a joint meeting in Harare in February last year.

The PAC watched angrily as De Klerk apparently disarmed the ANC and managed to erode the sanctions campaign, even before meeting the preconditions set in Harare.

It got even angrier as subtle pressure was put on it by the international community, including the Frontline States, to talk to De Klerk.

The frail Mothopeng then rallied the youth around him, saying the PAC would not talk to the government.

This radical talk became a source of structural problems within the organisation.

The structure of the organisation took up most of the time of the congress. The constitution that was written at the inaugural congress of the PAC in April 1959 was amended. The congress settled for a compromise: the central committee was incorporated into the national executive council (all the members of the CC were coopted onto the NEC until the next elections in 1992).

There had been some speculation in the media before the conference that the PAC would soften its position and decide to talk to De Klerk following his invitation. But congress merely reiterated earlier policy. It resolved:

- that there was no principle, tactic or policy barring it from seeking a democratic solution to the country's problems;
- that the PAC would not negotiate with the government unless negotiations were preceded by an election for a constituent assembly on the basis of one person one vote on a common voters' roll

in a unitary state;

- that the De Klerk government had failed to create conducive conditions for negotiations as demanded by the United Nations and the international community;

- that the PAC had a mandate from the 'oppressed and dispossessed' to demand that the constitution for 'a free Azania' only be drawn up by a democratically elected constituent assembly;

- that the PAC was prepared to pre-negotiate only the modalities of creating the constituent assembly, that is the date, age of voters, voters' roll, supervision. Any such talks should take place at a neutral venue;

- that the PAC remained committed to continue the struggle for liberation on all fronts, including the armed struggle; and

- that the PAC remained committed to 'the Pan Africanist policy on the return of land and all other resources to the toiling and dispossessed African masses'.

There was very little time left to discuss a programme of action for 1991 and policy documents.

But congress strengthened the executive council and charged it with calling a special congress in the first half of this year to review policy documents.

More urgently it has to develop 'strategies for mass mobilisation'.

Throughout 1990 the PAC was hamstrung by a sickly president, a vice-president who was locked away in the Transkei and was rarely in the public eye, and a publicity secretary who was rarely seen by the media. The burden of running the administration and the publicity fell to secretary general Benny Alexander.

Congress attended to these weaknesses by getting a mixture of the old guard founder members of the PAC, and younger members who included some from 'the class of 1976'.

Makwetu, who turned 62 the day

before the congress started, was confirmed as president. He started his political life in the ANC's Youth League while he was a student at Lovedale in 1948 and was one of the founders of the PAC. He is a farmer in the Transkei. To make up for his remote location, the congress elected the able Dikgang Mosenke (43), as second vice-president. The election of this practising advocate, who has distinguished himself at the bar, will help improve the visibility of the leadership. The first deputy president is former chairperson of the central committee Johnson Mlambo.

The articulate Benny Alexander (36) who came up through the trade union movement, was retained as secretary general. One of the students of 1976, Carter Seleke (35) a founder of Azanyu, was elected assistant secretary. The publicity portfolio went to another advocate, Barney Desai, who was the first PAC exile to return to South Africa. He is based in Cape Town.

In the new executive there is less emphasis on trade unionists and more on technocrats chosen for their knowledge in various fields.

The executive's year opened with a planning workshop over three days, January 11 to 13, at a conference centre near Johannesburg. The PAC intends that 1991 will be a year of action. The only question is the nature of the action.

The PAC believes the ANC compromised the liberation struggle by talking to De Klerk before the Harare preconditions were met, but it saw a glimmer of hope when the ANC affirmed its demand for a constituent assembly.

Feelings within the PAC are that a united front could be created around the demand for a constituent assembly. Azapo and the black consciousness movement generally also support this demand. But the latest ANC call for a multi-party conference has raised doubts in the PAC about the direction the ANC wants to take. The PAC has said that it will not talk to De Klerk until he unilaterally meets the preconditions in the Harare Declaration and agrees to a constituent assembly. Until those conditions are met, it will refuse to participate in a multi-party conference where the National Party is represented.

There is a possibility that the differences could be ironed out, and a united front of the liberation movements could still be created to bring coherence to liberatory politics here.

If this fails there will be a gigantic battle for support this year as the PAC and the ANC launch their programmes for mass action. •



If there is one person who has long symbolised the 'other left' in South African opposition politics, it must be the urbane and well-spoken Neville Alexander - academic, educationist and author.

A master of political debate, he has, in the past, been referred to by detractors in the MDM-affiliated organisations as an 'intellectual terrorist' or criticised for having no "base" among ordinary people. He is nevertheless acknowledged as perhaps the most articulate dissident voice to the left of the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party. He is also a man with a history of engagement in politics: he spent 11 years on Robben Island after planning the launch of a (failed) guerilla group; he was house-arrested and banned; and, in the past decade, he has been active both in the National Forum (a somewhat peculiar alliance forged between black consciousness groups and the left-wing Cape Action League) and in alternative education structures such as Sached.

Last Easter, Alexander was a key figure in the formation of a new opposition grouping, the Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action (Wosa). Wosa grew out of the National Forum, which developed into an alternative to the United Democratic Front in 1983. More precisely, Wosa grew out of a split in the National Forum between, on the one hand, Azapo and other black consciousness groups and, on the other, the Cape Action League and its allies, principally the Transvaal-based Action Youth and the Uppington-based Mayibuye. This was not particularly surprising, as the NF has always been held together in shaky unity more by a common disdain for the non-racial, 'populist' UDF than by ideological concurrence.

'The most serious difference between us and Azapo was over non-racialism,' explains Alexander, now chairperson of Wosa. 'They have always said they supported non-racialism, but they also said that whites were part of the problem. For us, we see non-racialism as a principle. It is not only a goal, but must be part of the method'.

Wosa espouses what it calls 'independent socialism' and independent working class organisation. With respect to the ANC, Azapo and the PAC, Wosa acknowledges that these parties' programmes contain 'elements of socialism'.

"But the multi-class nature of these organisations inevitably means that working-class interests must be compromised in order to reach an accommodation with other classes", said the organi-



• A Wosa banner at last year's Peace and Freedom March in Johannesburg

# Who's left? Who's right?

**Does the Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action aim to be a serious political force or merely a thorn in the side of the left? Pippa Green spoke to Neville Alexander and Jean Pease in an attempt to find out**

sation in the first issue of its newspaper, *Vukani Basebenzi*.

Of the SACP, it says that it is unable to give leadership to the working class 'at a crucial time in our history' because of its 'domination' by the ANC: 'The SACP still holds the view that the abolition of apartheid must precede the socialist transformation of society. We are not sure how they would interpret this position at the moment but we certainly hold the view that apartheid and capitalism are inseparable. The root and fruit of racial discrimination is profit', opines *Vukani Basebenzi*.

For all its ideological coherence, though, Wosa is, by its own admission, tiny and dominated not by an 'independ-

ent working class' but by middle-class intellectuals. 'In terms of class origin, less than 50 percent of our members are workers, despite the name', says Alexander candidly.

Of its 500 or so members, most are in the Western Cape, traditionally the bastion of left-wing opposition groups, although there are also clusters of members in the Transvaal and northern Cape, where Wosa has set up regional offices. Their base in Cape Town is the sports movement (Frankie van der Horst, former president of Sacos is on Wosa's executive committee), among teachers, many of whom had roots in the Unity Movement before becoming frustrated with its purer-than-thou ideological



## THE FIRST YEAR



• Neville Alexander

### 2 FEBRUARY 1991 **POLITICAL ORGANISATION** ONE YEAR ON

later became known simply as the 'Disorderly Committee', marked the first major and open cleavage between those organisations that eventually formed the UDF and those that went into CAL.

In a sense Pease is right. Alexander, for instance, from his Sached offices, challenged the 'liberation before education' slogan long before it became politically fashionable to do so. Today, Alexander warns of impending civil war unless a constituent assembly is elected on the basis of one person one vote. He warns of a military government within the next two years, the aim of which 'will be to prevent a right-wing takeover and left-wing radicalism'.

So what advice does he have for the ANC, which is the major player on the anti-apartheid field? Should it continue talks with the government, for instance: 'We are not, in principle, opposed to negotiations, but we are not at all interested in them. They are a field of contestation, but the only legitimate form of negotiations is over the right to elect a constituent assembly'.

Could the ANC win this demand? No, says Alexander. The government will not concede because it is negotiating from a position of strength, while the ANC is at the table because it has no other option. Unrest has been confined to the townships; the Soviet Union and Eastern bloc have more or less withdrawn support for the ANC; and sanctions, he says, were always a 'side issue': 'The government realised that this was the moment to catch the liberation movement at its weakest, when it was off its guard'.

At any rate, says Alexander, racial oppression in South Africa is an 'historic, not an episodic phenomenon' - like the intifadah in the occupied territories in Palestine/Israel, not like Iraq's invasion

of Kuwait - and cannot simply be negotiated away.

The analysis is not empty. The problem is, though, not Wosa's degree of prescience, but their ability to make themselves heard, to make some mark on the politics of the day. There are distinct elements within Cosatu, for instance, and within the ANC, who are articulating the same views, but who nevertheless would not be drawn to Wosa's exclusive style of organisation. The other problem, of course, is that many black people in this country are simply too desperate for change to heed the warnings about negotiations, unless they can see a clear alternative path. Alexander is quick to point out that 'workers' interest should not be sacrificed on the altar of peace or 'petty-bourgeois aspiration', but there seem to be plenty of workers (and others - peasants, squatters, and the unemployed) who would welcome a respite from the daily violence raging through the country.

What impact has Wosa really made on South Africa since its inception last year? The organisation's ideas do have some resonance among intellectual activists in the Western Cape - its newspaper, *Vukani Basebenzi* is reportedly distributed fairly widely on the campus of the University of The Western Cape - and in pockets among the trade unions, particularly Nactu.

But it is in no sense a popular organisation. Why, I asked Alexander, did the ANC for all its foibles have such widespread appeal? Two reasons, he replied: one was the organisation's armed propaganda. 'Umkhonto weSizwe is really the only organisation that has the image of a guerilla fighter against repression. And for youth, who since 1976 have become totally alienated, those fighters have become role models'. The other reason presumes a degree of conspiracy: 'The availability of resources', says Alexander. 'Essentially, the ANC has a reformist message.'

'ANC policy has consistently been to talk to the government the moment it (the government) is ready. That fact has made it possible for them to attract money, especially from overseas which in turn has made it possible for them to have thousands of organisers, directly and indirectly'.

As Wosa is unlikely to produce any armed heroes, nor indeed to attract fistfuls of dollars, it is unlikely, too, to attain the stature of the ANC. Its major role is one that it is probably quite resigned to: to be, at best, a left-wing conscience of the anti-apartheid movement, a minor discomfort on the ANC's left side. •

stance, and, says Alexander, it now has set up a labour committee with links with the unions. 'Our biggest weakness is among the youth', he confides. Whether Wosa will extend substantially beyond Cape Town is not clear.

As Alexander himself points out, the 'other left' has always been more secure in the Cape for two reasons: one is its longer 'modern' political tradition. The other is that the large 'coloured' population has diluted the historical impact of African nationalism. 'In a deep psychological sense, at least until the rise of black consciousness, most "coloureds" were more pro-white than pro-black', says Alexander. What is clear, though, is that Wosa does not much care for a place in the head-counting competition in which most other political parties are immersed. Nor does it have any illusions that the vision it has of the future will be translated soon into political reality. Independent socialists are a minority in the South African political stream, admits Alexander. In a world context, the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe has put the socialist dream on hold 'even in South Africa despite the fact that the base for socialism exists because of the close correlation between capitalism and racism'.

Moreover, despite its attempts to forge links with the labour movement, Wosa operates much more as if it were an exclusive club, than a party out to mobilise the recalcitrant masses. Membership is by application only, and only those deemed to be loyal socialists will be admitted into the ranks. 'If we just recruit people off the streets, we're going to be sitting with a lot of problems', says Alexander.

A minority grouping with no obvious growth area, what impact will an organisation such as Wosa have on the politics of the moment?

Jean Pease, who is one of the executive of Wosa is optimistic: 'Wosa, like CAL, has an influence out of proportion to its numbers. Take the education field, for instance - and in many other cases our analysis is so prophetic'.

Pease, a teacher by training, was vice-president of the Western Cape Teachers Union during the height of the Cape boycotts in the mid-1980s, when she was detained under the 1985 state of emergency. She was also a member of the aptly named Disorderly Bills Action Committee, a perilous alliance between the 'other left' organisations and the Congress-leaning civics and trade unions, which was formed to fight Koornhof's notorious influx-control bills. The demise of the committee, which



# Azapo: From fringe to fossil?

**T**he influence of the Azanian People's Organisation (Azapo) has been whittled down steadily in the last decade by the departure from its ranks of two waves of political emigrants. The first exodus started in the early 1980s when Azapo and black consciousness cadres were won over to the Freedom Charter by ANC stalwarts operating within the United Democratic Front and by new converts to the ANC-UDF nexus. The second, smaller migration took place towards the end of the 1980s with the revival of Africanism.

It was against that background that Azapo, as the premier vehicle of black consciousness within South Africa, met in Cape Town last year for its annual congress. It elected a new president, the third in recent years, Pandelani Nefolovhodwe, a contemporary of the martyred Steve Biko and a former Robben Island prisoner.

Azapo took a number of critical decisions at its Cape Town congress. It reaffirmed its opposition to negotiations with the government, demanded that the task of formulating a new, non-racial constitution be assigned to a constituent assembly elected on a one person one vote basis, and committed itself to promote a united front between itself and its co-liberation movements, the ANC and PAC.

Linked to Azapo's propagation of a united front is its opposition to 'sectarianism' in the liberation movement - the attempt by one component of the liberation movement always to put its interests above those of the broader movement. Azapo, Nefolovhodwe made clear in an interview after his election, mandated itself with an additional task: safeguarding the liberation struggle against the machinations of its enemies and betrayal from within.

Is it with these developments in mind that a vital question must be posed: does Azapo still have enough influence to make a positive impact in the critical months ahead or is it destined to issue increasingly radical statements to an audience which is no longer ready to listen? The answer depends to a large extent on Azapo.

If it sets itself at odds with the ANC and PAC, it is likely to find itself on the sidelines, having to chorus militant slogans to itself.

If it adopts an ideologically pure position while scoffing at its rivals, particularly the ANC, for fraternising with 'enemy forces', meaning talking to the

*The Azanian People's Organisation sees one of its major tasks as 'safeguarding the liberation struggle against the machinations of its enemies and betrayal from within'. Patrick Laurence looks at what this means for South Africa's black consciousness movement, and how it relates to other liberation movements*

2 FEBRUARY 1991  
**POLITICAL ORGANISATION**  
 ONE YEAR ON



De Klerk government or 'bantustan leaders', it may find itself fossilised in the past.

Strapped for funds, confronted by powerful rivals and faced with a measure of dissent in its own ranks - in December two of its Natal leaders, Imran Moosa and Monwabisi Vuza, broke away to form the 'Revolutionary People's Movement' - Azapo faces a difficult future.

Azapo's commitment to the idea of a united front finds an echo in the ANC and PAC. Both espouse the notion of forming a patriotic front.

Azapo has already worked constructively toward that end. It organised two major unity conferences last year and met with the ANC four times in an attempt to resolve differences and to end fighting between its cadres and those of the ANC on the West Rand.

Nefolovhodwe believes one of the principal objectives in calling for a patriotic front is for the liberation movements to agree on a minimum set of demands. He sees a minimum agenda of demands as the best guarantee against 'betrayal', unwitting or deliberate, of the liberation movement by one of its three organisations.

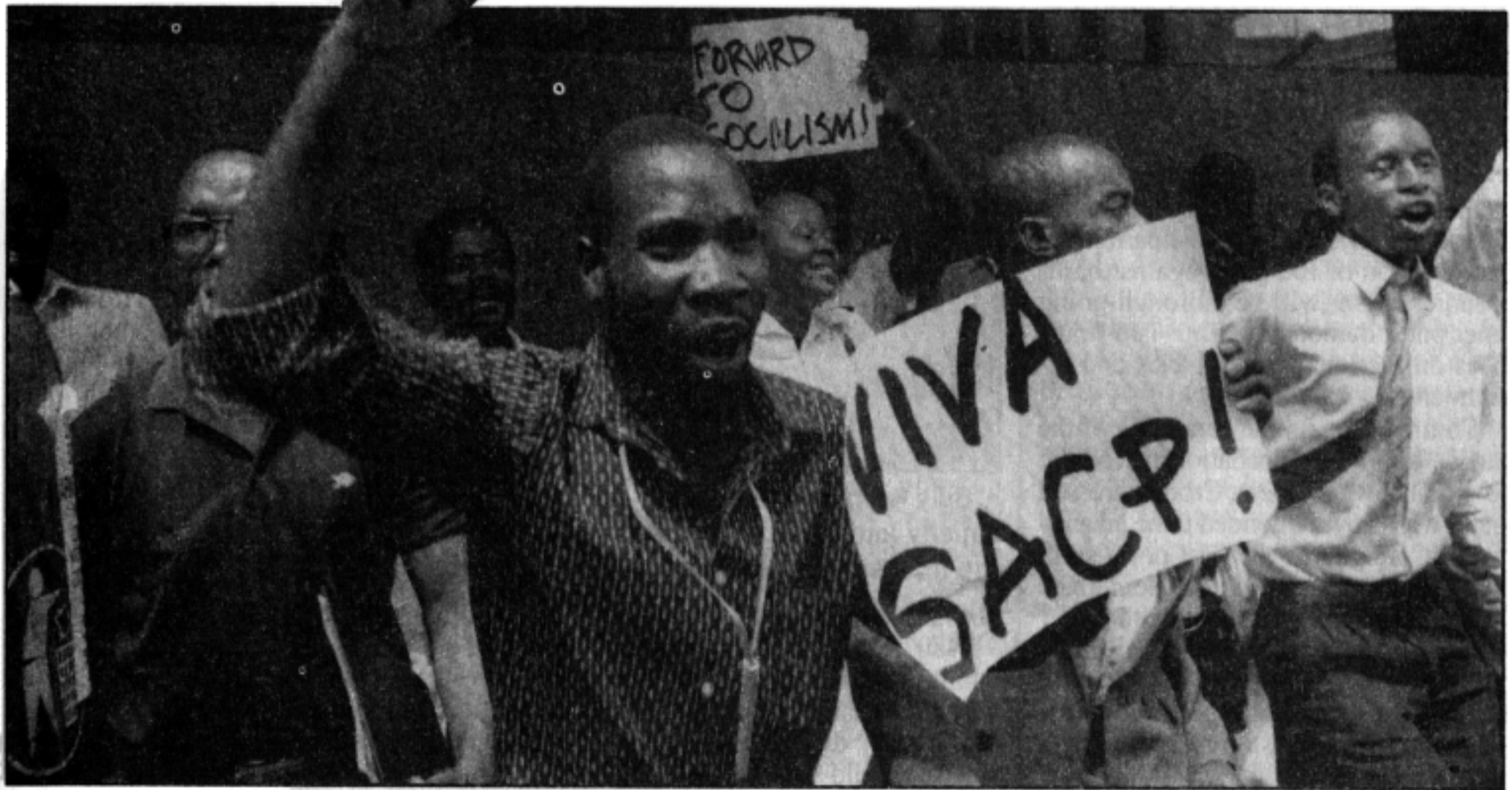
If Azapo attempts to tie the hands of its co-liberation movements by rhetorical pronouncements rather than rational persuasion, conflict lies ahead.

Azapo has already rejected the ANC's call for an all-party congress as one 'motivated by factors external to the ranks of our people', insinuating that it emanated from De Klerk. It has similarly dismissed the idea of even a tactical alliance with forces operating within government-approved institutions, declaring: 'To regard bantustans and tricameral parties as not falling within the government machinery of oppression is a betrayal of all those compatriots who died fighting against these dummy institutions'.

The second statement seems to put Azapo in discord with the PAC. The PAC, it will be recalled, welcomed Inkatha envoys at Zephania Mothopeng's funeral in November, justifying its decision with the slogan: 'Peace among the Africans. War against the enemy'.

Azapo's stand on these two cardinal issues suggest that Azapo may be in the process of immobilising itself, and estranging itself from potential allies, for the sake of ideological purity and rhetorical indulgence. It is not too late, however, for it to change course. •





• Celebrations marked the unbanning of the SACP last February. A year later, the Party faces the prospect of factions and tendencies attempting to redefine its political direction

# Learning to live with the factions within

**W**hile socialists and the communist movement are having a tough time surviving in other countries, in South Africa there is considerable support for both. Among local socialists, the South African Communist Party (SACP) appears supreme; other socialist groupings do not currently appear to present any significant challenge to it.

But with this support and the expectation that the SACP should act as a unifier of the left come several problems. One is entryism. How will the party deal with attempts to redirect the organisation along a different path? Does unifying the left mean that socialists with their own programmes and agendas will be welcomed as members of the party? Does it mean that party members will be allowed to form factions and tendencies to agitate for their particular views? What will be the character and role of the party in this new period of legality?

'It is party members who will act as watchdogs of the organisation', believes SACP Internal leadership Group mem-

2 FEBRUARY 1991

## POLITICAL ORGANISATION

ONE YEAR ON

*By opening its ranks to a broad range of socialists, the SACP could be faced with attempts at 'entryism' — tendencies within the Party agitating for a particular view. A special correspondent looks at the implications*

ber Billy Nair. 'This applies also to dealing with entryism. I would define entryism as an attempt to work within an organisation, such as the SACP or ANC, but with a hidden agenda. Entryism is usually carried out by a narrow conspiratorial grouping which has its own agenda but which is cut adrift from the mainstream of thinking and struggles of the people. Such a grouping finds itself at odds with the mass of the people'.

Nair argues that it is impossible to engage in 'mass work and at the same

time remain aloof as a theoretical 'guru'. Involvement in mass activity absorbs the entryist into the organisation. It imposes a greater degree of realism and flexibility on their application of abstract theory to struggle.

Nair's view is that the party is popular today 'because it has been able to attune itself to people's day-to-day struggles'. Almost irrespective of the agenda of an organisation, people want solutions to their day-to-day problems. If an organisation is unable to deliver, it will lose people's support and involvement, he believes. The SACP continues to be guided by this, among other, considerations.

Others who had stuck to theory as dogma had 'always ended up losing contact with the people', said Nair, recalling struggles past.

For the party's official spokesperson and National SACP internal leadership group member, Jeremy Cronin, entryism is an anti-democratic conspiracy by a faction or network. Said Cronin: 'The conspiracy is directed, not against the regime, but against popular organisa-



## THE FIRST YEAR

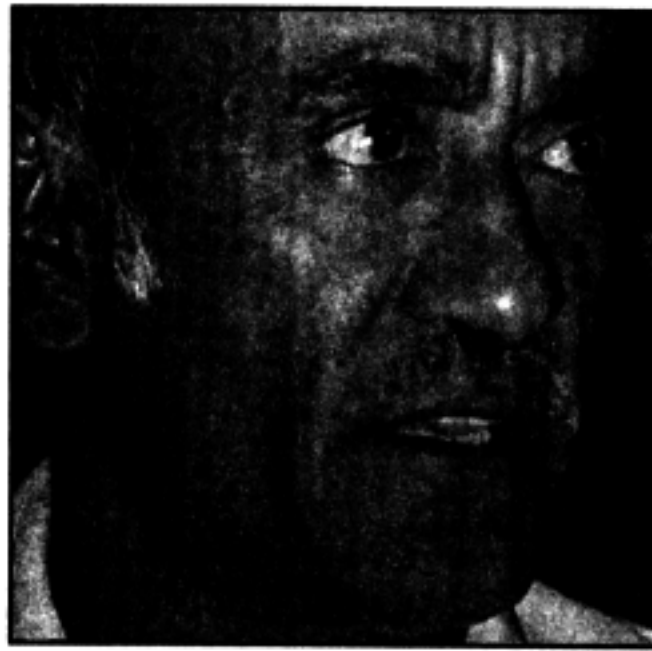
tions. Entryists attempt to seize the commanding heights of an existing organisation - usually one with a mass following. In other words, entryism is essentially parasitic'.

His view is that entryism can best be dealt with if the party ensures it operates democratically: 'In the new situation, the best weapon of the party against hard-nosed entryism will be thorough-going inner party democracy. Entryism flourishes on factionalism, rivalries and resentments'.

Commenting on the scrapping of the party's six-month probation period for potential new members, Cronin stressed that it was 'never intended to be an anti-entryist safeguard - at least not a safeguard against left entryism'. He said the probation period had been intended:

- to protect the party against enemy infiltration;
- to give the recruit a chance to consider the then-dangerous step of becoming a party member;
- and to provide the recruit with a basic ideological course.

Nair echoed this view: 'The probation period was started in around 1953, due to the illegality of the party. It involved members being introduced to the party. They also had to go through a theoretical and practical programme of work in the organisation. It was necessary to have a member who satisfied security requirements. Now that the party is legal, we don't have that problem anymore. The theoretical education and practical work will still take place - but after a person



• **Billy Nair: entryists are usually 'cut off from the mood of the mainstream of the people'**

becomes a member'.

Nair said that while the party was taking a mass character, it would still play a vanguard role. The mass character of the party did not mean that 'all and sundry' could join, as its constitution, rules and code of conduct still applied.

Cronin added that the party hoped to draw (and was already beginning to draw) into its ranks those who accepted broad party policy and who were prepared to be active in the pursuit of party objectives.

'We are seeing a fair diversity of comrades coming from different left traditions to the party. This is to be greatly welcomed', Cronin added.

'The scrapping of the probation period in the new situation can only have overwhelming positive consequences. The SACP is not the property of its pre-

February 2 membership. We need to build a strong party that can really live up to its role as a working-class vanguard. To do this it is essential we draw on the skills and experience of a great range of comrades who have emerged out of the trade union movement, out of the mass democratic movement and also those who have helped to develop a relatively dynamic Marxist intellectual culture over the last 15 years in our country', he added.

On the issue of factions, Cronin noted that the re-emergence of the party and ANC from a long period of illegality created difficulties which had to be overcome: 'We are trying to unify different currents - exiles, prison graduates, fighters from the underground and many tens of thousands of activists who developed in mass democratic formations.

'It seems to me that a prime organisational task at present lies in deepening and consolidating organisational unity. In the course of 1990 the ANC-led alliance failed to adequately link the negotiating process to mass struggle. Greater unity of purpose, a clearer programme of action, greater democratic discipline - these, I believe, are the imperatives', added Cronin.

'Tolerance of faction formation within the ANC or within the party would, at this point in time, I believe, undermine what is most crucially required to dislodge the enemy, to turn his tactical retreat into a full-scale rout.

'At the same time, it is also important that we begin to develop a political cul-

# Trotsky, entryism and the Marxist

By Devan Pillay

**O**f all the groupings in South Africa which are inspired by the political perspective of the Soviet leader Leon Trotsky, the self-styled 'Marxist Workers' Tendency of the African National Congress' (MWT) holds closest to the principles of 'entryism'. Its whole existence as a political force is based on the understanding that the struggle for socialism will not be won by tiny sects swimming against the dominant current of opposition. Instead, these mass formations have to be entered by self-conscious Marxist revolutionaries, and won over to a socialist politics.

The MWT was formed in exile during the 1970s, and was active in Sactu and the ANC. From its inception it was anti-Stalinist. It followed the classic Trotskyist line that the Soviet Union after the death

2 FEBRUARY 1991  
**POLITICAL ORGANISATION**  
ONE YEAR ON

of Lenin became a 'deformed workers' state', and that the new ruling class, the Soviet bureaucracy, had to be overthrown by the working class. Therefore, like its sister (or mother) body in Britain, the Militant Tendency, the MWT was strongly opposed to Moscow-aligned communist parties, who they believed had abandoned 'true' Marxism in deference to Soviet interests.

By entering Sactu and the ANC in exile, the MWT aimed to inject a militant socialist perspective into the movement, and draw 'sincere Marxists' away from the SACP. But in doing so they incurred

the wrath of the ANC leadership, and in 1979 four leading members - including two prominent unionists and a reknowned academic - were suspended.

During the 1980s the MWT continued to argue forcefully, through its mouth-piece *Inqaba Ya Basebenzi*, for militant socialist policies within the ANC and the UDF. Its members joined UDF-affiliated youth groups in Cape Town and other places, and some held positions in various Cosatu affiliates around the country. A few years ago they received national prominence when Buthelezi condemned their advocacy of militant struggle against Inkatha in Natal. Last year Cosatu's TGWU expressed unhappiness about the way MWT members allegedly intervened in the Putco bus-drivers strike, accusing them of undermining union structures.



## THE FIRST YEAR

ture of much greater tolerance and multi-partyism. So, while I think permitting factions within the party would be wrong, I think we must all certainly explore unity in practical action with a wide range of progressive political formations'.

Cronin stressed that outlawing factions should 'not be confused with intolerance of intra-party differences and the right to freely explore, express, debate and criticise on party platforms and within party organs'. All of the latter needed to be guaranteed and safeguarded.

Nair agreed with this view: 'While the party welcomes debate among members', he said, 'it will not allow members to operate as a bloc or faction. All socialists are free to join the party, provided they adhere to party procedure. Factions within the party cannot build unity. They would destroy the unity and coherence of the organisation'.

**T**hese views are similar to the attitude taken by one of Cosatu's largest member unions to political affiliation among its members and officials. The National Union of Metalworkers of SA (Numsa) recently passed the following resolution dealing with membership of political organisations: 'Numsa members and officials are free to belong to a political party of their choice ... Numsa members and officials must participate in ... debates as individuals. The union will not allow members or officials to participate in debates as a bloc. Numsa will not accept the development of party political blocs within the union'.

This compares with the approach of the Bolsheviks to factions in a resolution they adopted in 1921. This was a period in which the revolutionary forces were struggling to rebuild their war-ravaged country. At a party congress in March 1921, after an uprising by some of the staunchest supporters of the revolution - the Kronstadt sailors - the Bolsheviks passed a resolution banning factions in the party. The resolution, supported by Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin, said that party members could discuss issues, but not as groups with their own platforms. Defeated proposals could not be defended within the party and once a decision had been taken, all had to abide by it. Party members who went against this resolution could be expelled.

On the party's current attempts to combine elements of mass and vanguard approaches, Cronin offered a distinction between vanguardism and the vanguard party: 'Every organisational form or strategic approach carries with it its own inherent, potential dangers and caricatures. Trade unions need always to guard their flanks against syndicalism and economism. A revolutionary army needs always to be vigilant against militarism. Mass organisations need to guard against tendencies to populism, and so on.

'None of these tendencies is an argument in principle against the relevant organisational form or strategic approach. I would argue that vanguardism and the vanguard party stand in the same relationship. Vanguardism is always possible, but is not a necessary consequence

of a vanguard party'.

He defined vanguardism as a 'narrow elitism, dogmatism, arrogance, and, above all, a manipulative cabalistic approach towards other organisations and towards the working masses at large'.

In contrast, the original Leninist conception of the vanguard party was of a highly disciplined organisation of the most committed and tested professional revolutionaries. 'The reason why the organisation took a vanguard form was because of the nature of the strategic task facing the working class. The capitalists had a highly centralised and ruthless state apparatus. To make the revolution, large sprawling mass organisations were regarded as essential but not enough. The working class needed a vanguard force, capable of providing leadership, capable of planning, organising and outwitting the class enemy, capable of surviving onslaughts', Cronin said.

He added that the strengths of this kind of class organisation were clearly seen in the period of anti-fascist resistance in Nazi-occupied Europe during the World War II. But it was not only their tight, disciplined organisation which provided their strength. An important aspect was also their close relationship to various mass organisations and patriotic formations.

Cronin asserted that debate around mass or vanguard party formations, like any other organisational or strategic question, had to be related to specific, concrete situations. 'In South Africa at present we have a unique set of circumstances', he said. 'There is a relatively substantial support for socialism and, indeed, for communism and the communist party. To do justice to this support we cannot maintain a party with a few hundred members. At the same time our party is in longstanding alliance with a revolutionary national liberation organisation, whose general leadership of the present national democratic struggle our party recognises and affirms.

'This permits a certain division of labour between our party and the ANC and, for that matter, Cosatu. The same strategic and even electoral type imperatives in regard to building a massive membership in a relatively short space of time that apply to the ANC are not such strong considerations in our case. On the other hand, there is an enormous amount of work to be done by way of ideological and general cadre development. The whole alliance needs this kind of assistance. We believe that the party, operating as a more streamlined, more coherent organisation, can devote more focussed attention to this area', said Cronin. •

## Workers' Tendency

After the unbanning of the ANC and SACP, the MWT, unlike other left groups like Wosa (see p 16), continue to insist that the struggle for socialism can only be won through the ANC.

At first glance this position does not seem any different to that of the SACP. However, unlike the SACP, which wants the ANC to retain its broad, inclusive character (while the party becomes the mass vanguard of the working class) the MWT wants to transform the ANC into a mass socialist party. For this reason the MWT is likely to continue to argue that Marxists should shun the SACP and work within the ANC.

Besides the MWT and Wosa (many of whose members are apparently not averse to joining the SACP, if it 'proves' to have genuinely ditched its 'Stalinist' past), the other Trotskyist-inspired groupings seem

to have decided to enter the SACP. Whether they will adopt a 'hardnosed' form of entryism (of which the MWT has been accused in relation to the ANC) or whether they seek to influence the party as loyal and committed members who respect the democratic process, remains to be seen.

Whichever approach is adopted by entryists, the attitudes of SACP leaders Billy Nair and Jeremy Cronin towards them (see main article) deserve to be echoed: engaging in witch-hunts or purges, and forming counter-factions, destroys organisation. Only 'thoroughgoing inner party democracy' and mass activity will effectively expose those who really have secret agendas and narrowly-conceived ambitions. The basis exists for building broad unity amongst all serious and sincere socialists. •





• Raymond Suttner: 'If you want power, why should you ask for dual power?'

2 FEBRUARY 1991  
**POLITICAL ORGANISATION**  
 ONE YEAR ON

*The ANC's campaign for an interim government is, according to some in the ANC, 'the most radical demand we can make at this point in time'. Jo-Anne Collinge looks at the question of an interim government, and in particular how the ANC perceives this demand being taken up*

# Waiting for the great leap forward

**T**he demand from the democratic movement for an interim government is almost inevitably accompanied by the observation that 'the National Party can't be both player and referee' in the transitional phase.

What is really meant is that the National Party can't be the *only* party with a claim to this dual role. In short, every party of substance should enjoy this privilege of being both player and referee - including the African National Congress.

It may seem an unimaginable stride from liberation movement to joint administrative authority. The ANC would be at once a participant in a multi-party government where it would have to achieve at least a measure of consensus with other participants. And it would be in combat with many of these same parties across the negotiating table, depending - as ever - on evident mass support to

press home its demands.

The phase of interim government could well be a supreme balancing act for the ANC, reconciling the demands of the exercise of state power with the mobilisation of popular power. Whether the ANC falls off the highwire depends, to some degree, on how the structure of interim government is conceived.

Joel Netshitenzhe of the ANC's department of information and publicity warns of the danger that could result from being seen to administer elements of apartheid.

He is quick to add that it is precisely for this reason that the abolition of apartheid statutes and the enshrinement of basic freedoms - perhaps in an interim Bill of Rights - must be regarded as elements of interim government which the ANC cannot afford to concede.

An interim government is certainly not - in the eyes of Netshitenzhe and



## THE FIRST YEAR

other figures in the democratic movement - just any structure where the ANC joins the National Party (and others) to exercise a form of rule by decree.

Its composition, the range of its powers, the timing of its introduction within the transitional process and its relationship to the armed forces are just some factors they take into account.

Although the ANC has not yet reached an agreed definition of interim government, it is clear that the liberation movement does not expect that an interim government would be secured through the ballot box - although it does foresee a sovereign body, replacing (not supplementing) the tri-cameral parliament.

Raymond Suttner, head of the ANC's department of political education, sees an interim government being created after there is agreement on the objectives (of negotiation) as the Harare Declaration envisages. But, during this process, says Suttner, struggles will be going on 'in the streets, at the negotiating table, in the factories', and these struggles will partly determine the composition of this interim government. He considers it will also depend on an assessment of the objective situation.

In the United Nations, he points out, the five permanent members of the security council hold a particularly strong position: 'They put them there, they created a situation of inequality because they felt that those five had a major contribution to make to peace and to avert war'.

Argues Suttner, there are three key characteristics to interim government: Effectivity ('you don't want an interim government that is unable to govern'), representivity ('of the South African people' as a whole) and legitimacy.

It is the question of legitimacy which renders the demand for an interim government, in Suttner's words, 'the most radical demand that you can make at this point in time', because it implies the removal of the present government and presupposes its illegitimacy.

He adds that an interim government would do much more than simply ensure free and fair elections for a constituent assembly and/or the first democratic government. While it should not have a whole

social programme, 'it must be part of the process of transfer of power to the people'.

'One of its first jobs is to dismantle existing apartheid laws', he adds.

For Netshitenzhe, there are certain essentials that are implied by the very words 'interim government'. He insists that it is a structure with basic mandates to supervise the transition. These must allow free political activity for all parties and should ensure impartiality and fairness at all levels. It is these very qualities that would reduce for the ANC the tensions between its role as administrator and its role as a mass-based liberation movement.

of political prisoners - and other measures - negotiations will not be among 'forces that are able, freely and as equals, to engage in political activity'.

At the December consultative conference, a 30 April deadline was set for the National Party government to carry out the agreements concluded in the Pretoria Minute regarding the removal of obstacles to negotiation. Failing that, the ANC said, it would reconsider its participation in the negotiation process.

Suttner suggests that failure of the government to meet this deadline might provide the ANC with an opportunity to tactically link the demands for removal of obstacles and the setting up of an interim government.

It is possible simultaneously to make the demands for both the removal of obstacles and for an interim government, Suttner suggests. And, he adds, if the April 30 deadline were to be ignored, then maybe 'you pull out (of talks), go to the streets and demand that this government depart from the scene and grant an interim government'.

'That's the situation in which interim government often occurs - as it did in Eastern Europe', adds Suttner.

The mention of Eastern Europe invites the question: what is the nature of popular support for the liberation movements? And what is its strength?

Netshitenzhe discerns elements of people's power in a number of phenomena:

- the extent to which organs of power of the apartheid state have been destroyed by popular struggle;
- the numerical strength of the formations of the mass democratic movement - including the ANC, Cosatu, the civics - and their ability to 'engage in action and achieve their demands';
- the 'popular soldiers' rising' in the Transkei (and perhaps other bantustans) and the existence of ANC-aligned KaNgwane;
- local level negotiations - such as those engaged in by the Soweto People's Delegation;
- and, tentatively, the very practice of government consultation with the ANC before the implementation of various measures.



For Netshitenzhe, therefore - though an interim government promises a share in sovereign power - the removal of obstacles to negotiations must precede the setting up of a transitional government.

Yes, he readily concedes, it is the ANC's impotence in the phase of talks about talks that has led to the frustration of the working group on amnesty and indemnity. It was left to the apartheid government alone to actually implement agreements on the return of exiles and the release of political prisoners. Yes, it was a similar lack of power over the armed forces that meant that participation in joint ANC/SAP monitoring groups on violence was often (though not always) fruitless - and which led to delegates to the December consultative conference rejecting continued participation in this exercise. But, he argues, the answer is not simply to grab a slice of power quickly and at any cost.

Without the removal of repressive legislation, an end to the 'formal and informal' state of emergency, the freedom of all parties to consult their memberships, the return of exiles and release



The sum of all these factors is anybody's guess. But a useful reference point is Netshitenzhe's assessment that the democratic forces never came within reach of a situation of dual power.

'My own understanding of dual power would be that a relatively equal balance of power (would exist) between the democratic forces and the organs of power of the government.

'And although in a number of areas people might have destroyed community councils and set up street committees, these have not actually addressed the seat of power, which is white South Africa', he argues.

Useful though the concept of dual power might be as a yardstick of the movement's relative strength, its brief (and very partially appreciated) flowering as a strategic goal seems to have lost its relevance. Suttner puts it succinctly: 'If you want power, why should you ask for dual power?' Suttner has already made it clear that this 'request' for state power - even in the interim - is predicated largely on increased popular power.

While Suttner predicts that 1991 will be the ANC's 'year of the big leap forward' organisationally, in which the tedious groundwork of 1990 will begin to bear fruit, Mayibuye looks soberly at 'whether we can use the objective strength (of the democratic forces) to our advantage'.

He foresees mass protest as an important element of the campaign for an interim government, perhaps coupled with new formulations of ungovernability, patterned in the politics-of-refusal. 'If we use our power we should be able to demonstrate to this government that without the people's consent they cannot govern'.

Assuming that formal state power is attainable within an interim government, how does the ANC ensure that these formal powers become real authority?

Suttner observes that the potential for outright co-optation and 'taking responsibility without any authority' - as the joint working groups and violence monitoring structures have been forced to do - does not exist once an interim government is agreed, provided the apartheid government is dissolved. 'The problem is not one of co-optation but of frustration of our objectives', particularly from elements within the security establishment.

Even with the transitional government constituting a sovereign authority to which the armed forces would be accountable, there could be serious problems in compelling the armed forces to cease acting as apartheid's guardians and enforcers. It may well be that some form

**'If the April 30 deadline were to be ignored, then maybe you pull out of talks, go to the streets and demand that this government depart from the scene and grant an interim government'**

2 FEBRUARY 1991  
**POLITICAL ORGANISATION**  
ONE YEAR ON

of international monitoring is desirable - 'at least of the security forces', suggests Suttner.

Netshitenzhe foresees that the ANC's new administrative power might facilitate 'the role of the armed forces of the liberation movement in imparting, somehow, the enforcement of law and order in a democratic sense'.

'This would relate to the general call that has been made for the formation of defence units. Ultimately, when you are talking about law and order in communities you are talking about the actual involvement of the community in determining that'.

Within the interim government, too, there could be power struggles. The composition of the structure, the relative strength of parties within it and the ground rules for decision-making would influence from the outset the democratic movement's strength within government, Netshitenzhe points out.

'The degree of tension in that government depends on who is in it. The main players must be in it for effectivity', asserts Suttner. 'I see it not as an opportunity to squeeze out one or other party but as a way of achieving effective, representative and legitimate government that can pave the way for liberation'.

Conflict could arise between 'an interim government's perception as to what is desirable and that of various popular formations', Suttner observes. 'We would have to be very careful as to how we resolved this. Because it would be very unfortunate if we found ourselves having to coerce our own people who perceive themselves - rightly or wrongly - as carrying out the basic values of our struggle'.

**T**he South Africa of the future is hardly likely to be an agglomeration of city states. So how can local level negotiations to reshape urban government precede the national constitutional settlement?

The possibility of local level negotiations undermining the national settlement has been a vexing issue since scores of civic associations, pressed by evictions and interruptions of electricity and water supplies to rent-boycotting residents, have negotiated with apartheid authorities.

Issues have not been confined to finding acceptable rent and service tariffs. Civic associations have made constitutional demands such as the reintegration of town and township into single non-racial municipalities, and the creation of a single tax base so that the revenue from the CBD is spread equally over suburb and township.

Talks have resulted in various interim structural arrangements. Some civic associations have actually taken on the tasks of the township authorities. Others have constituted joint committees comprising civic representatives and members of apartheid local authorities, black and white.

This has resulted in heated debate as to whether the settlements advance the power of the democratic movement or are co-optive and undermine the thrust of the ANC towards a national constitutional settlement.

Responses to the settlement in Soweto have revealed decided confusion about local interim government in the ANC. The Soweto People's Delegation (SPD) - a group of prominent citizens acting on behalf of the 15 civic associations in Greater Soweto, concluded the Soweto Accord with the Transvaal Provincial Administration and three Greater Soweto civics to form the Central Witwatersrand Metropolitan Chamber, in which members of the SPD would sit alongside councillors from the three Soweto local authorities and from various white municipalities.

At a national ANC workshop on local government last year the Chamber was severely criticised. The workshop report noted the 'disturbing negative features' in the model:

- its implicit recognition of 'discredited illegitimate black local authorities';
- its use of a 'group-rights approach' for building metropolitan government, implicitly supporting one of the authorities' constitutional options;
- its potential to freeze mass struggles;
- its acceptance of 'present illegitimate





• Moses Mayekiso: civics must be above political organisations

# Negotiating the shape of future local governments

*Jo-Anne Collinge looks at the different strategies adopted by civic associations in negotiations at local government level — and the implications these have for their role in a restructured society*

structures' as fit to manage the transition - and its conceding them a decisive presence, since local authorities were to be individually represented while the 15 civics were jointly represented by the SPD. Individual civic representation was subsequently instituted.

Surprisingly, the ANC national leadership has since expressed clear support for the Chamber - and specifically for its constitutional initiatives rather than its gains on the service front.

In its January 8 statement, the ANC declared that while waging a national struggle for an interim government, it was also necessary to act in local government to ensure that these interim structures are established and the old apartheid institutions, such as the community councils, are finally abolished.

An 'important lead' had been given by the agreement on the Central Witwatersrand Metropolitan Chamber, the ANC added. Within the civic movement there is a more critical approach. Moses Mayekiso, head of the Civic Association of the Southern Transvaal (Cast), believes that fundamental principles of interim rule - which would never be overlooked in national negotiations - have been ignored. He reckons it is a contradiction to conclude an agreement 'where councillors are involved and are playing a prominent role while the Soweto community is demanding that they should resign'.

Mayekiso asserts that, just as at the national level parliament will have to disband before an interim government takes power, so the apartheid councils should have to go. The Alexandra Civic Organisation (ACO), he said, believed that its negotiating partner was the TPA, which had been told: 'We won't dictate to you who you can bring to negotiations. If you feel a councillor is an expert and can help you negotiate properly, that is your business. We won't interfere with that. But civics must negotiate straight with the TPA'.

Cyril Ramaphosa of the SPD says: 'We are against the presence of councillors. We have called for their resignation within the Chamber itself and will continue to do so'.

But, he adds, the compromise of including them was made because other aspects of the settlement were hugely beneficial to the community - the writing-off of arrear rentals, the undertaking to transfer title on rented houses to the tenants, and the possible formation of a joint tax base for Soweto and surrounding white cities.

According to Mayekiso the SPD initiative is not the only one plagued by



'loopholes'. The civic movement plans to press ahead and form regional civic structures and eventually a national civic association this year. This body would aim to achieve some uniformity in local negotiations and promote a keener awareness of how local initiatives should dovetail with national constitutional change. It would also attempt to influence national political negotiations insofar as they concerned local governments.

The civics, often portrayed in the '80s as 'alternative' government structures, are making it very plain that their role is outside party politics, in civil society not state structures.

'The civic has to be above the political organisations', asserts Mayekiso. Once it has made its pitch in attaining new governmental forms 'the political parties must contend for control of the local authority. The civic must be out of those elections'.

So how do the civics - arguably for some time the most representative community-based organisations, with politically diverse memberships - relate to national negotiations and the parties participating?

Firstly, as issue-oriented organisations, the civics support positions rather



• Cyril Ramaphosa: councillors must resign

than parties - but may back those parties which adopt the position which prevails in the civic. Secondly, support for a party and for its positions depends not on unanimity but on a democratic majority vote in the civics. For instance, says Mayekiso, the civics favour both the mechanisms of an interim government and a constituent assembly and will support negotiating parties pressing for these. Tensions within civic constituencies are inevitable, says

Mayekiso, but the idea is to contain them as non-hostile differences.

The civics remain committed to organising and mobilising on a mass scale and engaging in mass action.

Comments Mayekiso: 'Even if there's an interim government where our political organisations are participating, mass mobilisation, mass action and mass protests must continue. We managed to usher in the present situation through our struggles and if we now water down that power - because that's the only power we have at the present moment - we face a disaster where we will come away from the negotiating table with bones only'.

It is in the area of building mass support that criticisms of the SPD settlement demand reassessment. In a township where, as surveys indicated, economic factors rather than political ones motivated most rent boycotters, winning demands like the cancelling of rent arrears and the transfer of rented houses to tenants gains widespread support for the civic movement. Mayekiso's description of the new 'civil' civic association - as development agent, and as a moving force behind community-controlled housing trusts and utility companies - sounds like a retreat from politics. But, by attending to people's concrete needs, the civics might deliver to political parties judged worthy of support enviable popular clout.

However, for parties headed for the negotiating table is it enough to approve local level negotiating initiatives on the grounds that 'on balance' they appear to move matters forward? Was it necessary for the SPD in winning truly astounding service gains, to dress the settlement up in the robes of constitutional change?

With hindsight - and numerous agreements under the belt - the civic movement in consultation with the ANC local government specialists is attempting to separate the chaff from grain of local negotiations and to ensure that they feed the negotiating process at the table as much as on the ground. To this end, the consultative conference on local government resolved that 'local negotiations should focus on issues that seek to improve the quality of life of the community and not on matters which might have serious constitutional implications at the national level'.

Further: that where interim local structures are created (and the conference rather ambitiously envisaged that these should be elected rather than negotiated into being) they should channel all proposals for the restructuring of local government to the national constituent assembly. •

**KAGISO TRUST**, a development agent is funding community-based projects nationally and we require the services of a **FINANCE OFFICER**, **SECRETARY TO GENERAL SECRETARY** and a **SECRETARY TO PERSONNEL OFFICER** for our central office based in Johannesburg.

**FINANCE OFFICER**

- incumbent must have strong community-based background
- be self-disciplined and have excellent communication skills and sound experience in bookkeeping

**MAIN TASK WILL BE:**

1. to administer and monitor sponsor's inflow of cash
2. maintain financial records sufficient for audit
3. prepare and control budget
4. reconciliation of all our accounts on a monthly basis

**SECRETARY TO GENERAL SECRETARY**

- must have excellent communication skills
- must have advanced secretarial skills
- must have initiative and be able to take control while applying administrative skills
- duties include typing, filing and all secretary-related work

**SECRETARY TO PERSONNEL OFFICER**

- must have excellent communication skills and sound experience of working with disadvantaged groups
- must have administrative skills and be able to initiate
- duties include communicating with regions, filing and typing

Salary benefits are negotiable and successful applicants will take up duties in February 1991.

Please apply in writing and include your CV to:

**THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**  
**PO BOX 1879**  
**JOHANNESBURG 2000**



# ARE WE READY TO GOVERN?

Enrol now for an intensive certificate course  
in leadership and organisational effectiveness

**PHONE 484-3720**

## **COMMUNITY BASED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

A KAGISO TRUST - UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION PROJECT

**CAPABLE LEADERSHIP  
EFFECTIVE ORGANISATIONS**





• Who foots the bill for the transition from plastic igloo to a four-roomed township house? And what role does

# Shacking up with private capital

*As the state starts to develop new ideas around the provision of housing, the question arises: Who is going to pay for new developments? Alan Mabin looks at some of the possibilities*

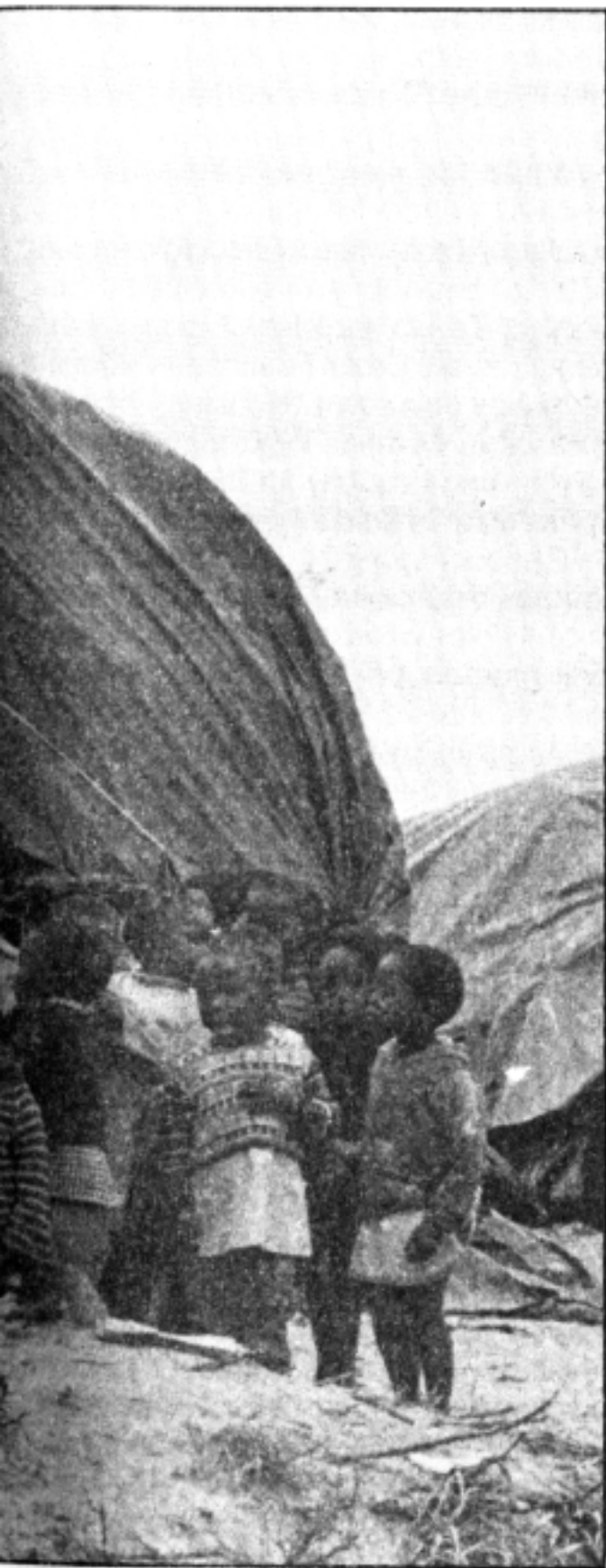
In the atmosphere of anticipated repeal of Group Areas and Land Acts, the expected government white paper on housing strategies seems certain to herald some significant changes in state housing policy - changes which a broad spectrum of opinion would suggest are long overdue. In the run-up to these predicted changes, various private sector groups have initiated significant new forms of finance for housing, all involving backing for home ownership.

The main point of interest in the white paper will be which kinds of private sector proposals the state decides to back. How democratic organisations respond may be important in determining not only housing policy, but whether people live in houses or shacks, for years to come.

At present state housing policy, which is not spelt out in any single policy document, has three major prongs. One in-



**'One of the demands of rent boycotts in many townships has been that the privatisation of rental housing should cease, at least until communities can shape the way in which it is done'**



**the state play?**

involves allocating and sometimes servicing land for occupation by individuals, most of whom erect their own shacks and sometimes their own houses.

On some of this land, especially new areas under the control of black local authorities, private contractors erect and sell whole tracts of housing, such as those in Vosloorus on the East Rand or in parts of Khayelitsha. In some cases sale of these houses is financed by the ordinary building society or bank mortgage bond, but these institutions have not been keen to lend less than about R35 000. House of Delegates and Representatives housing activities have brought private contractors with some subsidies into substantial extensions of coloured and Indian townships, as at Phoenix, Blue Downs and elsewhere.

In African areas provincial authorities and others have bridged the financing and provided some subsidies, allowing people of very modest means to buy

simple, poorly serviced, 'core' or 'starter' houses, as at Orange Farm near Sebokeng south of Johannesburg. All this approved squatting and private contractor housing continues to be located in areas which extend the segregated pattern of the townships.

The origins of these aspects of policy lie in the seventies, when 'self-help' and private contractor involvement were first vigorously touted as the solution to the burgeoning shack areas (which the end of state building of houses for rental in the townships had caused in large measure).

A second prong of state policy, developed since 1983, involves the privatisation of existing state-owned housing by selling houses to their tenants. This privatisation affects state tenants of all colours, and together with the fact that little state housing is now built for rental, puts an enormous squeeze on classes who had previously found shelter through the state system.

Waiting lists for rental housing are very long and growing, and the private sector has built very little housing intended for rental since the sixties. One of the demands of rent boycotts in many townships has been that the privatisation of rental housing should cease, at least until communities can shape the way in which it is done. In some areas privatisation continues apace, in others it has moved very slowly. Privatisation presumably generates some income for the state, though the amount must be very small relative to outlays on other aspects of housing policy.

The third aspect of state housing policy, and the most expensive, involves a variety of subsidies to home-ownership, particularly the civil service housing subsidies. In recent years the proportion of these subsidies going to whites has been falling rapidly. Together with the development of township extensions, these subsidies have been costing several billion rand per year, and the large sums of money involved have prompted proposals to use the money in other ways. Here lie the origins of many of the new ideas for housing policy and housing finance which have surfaced in the last few years

or months.

The effects of present state housing policy have been to keep funds from the banks and building societies circulating in the housing market frequented by reasonably well-off South Africans. But the vast majority cannot afford conventional suburban houses, and the financial institutions have not been prepared to lend widely to those of lower incomes. So the major private sector lobbies, led by the Urban Foundation, have long argued for policies to be adopted which would reduce the risks of lending to poorer people, increase the profitability of doing so, and shift state housing subsidies towards lower-cost housing.

To a considerable extent this has already happened, but within the parameters of existing policy. The Urban Foundation, and others, are keen to restructure the system much more thoroughly.

Foremost among the Urban Foundation proposals for state policy is to cut existing subsidies to the bone and to opt instead for an equal subsidy to be paid to the developers of every serviced site. Figures of R5 000 to R8 000 have been mentioned. The basis of this idea is that the key problem in housing affordability in a private enterprise system is the cost of serviced land, and a subsidy paid to companies (and perhaps even to communities) to develop serviced sites would allow everyone to gain access to at least that basic unit. What housing the occupants would then be able to afford would depend entirely on their ability to raise private finance with no further state subsidies, which is, of course, almost impossible for the majority of South Africans.

As a result the Urban Foundation and a number of financial institutions have sought to find ways of making housing finance accessible. Four new schemes to this end were introduced in 1990.

One scheme was intended to make very small loans, by typical mortgage bond standards: a few thousand or even hundred rand, perhaps to be spent on building or upgrading a shack, and building security for the loan on community pressure rather than on the house itself. The Urban Foundation set up a trial small



loans company with private sector and Development Bank subsidy, and its 1990 report claims that the initial trial has been successful.

The Usury Act had to be amended to allow this company to proceed at all, since it charges interest rates so high that they used to be illegal. Small loans companies are not going to put the poor into decent housing, though they may help to alleviate conditions for some people.

The Loan Guarantee Fund, announced with much fanfare in April, provided for a group of foreign governments to put up something like R20 million as insurance against defaults on 'smaller' housing loans from the banks and building societies.

The intention was to lure the reluctant financiers into making loans of roughly R15 000 to R35 000, which would provide enough cash for individuals to buy very basic housing. The difficulty for those individuals, however, continues, as the scheme would still require a 5% deposit - and not many people desperate to buy a starter house for R20 000 would actually have R1 000 or more in cash. This is where the Old Mutual's scheme to allow pension/provident fund members to borrow against their funds comes in.

Pension money is usually locked firmly away from the future beneficiary, but in terms of the scheme jointly developed by the Old Mutual and the Urban Foundation and announced in November 1990, a fund member can borrow the 5% deposit and further amounts to help cover initial bond repayments. Since many union members should be able to take advantage of this kind of scheme, it could in theory help to make housing finance available to them.

**B**ut it remains to be seen both whether workers want to do so, and whether the financial institutions will in reality lend to such clients. The Old Mutual's enthusiasm for lending to its own staff is limited by the complex rules of its in-house scheme, which places women on a different footing from men, for example. It will be interesting to see whether the Life Assurers can overcome such conservative policies in arranging lending to union pension fund members.

One factor which dampened the enthusiasm of the institutions for lending in the lower income 'market' during 1991 was the continuing rumble of real or threatened bond repayment boycotts. In some communities the boycotts were real enough, and the institutions seem to have backed-off a major commitment without

***'The 1991 white paper will reveal how the government plans to play opposition between house financiers and builders, and between various parties within the state'***

further incentives. One solution to the problem is to link repayments to the salary or wage of continuously employed people. The SA Perm opted for a system of this kind during 1990, but it is not yet clear whether it will really be able to extend the market for smaller loans significantly.

For the last decade shifts in housing policy have been dominated by the rhetoric of private sector involvement and the shrinking of the direct state role in housing. All the new housing finance initiatives are basically about extending the private market - in the end to the profit of the institutions concerned. The state's role has been played down, except in the debate over housing subsidies.

Since the upper levels of the housing market are likely to continue to be profitable for lenders with or without subsidy for a long time to come, the key policy proposal from the Urban Foundation has been the once-off serviced site subsidy. However, this proposal by no means enjoys unanimous support from the private sector. It may excite the big lenders, but those building houses in the R50 000 and up range are very wary.

Put bluntly, bond subsidies like the civil servants scheme have ensured the growth of the housebuilders' market, and they want that growth to continue. Thus the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) have put alternative proposals for restructuring the subsidy system to government. Rather than subsidising the servicing of sites, the NAHB appears to want government to assist in the growth of a new market for its members in the same range as the Loan Guarantee Fund (R15 000 to R35 000) and above.

Opposition to removing home-buying subsidies has also come from within the state: the administrations of the Houses of Delegates and Representatives are less than enthusiastic about losing the sources of finance which have allowed their constituents to acquire houses in their new schemes. Their limited political credibility depends on at least being able to deliver some goodies, after all. The 1991 government white paper will therefore be an interesting

document, for it will reveal how the government plans to play opposition between house financiers and builders, and between various parties within the state.

While the state grapples with the complex politics of housing subsidies, indications show that a direct role for the state in housing provision could re-emerge. To the surprise of many commentators, the Urban Foundation's housing policy document 'Housing For All' released in October 1990 suggested (at least by implication) an increased role for the state in housing provision.

To those hoping that the conclusion of political negotiations will bring about a system able to realise the Freedom Charter's promise of 'houses, security and comfort' for all, an enlarged state role would probably be the obvious way of delivering affordable decent housing. But there may be other reasons for the apparent shift in private sector thinking on the appropriate role for the state in housing delivery. *Business Day* has suggested that, if the large financial institutions could invest in state housing stock, the risks associated with individual lending could be eliminated much more effectively than any of the loan guarantee or life offices' schemes.

**L**ike many other issues which seem certain to arise in the 1991 session of parliament, decisions made on housing policy could set directions which may prove difficult to deflect in the years ahead. Commitments to particular forms of subsidy may involve literally hundreds of thousands of people in purchasing houses which, without the subsidies, they might be unable to afford; so for future governments to cut those subsidies would be to make large numbers displaced, if not actually homeless.

A commitment to the once-off site subsidy scheme could mean that out of fairness, a future government would find it difficult to avoid continuing the scheme. Any such results will inevitably reduce budgetary flexibility: future governments may simply have little leeway to introduce new housing policies and find themselves stuck with the 1991 model.

Of course, political action in response to government proposals during this year could change all that. Mass action, specific demands in negotiation backed up by successful organisation and lobbying could produce policies quite different from those which at present seem likely to be adopted. It remains to be seen whether democratic organisations have both the strength and the policy thinking to accomplish what now seems improbable. •



# A brick in the wall

**Jo Dunstan challenges Planning Minister Hernus Kriel's insinuation that progressive organisations are to blame for the lack of black housing development**

small loan borrowers were no greater risk than large loan borrowers. Additional comments by one lender were that if black borrowers joined bond boycotts then their credit rating would decline, while another lender felt confident that black borrowers, especially of small loans, were a good credit risk.

On bond boycotts, the answers were more varied. Three respondents had no experience of boycotts. One building society reported non-repayments in Natal and said threats had been received of this spreading. Two other institutions reported problems in the Western Cape. One had solved the problem by negotiation and had no current instances of non-repayment. The other institution had had up to 70% arrears on all active accounts in one specific Cape township but believed this was localised and would not escalate into a national problem. Two of the institutions declined to comment. The institutions were in agreement that their rate of repossessions had increased and cited the high inflation rate and high interest rates as the main reasons.

It is common knowledge in the building industry that there have been a succession of casualties in their ranks over the past year in the black housing market.

There are many causes, the most important being the inability to read the market correctly. After the 1986 legislative changes, there was a rush to enter black housing. For three years the industry boomed as the needs of the middle- and upper-income buyers together with state employees and a few others who could obtain substantial subsidies were met. Companies expanded their operations fast and furiously and bought up land to secure future activity. They neglected to research the affordability of

the market that remained, assuming they would carry on as they had begun. High inflation and interest rates added to the problem.

Very simply, many companies were caught with expensively serviced land they couldn't develop and the profit margins on houses they could sell were so low that construction was no longer viable. Some of the older and wiser operators withdrew before they were in trouble, others adapted to weather the storm and their commitment to the provision of housing is as strong as ever. Many others however got caught and are now not unhappy to lay the blame elsewhere for their own mistakes.

The problems caused by township violence should not be minimised as there have been injuries, even deaths among construction company personnel. Theft and vandalism has been and continues to be a serious ongoing problem. However the root cause of the collapse of many private sector builders lies firmly in their own misreading of the market and their inability to adapt their product to suit the pockets of their customers.

**D**iscussions with various people in the leading black political organisations indicate that:

- the ANC and its affiliates in no way support or promote bond boycotts;
- they are fully supportive of home ownership;
- they are severely critical of the government neglect to address the problem of homelessness.

ANC international department head Thabo Mbeki issued a press statement on November 4 denying collusion in the bond boycotts, adding the organisation had never been involved 'in such irresponsible behaviour'.

'We are concerned that the private sector should continue to be involved in helping to provide housing for the millions of homeless people'.

Mbeki went on to say that the public and private sectors would have to find a way to make housing affordable for poor people who 'cannot carry the burden of current real interest rates. It would seem clear to us that there is a strong case for discriminating in favour of the poor in the area of housing. This would constitute affirmative action which would address a real and desperate need. It would also assist in the process of economic growth and bridging the gap between the "haves" and the "have nots".'

On all three counts cited by Kriel he exposed himself as ill-informed.

*\* Jo Dunstan is a consultant specialising in worker housing \**

**S**tatements by Planning and Provincial Affairs Minister Hernus Kriel have caused problematic repercussions in black housing and the relationships on which the achievement of progress in this crucial sector depend.

His address to a media conference in Pretoria on October 16 resulted in newspaper headlines like:

- 'Violence brings black housing to a standstill';
- 'Building firms quit black housing market as bond boycott takes its toll';
- 'Violence stalls major black housing project';

Kriel created the impression that:

- leaders of the ANC, SACP, UDF and MDM are directly responsible for the crisis because of their promotion of bond boycotts and unrest in the townships;
- as a result, banks and building societies are no longer providing bonds for new home owners;

- and as a further consequence, many of the largest construction companies involved in township housing have stopped operations and will not return to work in black housing.

There has been very little attempt to answer Kriel or to interpret his press conference as a political manoeuvre to shift blame onto the ANC and its affiliates for the state's own failure to create an adequate national housing policy.

Housing consultants have been besieged by anxious employers fearful lest their company housing policies are now going to be useless and the employees themselves fearful lest their goal of home ownership is now going to be impossible to achieve.

One housing consultancy undertook a survey of all the major financial institutions and talked to builders and developers as well as community leaders.

The eight financial institutions surveyed were unanimous they had not and had no intention of withdrawing from financing black home loans. All eight said they had not cut back on black loans in any way though two made the comment they were tightening their lending criteria across the board in response to the poor economic situation and not to any other factors. All the institutions said they would be participating in the Loan Guarantee Fund initiative although only the Perm was involved to any degree at the time.

When asked whether there was any proof that black borrowers were a worse risk than white borrowers, the unanimous opinion of the financial institutions was that no such proof existed. Also there was general agreement that



# Farming for ideas

*The cry for black access to the land lies near the centre of the South African conflict. In our last edition, we carried two stinging attacks on models for land reform proposed by the Urban Foundation and Private Sector Council. Here, Jeff McCarthy, Charles Simkins and Ann Bernstein, involved in the development of the proposals, respond*

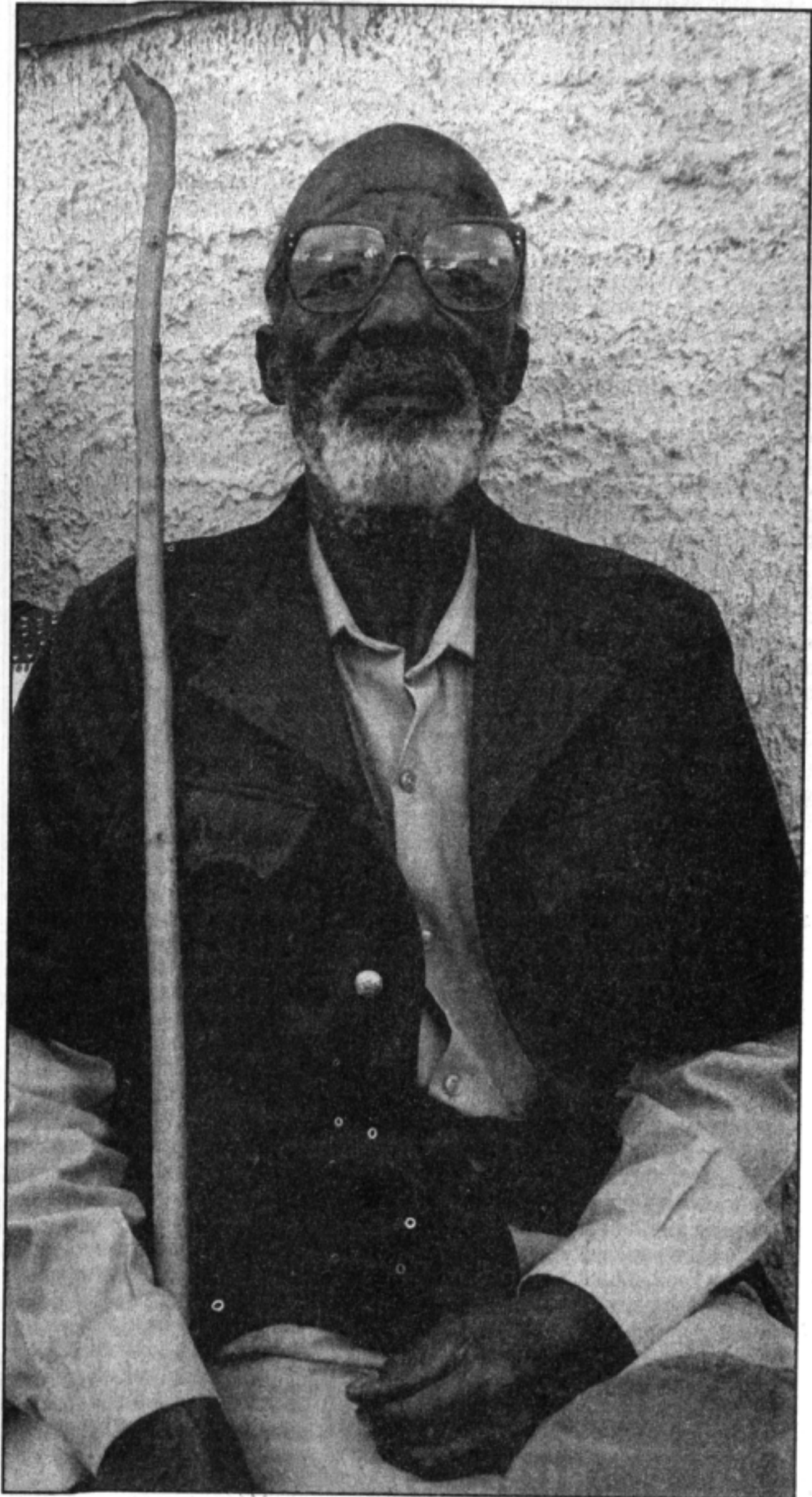
**S**outh Africa in the 1990s will require both a new breed of policy analyst and a new type of debate. The transition from white rule to a democratic government requires a fundamental reassessment of the policies that have hitherto governed this country. The different political parties, interests, constituencies and their leaderships will have now to put forward their practical proposals for new policies and approaches which will contribute to the building of an equitable and successful post-apartheid society.

The shift away from the 'politics of protest' to the 'politics of reconstruction' is as necessary in the national policy arena as it is elsewhere in our society. In this spirit the Urban Foundation (UF) has been instrumental in the publication and mass distribution of a series of policy documents that span a wide range of topics - from local government to informal settlement to regional and rural development.

The focus in each document has been analytically based but action-oriented. This series of public policy documents is intended to encourage and stimulate a widespread, vigorous and public debate on important national issues that need resolution. We therefore welcome the interest *WIP* has shown in our rural development document. If our work on rural development helps to contribute to a more informed, critical and constructive debate on rural issues and policy then one of our objectives will have been fulfilled.

A serious and useful debate can only occur when it is clear where each of the participants stands.

Neither Tessa Marcus nor Aninka





Claassens (see *WIP 70/71*) have found it necessary to provide *WIP* readers with the facts concerning the UF/Private Sector Council proposals. Let us start then with these.

The UF/PSC rural policy proposals comprise a complex intertwined package of legislative and policy recommendations. With respect to legislation the proposals include the need to:

- repeal the 1913 and 1936 Land Acts, the Group Areas Act, the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act;
- stop arbitrary intervention in present black tenure patterns in the homelands;
- introduce a new legal mechanism - a land court - to resolve issues arising from the legacy of apartheid in which black South Africans have been dispossessed. This legal mechanism must ensure a fair judicial process, accessibility to the poor, and be capable of handing down legally binding judgements in respect of competing claims in relation to settlement and ownership issues;
- re-examine existing agricultural legislation and policies to ensure that they do not discriminate against black and smaller farmers;
- promote labour rights and improved conditions for farm workers and ensure that the Labour Relations Act applies to agricultural workers and employers;
- investigate tenants' rights legislation with a view to supplementing the existing provisions of the common law with a specific body of legislation which protects and strengthens the rights of tenants;
- stop the implementation of all aspects of the state's population relocation programme and communicate the reprieve urgently and effectively to the communities concerned. In addition to these legislative measures, a bold new development programme in the field of rural development is required.

Such a programme must be based on national negotiations and widespread grassroots community participation (as there needs to be wide involvement in, debate about, and ultimately acceptance of the programme eventually implemented).

We would advocate that such a programme include:

- expansion of small farmer-support programmes. These programmes will ensure that national, economic, agricultural, regional and local policies assist small farmers wherever they are in the production and marketing of their goods;
- establishment of special agricultural areas for small-scale farming. Such areas will be demarcated specifically for occu-

pation and ownership (if so desired) by emergent resource-poor farmers who voluntarily choose to participate. These areas could be near to existing urban or peri-urban areas, on released SADT land, on large corporately-owned estates and on irrigation schemes;

- expansion of state-owned grazing land for possible use by rural communities subject to controls on over-crowding and natural resource depletion;
- no ad hoc disposal of present South African Development Trust (SADT) land without reference to local community wishes and needs;
- provision of opportunities for non-agricultural rural development including access to land for residential purposes, access to both infrastructure and public services and assistance to small-scale non-farm enterprises;
- opening of rural towns to all, ensuring the effective repeal of the Group Areas and Separate Amenities Acts, an end to segregated local government and the upgrading of facilities for black small-town residents;
- more finance to rural development with a focus on the rural poor. Even within the constraints of the present budget, some state funds drawn from the amount currently allocated to the Regional Industrial Development Programme could be utilised together with funds borrowed on the private capital market.

The careful reader of these proposals will do well to reflect them against the critique of Marcus and Claassens. Both authors have allowed an eagerness to substantiate well-worn stereotypes of the UF to divert them from what we believe to be bold suggestions that could radi-

cally increase rural opportunities and provide the platform for a powerful coalition of supporters well beyond the UF and its direct constituency.

Both authors imply that the UF/PSC proposals rely almost exclusively on 'the market'. Marcus for example, says that 'the primary redistributive mechanism' would be 'assigned to the market'. Claassens states in similar vein that our approach entails that 'the free market reigns'. Both their assertions - as any businessman will tell them - are patently untrue.

**C**ertainly our approach is market-oriented but we advocate several roles for the state - supporting small farmers, declaring special agricultural areas, converting large farms to small ones, restructuring markets, co-operative and extension services, protecting the rights of farmworkers and tenants and managing carefully the evolution of tenure in communal areas amongst others. On the critical issue of access to land, the UF/PSC proposes three broad processes of white-to-black and rich-to-poor redistribution.

The first method of redistribution is through normal market processes (once racially discriminatory legislation has been repealed) augmented by development programmes to assist emerging farmers, among others:

- by making input, credit and technical and managerial advisory services available at favourable rates;
- by removing the large farmer bias in present agricultural structures;
- by reshaping laws and processes which currently constrain small farmers, in



• Duck! One of the hundreds of 'resettled' South African communities — this one, in Ladismith, recently returned to their land after being evicted in the early 70s



particular the Sub-division of Agricultural Land Act and measures governing tenancy. Tenancy in its many forms could then be expected to expand, in many instances transferring the occupation and use of land from white to black.

It is our view that tenancy should not be discarded as an undesirable method of redistribution. It is a very widespread form of tenure in both the First and Third world because it has the inherent appeal of not requiring farmers to possess large amounts of capital before they can enter commercial agriculture.

Farming skills rather than ownership of capital then becomes the main determinant of who occupies farm land. It also reduces the amount of capital that the state needs to lay out to acquire land - especially important in South Africa where land purchases may find it difficult to compete with the many other demands on fiscal resources in a non-racial society.

We are aware of the unfortunate track record of tenancy in South Africa and agree that, of the many different forms of tenancy, labour tenancy is probably the least desirable. However, it is our view that tenancy, constructively reshaped, offers an important route (amongst many others) for defusing black/white conflict over land ownership and occupancy.

The second redistributive process proposed by the UF/PSC is through the acquisition by the state of land on which a coherent small-farmer programme could be implemented. This could include the resale of land to individual

small farmers. Claassens seems to have misunderstood this proposal altogether - labelling it 'perpetual tenancy and nationalised land for black farmers'. This UF/PSC proposal would be subject to national negotiations and debate and would therefore only be implemented after extensive discussion. In practice such special agricultural areas would involve, among others:

- voluntary participation;
- extensive community participation in design, implementation and management;
- access to finance so that households could buy land if they so desired.

And the third redistributive process proposed by the UF/PSC is through the operation of a land claims court which will adjudicate between conflicting individual and community claims to land. Claassens' recent work has focused mainly on the difficult issue of the right to own or occupy land and she has done much to put the idea of the land claims court on the map.

**W**e agree with the need to recognise the validity of conflicting claims and support the idea of a competent neutral body empowered to adjudicate and resolve claims. However one shortcoming of such a process of redistribution is that with some exceptions it is likely to be slow, costly and frustrating. Much the fastest of the three processes of redistribution outlined above is for the state to purchase land and then sell or lease in the special agricultural areas.

This is a major advantage of the special agricultural areas as proposed by the UF/PSC.

To describe this complex and multi-pronged approach to land redistribution as 'the free market reigns' reveals a fundamental lack of understanding or a deliberate attempt to mislead readers as to the true nature of UF/PSC proposals. Both Marcus and Claassens compliment aspects of the report. For instance, Marcus concedes that 'ground-breaking assumptions' characterise the document, whilst Claassens notes that the Urban Foundation 'more than any other group, has shown that blacks are in de facto occupation of land that is nominally owned by whites in the rural areas'. Moreover, neither questions the central policy thrust of the report: that is, the need for the repeal of racial legislation coupled with development programmes to expand the prospects of black farmers; and a rejection of any form of nationalisation. Despite these agreements Marcus and Claassens nevertheless appear driven to argue that the class design of some state/monopoly capital alliance must somehow underlie the report. They invite their readers to reflect darkly upon the timing of the report's release on the one hand, and FW de Klerk's announcement of the intention to repeal the Land Acts on the other.

Marcus reflects that this allegedly joint action by the State and capital was preceded by 'a military-style intelligence gathering operation (by the PSC) to arm itself for the offensive'. Moreover both Marcus and Claassens imply that the UF/PSC systematically withheld information and stifled debate until such time as the State and capital were allegedly at one in both repealing racial legislation and protecting 'white title deeds'.

We would have thought that such simplistic notions of the state and capital were restricted to now discredited sociology textbooks from the 1960s. Surely the track records, both of this article's authors and the Urban Foundation as an institution, would at the very least cause Marcus and Claassens to reflect that there are important points of departure between the UF/PSC rural policy document and that of government?

Neither Marcus nor Claassens are innocent of the notion that knowledge and information can and should be used to effect social change. We are not embarrassed to be associated with a strategic approach to information. Certainly we are involved in workshopping knowledge and information at our disposal and we are in good company. Surely this is



• The Urban Foundation 'supports the idea of a competent neutral body to adjudicate and resolve land claims' — but warns that it could be a slow, costly and frustrating process



the approach adopted, for example, by the Cosatu-aligned 'Economic Trends' (ET) group in their collective work over the past several years? It should also be noted that our documents are not research reports alone but analytic and normative proposals that have been widely discussed, debated and reviewed in order to formulate and agree on a practical, workable programme that carries the support and weight of an influential and committed national constituency.

Marcus makes a number of accusations regarding the consultations which the UF/PSC have held on their policy proposals. She says that 'the report implicitly claims to be the standpoint of unspecified popular democratic organisations or leadership' and that the UF/PSC has mistaken discussions with particular individuals and leadership as 'consultation and, worse, as endorsement of the report'. In reality, the UF/PSC make no such claims at all. In particular, at the briefings it has held with these groups, the UF has been keen to stress that it is not seeking the endorsement of 'popular democratic organisations or leadership' for its proposals. We take strong exception to the allegation that we have plagiarised others' work or that academics have been forced into 'secrecy clauses'. This is simply incorrect. It is true that some academics have been requested to time the publication of work originally done for the UF/PSC so as to coincide with the public release of research and policy syntheses. Every organisation that is involved in research and policy formulation at some time keeps research, documentation or information confidential, for limited periods at least. This is as true of the ANC and progressive service organisations as it is of the

**'The Urban Foundation has been keen to stress that it is not seeking the endorsement of popular democratic organisations or leadership for its proposals'**

UF. We do not question their right to do so: none of this, to our minds, constitutes a breach of ordinary individual liberties or the spirit of public debate.

**T**he accusation that the UF/PSC subscribes to a packaged 'cargo' notion of policy is contradicted by the fact that, one, we have gone to extraordinary lengths to discuss our proposals with a very wide range of groups and grassroots organisations; two, we explicitly state, in bold type, in all our documents that they are to be seen as contributions to debate and democratic policy development; three, we have devoted considerable time and resources to publishing and communicating UF/PSC work widely; and, four, UF research on many of these issues is ongoing, such as the very recent work on a 'land registration model' which will obviously be integrated with our rural proposals as soon as it is tested and finalised.

The Urban Foundation's commitment to policy work that is value-based, academically sound and as inclusive as

possible is well known.

Our process of policy formulation and testing is taken very seriously indeed as can be shown by the production of countless drafts of our documents continuously responding to comment, ideas and criticism from a very wide range of people.

Our response to the Marcus and Claassens criticisms in *WIP* should be seen as an extension of that commitment to debate, but we must record our surprise at the attack that they make on our intentions and bona-fides.

A new rural development strategy in South Africa must meet three simultaneous demands :

- it must recognise the historic legacy of injustice and irrationality of apartheid and segregation;
- it must maintain and expand the country's capacity to feed itself;
- and it must be politically feasible, that is the strategy must form the basis for a workable political alliance between the country's key interest groups.

The important work that particularly Claassens has done in the rural arena must now be shaped into practical, workable proposals that can be incorporated into a comprehensive new rural policy. The rural and urban poor are not guaranteed a better deal in a 'new South Africa'. And the rural areas are often where the reactionaries are at their strongest.

Those who are concerned about the rural poor should put their energy into organisation and alliance-building with others who share a genuine vision of an open and democratic post-apartheid rural future. Such alliance-building will require serious policy debate - and this should concentrate on the real content and substance of the issues at stake. •

**Paper, Printing, Wood & Allied Workers' Union (PPWAWU)**

The Paper, Printing, Wood & Allied Workers' Union (PPWAWU), an affiliate of COSATU, invites applications for the following vacancies:

1. **ADMINISTRATIVE TYPIST**  
Duties include typing, filing, fax and telex administration and related duties. Required skills: PC skills, drivers licence, fair knowledge of the trade union movement and ability to work in a democratic environment. Previous experience in a trade union, though not essential, will be a strong recommendation.
2. **THREE NATIONAL ORGANISERS** to co-ordinate the following sectors:
  - a) Pulp and paper
  - b) Furniture
  - c) Forestry and sawmills
 Applicants for these positions will be required



to co-ordinate the activities of the relevant sector nationally. This includes travelling to areas where we have branches to assist.

For the above positions, previous experience in a trade union and the possession of a drivers licence are essential. Other skills desired (but not essential) include basic typing and administrative skills.

All applications must include a detailed CV and names, addresses and telephone numbers of at least 2 referees.

**Applications to be addressed and sent to:**  
The General Secretary  
PPWAWU Head Office  
PO Box 3528  
Johannesburg 2000  
Telephone: (011) 834-4661/2/3  
Fax: (011) 834-4664

**Calendar for 1991**

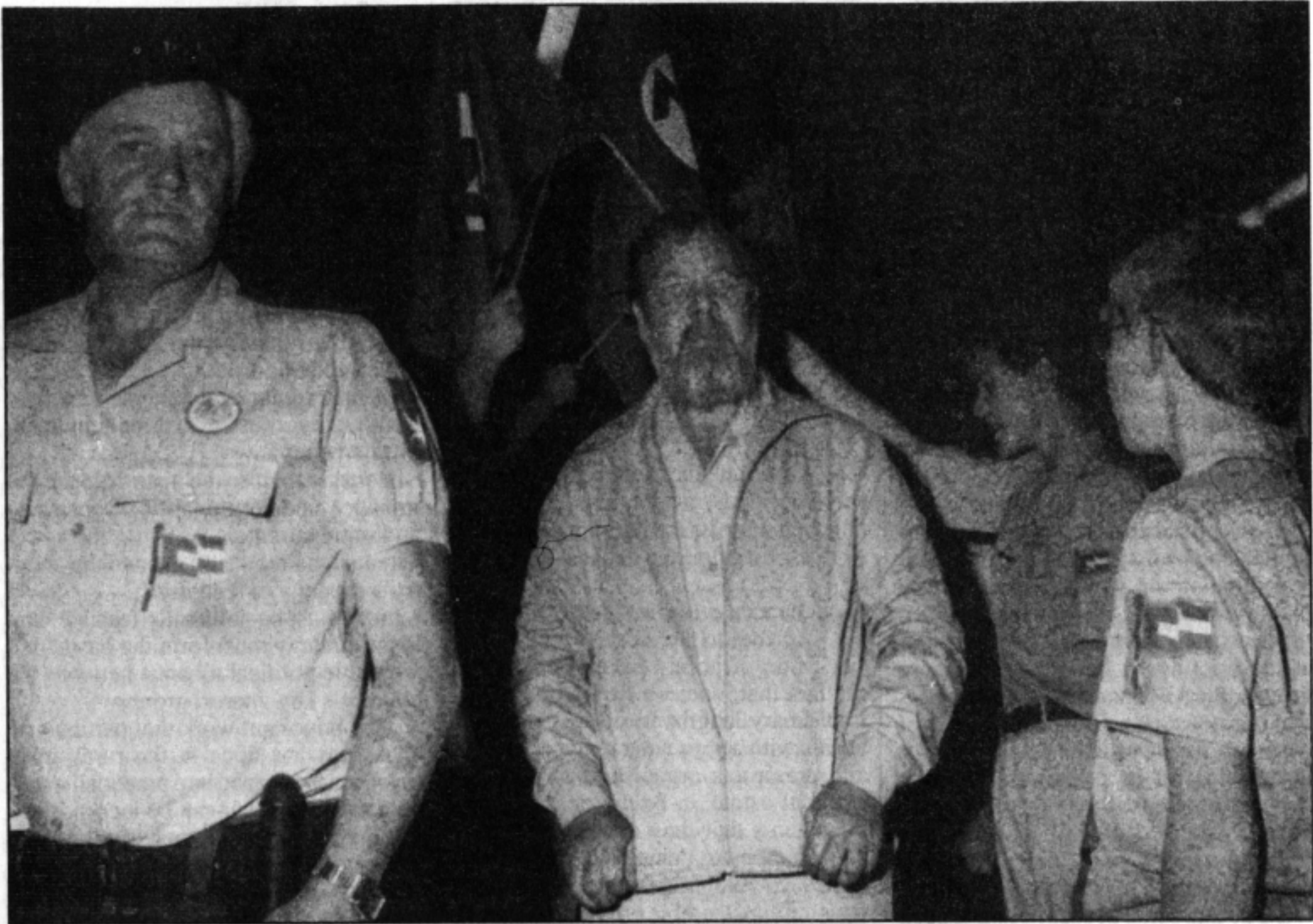
**Socialist struggles in Europe**

Each page focuses on one of the many great struggles of workers in Europe, including Germany 1918 • The Russian Revolution Poland 1980 • Italy: The 'Red Years' The Spanish Civil War • Czechoslovakia 1968



Size : A3  
3 Colours  
Price : R4 for workers  
R15 for salaried people  
Order your copy now  
From ILRIG, P.O.  
Box 213, Salt River,  
7925  
Tel: (021) 476375





• The missing link: Right-wing labour leaders allegedly have strong ties with the AWB

# White workers of the world unite

*Right-wing white trade unions are trying to gather their forces. But, asks Robyn Rafel, are they preparing to storm the bastions of power — or fighting to preserve a dying breed?*

**F**or several years now right-wing white trade unions, enviously eyeing the successes of their black counterparts in Cosatu and Nactu, have been expressing the urgent necessity to forge greater unity among themselves in order to ensure the survival of the white worker. That these unions have good cause for concern is undeniable. The 'white worker', in the traditional South African sense of a person mollycoddled from birth to death by the National Party government, is an endangered species.

Job reservation and other protections white workers once regarded as their automatic right have been steadily eroded over the years and now no longer exist.

The surprising thing about these changes - and it is a point that sometimes escapes one - is that despite all the dire threats, racist rhetoric and a history of militancy among white workers (as typified by the 1922 Rand Revolt), they occurred without the conservative white unions really putting up a fight. Granted, the Mineworkers' Union (MWU) did strike for a few days in 1979 to try to prevent the release of the groundbreaking Wiehahn Commission report. But the mine bosses won that



**'The white worker's economic, cultural, political and even physical survival depends on whether he can unitedly organise within a super white union to guard over his members'**  
**— Mineworkers' Union**

here is whether this development will be sustained and come to pose any kind of serious threat to the social order.

The South African Confederation of Labour (Sacol), established in 1957, is the traditional home of the conservative white unions.

**T**he Sacol unions (see box below) are by no means the only white unions. According to an NMC report issued last October, 32 of the 212 registered trade unions have a solely white membership. But there are white unions and white unions. Sizeable unions like the 25 000-strong Amalgamated Engineering Union AEU and the 22 000-strong SA Electrical Workers' Association may not organise blacks, but they have no objection to sitting down and bargaining together with unions which do. Their membership of bodies like the CMBU and the Council of Mining Un-

ions attests to that.

The AEU's Arthur Allen sums up his union's stance this way: 'The AEU is a white union but it is not a rightist union. It is not politically orientated. We accept change, although we feel it must be done in an orderly manner and that standards must be maintained. We believe we can protect the white worker within the framework of the new South Africa without being radical'. There are a few other white unions of some substance in the building, municipal, transport, mining, state and railway sectors. But like the aforementioned unions they are not rightist bodies. Indeed, in the railway sector unions like the Artisan Staff Association, the SA Footplate Staff Association and the Spoorbond, which were once affiliated to Sacol, have long since left the confederation.

The Sacol unions then are the 'hard core' of the white unions. Given that this is the case, one might be forgiven for assuming that attitudes within Sacol on how to create greater unity among white workers would be uniform. Fortunately, this does not hold true.

Yster & Staal is of the opinion that best way forward is to go one step further than a confederation and form a federation. (A confederation is essentially a loose formation in which co-operation takes place on a voluntary basis; a federation is a much tighter organisation in which affiliates are obliged to abide by joint decisions.) 'The best avenue to follow is a federation. That was proved by Cosatu and Fosatu before it. Around the world it is the proven way', says general secretary, Nic Celliers.

The MWU, on the other hand, is ada-

**Sacol: So who's who?**

Once the pre-eminent force in the labour arena, the South African Confederation of Labour (Sacol) today consists of seven affiliates with a combined membership of approximately 85 000. Of the affiliates, by far the two most powerful are the 41 000-strong SA Iron, Steel and Allied Industries Union (Yster & Staal), whose general secretary, Nic Celliers, and president, G P Diederiks, are general secretary and president of Sacol respectively, and the MWU, which has a membership of approximately 30 000. Then there are two Transnet unions: the 7 000-strong Transnet Union of SA (Tusa) (formerly the Running and Operating Staff Association) and the 6 000-strong Transnet Employees' Union (formerly the SAR&H Salaried Staff Association). The remaining affiliates are the 4 000-strong White Building Workers' Union, the SA Engine Drivers, Foreman & Operators Association and the SA Karwelerswerknemersvereniging. WIP was not able to establish membership figures for the last two, but they are small and, for our purposes, inconsequential. •

trial of strength hands down. And in the decade that followed the Chamber of Mines went on to win the battle to end the mining job bar without any industrial action - notwithstanding 1922 and the MWU's strenuous objections. There have not been any significant strikes involving white workers since. Simply put, white workers have had it too good to want to strike or pay more than lip service to notions of white worker unity. Nothing, however, stays the same forever. Ever since 2 February last year - and some say even before, although not on the same scale - there have been clear signs that the mobilisation that has taken place in right-wing political circles has also been affecting the right-wing unions. Aside from the government's decision to negotiate with the African National Congress (ANC), what has been of particular concern to these unions has been Pretoria's decision to go ahead with enacting the Cosatu-Nactu-Sacola accord on the Labour Relations Act (LRA) as amended by the National Manpower Commission (NMC) and a special tripartite working group. They are also perturbed that Cosatu and Nactu will in future participate in the NMC.

'This was, without exception, seen as a victory for the radical trade unions whilst white unions were ignored', the September 1990 issue of the MWU's newspaper, *Die Mynwerker*, said of the government's action. General secretary Peet Ungerer summed up the implications this way: 'This means that the old order, in which the white worker was the most important ally of successive governments, (is) obviously gone for good'.

It is not only the conservative white unions that have been horrified by the government response to the LRA accord. In December last year the 250 000-strong Federation of Salaried Staff (Fedsal), a federation of mainly white clerical workers in 14 affiliates, and the 150 000-strong Confederation of Metal and Building Unions (CMBU), a group of eight craft unions, announced they would be merging to form a new federation. The two elements will not disband and will continue to concentrate on their specialist areas, but the idea is that a federation will enable moderate unions to speak with a common voice. The organisations make it plain that their exclusion from the deliberations on LRA amendments served as the impetus for unity.

In these circumstances then, it is to be expected that the white unions should be making renewed efforts to create unity. The question that has to be addressed



mant that forming one 'super white union' is the correct path to follow. 'It can rightly be said that the white worker's economic, cultural, political and even physical survival depends on whether he can unitedly organise within a super white union to guard over his members' interests', *Die Mynwerker* proclaimed in September last year. It's easy to see why the MWU is so attracted to this idea. Indeed, it could be argued that its very survival has depended on it. For what many people do not realise is that the MWU became a general union in the early 1980s, and that today something like two thirds of its membership falls outside the mining industry. Many of these people are employed in highly strategic sectors such as transport, communications and power stations. With the end of job reservation on the mines in 1988, and thus the very real prospect of declining membership, the union would not have endured had it not changed its approach.

**Y**ster & Staal is opposed to a super union for several reasons, one of which is its belief that it would be virtually impossible to effect under current legislation because of technicalities relating to trade unions' scope of application. Says Celliers: 'When you register as a trade union you get a scope and job categories for which you are representative. The MWU does not have scope for lots of industries for which we do - for example, the tyre and rubber, auto manufacturing and glass industries. If we merge with them we will lose our scope for these sectors.'

'Similarly, if our registration should be upheld and the MWU merge with us, the new trade union would immediately lose scope of registration on the mines. The new union would have to apply anew for scope there. If the registrar (of trade unions) receives objections to such an application he would have to investigate. Meantime, the other unions on the mines could climb in and organise the MWU's members. Even if there are no objections it could take up to two years before the scope of registration is approved'.

If a federation is not what people want, a second option which Yster & Staal has floated for consideration is the idea of forming 'industry federations'. These federations, it proposes, would essentially be there to bargain in the various industrial sectors - for example, mining, metals - for the various white unions in Sacol and others outside the confederation. The beauty of this idea,

**'Unity between the white trade unions is unlikely to come unless the various right wing political factions can unite — and the prospects of that happening seem to be extremely remote'**

says Celliers, is that unions can gain from pooling their expertise without losing their identity in the process. And the co-operation could perhaps extend even further into areas like monitoring agreements and dispute handling.

Good idea or not, this option is unlikely to find much favour. The issue confronting the right unions is how to maximise their influence. Industry federations would be too informal as structures to achieve this purpose. A federation or a super white union are then the only two serious options.

Someone who clearly regards himself as a key actor in the drama over right-wing trade union unity is Sacol's junior vice-president Phillip Strauss, general secretary of the Transnet Union of SA (Tusa). Strauss, who is in early middle-age, is said to be a member of the Groot Raad (main council) of the Afrikaner Weerstandbeweging (AWB) - he refused to comment when asked by *WIP* to confirm or deny this - and is one of the more flamboyant characters on the far-right. He first sprang to prominence in January 1988 when he became general secretary after engineering a palace revolt to unseat the long-standing general secretary, the late Johann Bernadi, who resigned in December 1987.

Under Bernadi, Tusa had withdrawn from Sacol in 1984/5 because it believed that its association with the confederation would prejudice its membership of an international transport union body. Strauss allegedly smeared Bernadi by releasing a text the late secretary had signed which was critical of apartheid. Since his accession to the general secretaryship Strauss has steered the union back in a rightward direction, one manifestation of which was Tusa's decision to re-affiliate to Sacol.

Another manifestation of Tusa's right-

ward trend is the fact that one of its organisers, Greyling Bezuidenhout, was last year charged for two bombing incidents. One was an explosion at an Indian shop in Kempton Park selling ANC paraphernalia, the other an explosion on a railway track between Kempton Park and Pretoria.

Strauss is a man in a hurry. One *WIP* source likened him to Eugene Terre'Blanche, saying he has a charisma similar to that of the AWB leader. Others - including some that work with him - accuse him of being an opportunist. Certainly, he does have an acute sense of melodrama. In an interview, for example, he told *WIP* that aside from his job at Tusa, he is also general secretary of an underground trade union which operates in the small business sector. Asked how one goes about organising an underground union, he gave an enigmatic reply: 'If I told you that I would open the way for others to do the same.'

Aside from that, it is also known that Strauss is regularly accompanied by a group of bodyguards and at times wears a gun strapped to one ankle. Says Strauss: 'I am accompanied for security reasons. I have had two threats on my life.' As for the gun, he says he wears one depending on the situation in which he finds himself. 'Where I deem it necessary to take precautionary steps, I do. It is not against the law.'

As secretary of Tusa, Strauss clearly has lots of ambitious ideas: whether he will be able to achieve them is another matter. Up until 1988, Transnet members who decided to become members of the various staff associations were obliged to join the association that catered for their job category. In terms of this dispensation, Tusa - or to use its old name, the Running and Operating Staff Association - catered for ticket collectors, traffic controllers and shunters. As a result of an internal policy change in Transnet, however, this system no longer applies. By changing the union's name, Strauss has signalled that he no longer intends to confine himself to the union's traditional job categories, but across grades. In other words, poaching from other unions will be the order of the day.

He has also taken steps to sign up white-collar Transnet workers who up to now have not been represented by trade unions. Strauss' Senior Officers Association, which was formed at the beginning of last year, is competing with Salstaff in trying to organise them.

Strauss won't say whether his union favours a new federation or the super white union idea. 'That is difficult ques-



tion to answer', he told *WIP*. 'Both those unions (Yster & Staal and the MWU) are dear and very valued friends. If I answer explicitly I would be choosing sides and I cannot do that. To form a super white union obviously poses a lot more problems, but both options are very viable. Which is not to say that they should both exist. Certain things are still developing - only when they materialise will I be able to speak'.

Back then to Yster & Staal and the MWU. The difference of approach between the two on the question of white worker unity is not an insignificant matter. Both are perfectly well aware of the other's views. Yet even now that their worst nightmares are coming true, they appear unlikely to be able to bury their differences. Why is this so? Notwithstanding Yster & Staal's point about the legalistic complexities of a merger, it seems the real reason must be because there is a lack of trust.

Indeed, Celliers said as much when he told *WIP* that the other reason why his union opposes a super union is because it views the creation of a monopoly as problematic. 'This state of affairs often leads to authoritarianism: one trade union could become very politicised and impose its political will on members,' he stated. 'Greater flexibility and competition between unions is in the interests of workers'.

If politics is at the root of the problem between Yster & Staal and the MWU, what then are their political positions? The MWU has, of course, long been associated with rightwing political parties. For example, Conservative Party (CP) and Herstigte Nasionale Party (HNP) leaders have frequently been guest speakers at its congresses. And in 1987 its former general secretary, Arrie Paulus, was elected CP MP for Carletonville.

These days, according to some *WIP* sources, the union may have moved beyond parliamentary politics into the extra-parliamentary arena and closer to organisations like the AWB which - coincidentally or not - has also been punting the idea of a super union. Celliers, on the other hand, is at pains to portray Yster & Staal as being independent of party politics. 'Yster & Staal has been and always will be apolitical', he says. 'It is true that some of its officials participate in things like municipal elections, but when these become politicised the union does not allow that official to stand. And if a member should stand the union will not support that member's campaign'.

One cannot, of course, take Celliers' claims about the apolitical nature of Yster

& Staal totally at face value. The point has already been made that the Sacol unions are more right wing than the other white unions. Nevertheless, it is quite apparent from his comments that unlike the MWU the union clearly does not want to publicly associate itself with rightist politics.

Meantime, as all these unions are well aware, time is running out for the white worker and the MWU is becoming more impatient with the protagonists of a federation.

In the Christmas issue of *Die Mynwerker* general secretary Peet Ungerer pours scorn on their ideas and claims there is a groundswell of support among white workers for a super union: 'Despite stupid excuses and slanderous talk, there is an unstoppable will for the deliverance fight against the organised money power and its allies' strategy to divide the white worker and then to rule'. He fails, however, to adequately justify why a federation is a bad idea. Indeed, his explanation betrays exactly why Yster & Staal has good reason to mistrust the MWU.

'The idea that a federation of unions would be the solution will not work', Ungerer told *Die Mynwerker*. 'Because a federation is formed out of several unions who (sic) is constitutionally controlled and is managed by each individual union's different executive committees, a federation does in fact not give effective protection and in times of a crisis will be a bulldog without teeth'.

In other words, the democratic process in terms of which each union in a federation is autonomous is not enough.

What the MWU wants is total control - hegemony.

But dreams are one thing, reality is another. Political and labour risk consultant Wim Booysse is probably right when he says that unity in white labour is unlikely to come unless the various right wing political factions can unite - and the prospects of that happening, according to him, are extremely remote. Nevertheless, Booysse does not underestimate the capacity of white workers to damage the economy because of the strategic positions they occupy in it.

So even if organised labour currently does not pose a threat, the actions of individual workers could have a devastating effect. And there is, of course, always the possibility that members of the 'tame' white unions like the AEU and the SA Electrical Workers could become disgruntled with their present leaders and get rid of them. That could alter the equation considerably.

None of this, however, explains why the MWU has been engaging in certain activities which it would probably have preferred were not known. For example, when racial tensions reached fever-pitch in Welkom last year after two white miners were slain by black miners, Ungerer actually sat down and negotiated alongside Cyril Ramaphosa, general secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), to try to defuse the crisis. Later in the year the MWU set another precedent when it joined NUM in talks with the Chamber of Mines over retrenchments. Could it be that despite all the tough talk the MWU is actually becoming more pragmatic? One can only hope. •

## Resources & Materials Centre (RMC)

PO Box 31123, Braamfontein 2017

First floor, Portland Place, 37 Jorissen St, Braamfontein 2017

- RMC Calendar for 1991 available at R5 each. Postage R2
- Freedom Charter translated into Zulu, Sotho (Southern, Northern), Tswana, Venda, Tsonga, English and Afrikaans — R5 each + R2 postage
- T-shirts in full colour — R15 each + R2 postage:
  - Welcome Home Oliver Tambo
  - Nelson Mandela
  - ANC leads the way
  - SACP
  - SADTU
  - Sam Nujoma
- Marshall's epaulettes — R5 each + R1,50 postage
- ANC badges (big buttons) — R2 each + 50c postage
- SACP badges
- Nelson Mandela badges
- ANC flags (with stick) — A4 size R5 + R1,50 postage
- SACP flags
- Still available: the original welcome the leaders T-shirt — R12 + R2 postage

DISCOUNT  
FOR BULK  
ORDERS!

For further information call (011) 339-3449



# One small leap for those who till the land

**S**outh Africa's 1,3 million farmworkers - who along with domestic workers are the most exploited members of the labour force - will soon qualify for some of basic labour protections enjoyed by other workers. This follows the government's decision to call for comment on proposals by the National Manpower Commission (NMC) published in December last year to extend the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) and the Unemployment Insurance Act (UIA) to agriculture.

The NMC's proposals are based on the work of a special technical sub-committee. The government first gave notice that it intended referring the matter to the NMC for investigation in April last year. However, it was not until it entered into negotiations on the Cosatu-Nactu-Sacola accord on the Labour Relations Act (LRA) that the sub-committee was constituted.

Although the government agreed to restructure the NMC to include Cosatu and Nactu as part of the agreement, neither federation is presently party to the NMC. Nevertheless, it is understood that, in the light of the progress made on the LRA, both agreed to participate in the sub-committee's investigation. (Nactu, however, subsequently failed to attend).

The sub-committee also included delegates from the South African Agricultural Union (SAAU) and the the Rural Foundation (both of which are employer organisations), the Labour Party, the NMC and two lawyers. With the involvement of interest groups as diverse as Cosatu and SAAU, it was inevitable that there would have to be compromises - and this proved to be the case. Nevertheless, the NMC proposals do pave the way for significant improvements to the lot of the average farmworker.

Manpower Minister Eli Louw has indicated that the proposed legislation will be dealt with during this year's parliamentary session.

Some of the key NMC recommendations on the BCEA are listed below (unless stated otherwise they refer to all workers and not just farmworkers):

- **Working hours:** It was recommended that maximum ordinary working hours for farmworkers should be 48 hours a week and 9,5 hours per day. The government must, however, reduce these hours over the next few years.

- **Extension of hours:** In order to accommodate the seasonal nature of agricultural work, it was recommended that farmers and farmworkers should be able to enter into an agreement which provides for an extra four hours a week over and above the normal 48 hours, for up to

three months annually, without workers receiving overtime pay. As a quid pro quo, workers will work four hours less than usual for a corresponding period at normal wages. The agreement on extension of hours must be in writing and signed by both parties, with workers receiving a copy. If workers are fired before the compensatory period of shorter hours is completed, all hours already worked in excess of 48 per week should then be paid at overtime rates.

- **Termination of service:** The NMC felt that although the maximum statutory notice required is two weeks, this should not detract from the possible right of workers to be afforded longer notice in terms of common law. If employers pay notice pay in lieu of notice, they should nevertheless be required to give reasonable notice with respect to accommodation and use of land.

- **Calculation of wages:** The recommendation is that payments in kind, use of land larger than a certain size, consumer goods, food and accommodation should be included in the calculation of wages for farmworkers. To facilitate this the Manpower Minister should publish a list stating the value of various types of goods. Employers should not be allowed to make deductions from workers' wage packets without consent.

- **Piece work:** It was recommended that farmworkers doing piece work should be paid a minimum wage equivalent to that which a permanent worker doing broadly similar work would receive.

- **Child labour:** In terms of the BCEA, other than on a farm, it is illegal to employ a child under the age of 15. The NMC could not reach consensus on this point. The majority recommended that farmers should be allowed to employ

children between 12 and 15 to do light work with various provisos, including no work during school times and that all employers of child labour register with the Department of Manpower. The minority (including Cosatu) recommended that the current provisions of the BCEA be extended to farms.

- **Victimisation:** In its present form the BCEA prohibits victimisation in cases where workers have given information to a government official or evidence before a court of law, or where they belong to a trade union or participate in union activities outside of working hours. The NMC recommended two more provisos: situations in which workers have refused or failed to do any act contrary to the provisions of the BCEA; and cases where workers have discussed their conditions of service with other workers, the employer or anybody else.

- **Prohibition of certain practices:** The majority of the NMC recommended that the following practices be prohibited: the unilateral amendment of an employee's term of employment to less favourable terms; and dismissal of a worker in anticipation of the adoption of an Act by Parliament (SAAU dissented in both cases).

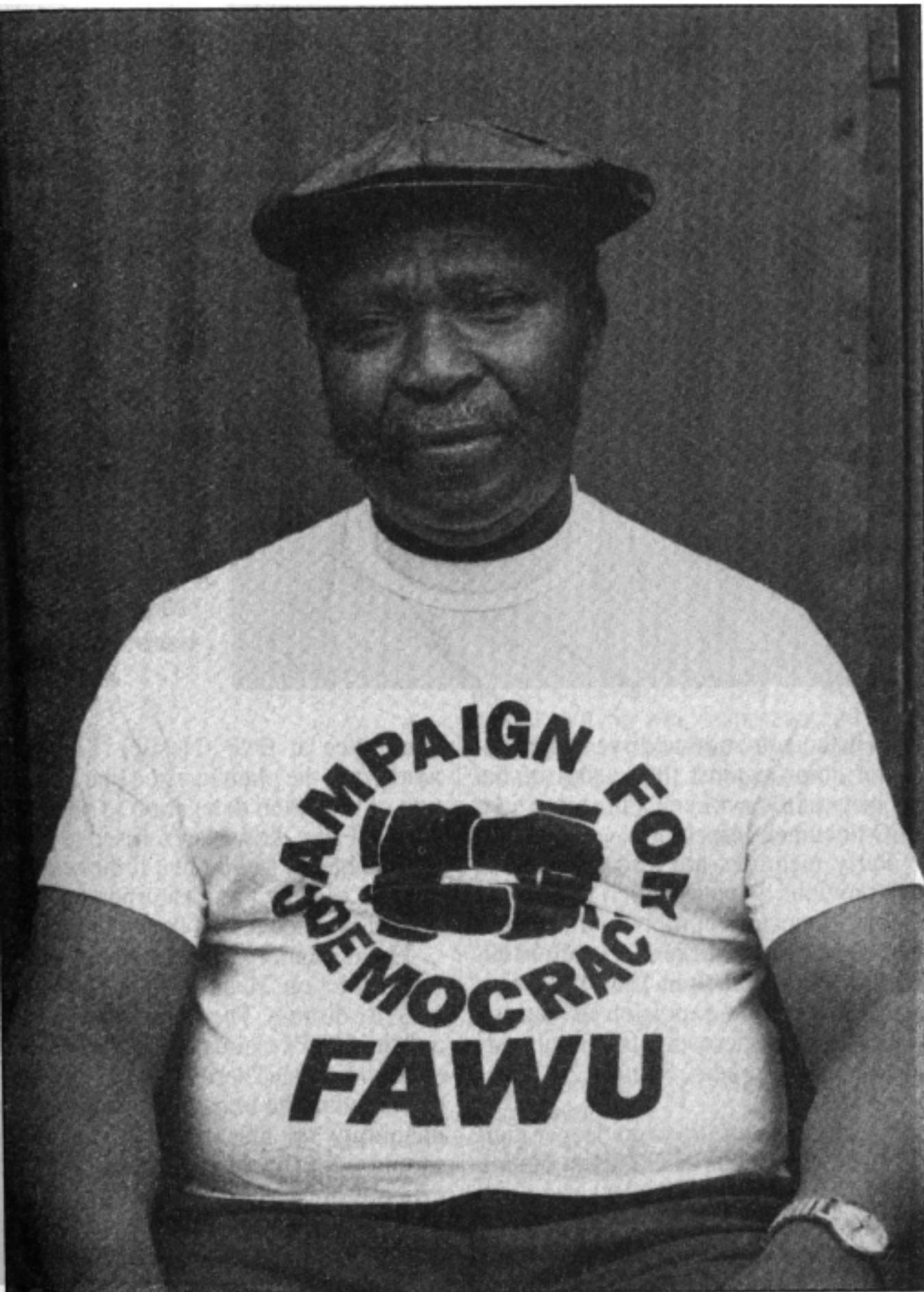
- **Civil order:** The NMC recommended that any party should be entitled to apply to a civil court for an order enforcing the provision of the Act. Any such action should not rule out the possibility of criminal prosecutions for violations of the Act.

- **Labour contractors:** It was recommended by the majority of the NMC that all labour brokers be registered in order to make it easier for workers to claim their money. Furthermore, to facilitate law enforcement all brokers should have a head office in South Africa. A minority (including Cosatu) recommended that where labour brokers are not registered, farmers should be responsible for the working conditions of workers supplied by the broker.

- **Exemptions:** In terms of the BCEA, the Minister may exempt any employer from any of the Act's provisions. The NMC recommended that exemptions should only be considered once the minister has informed all parties with a substantial interest that an application has been received and, in addition, published a notice in the Government Gazette and a local newspaper inviting comment. The Minister should not be allowed to grant exemptions unless the workers' conditions are on balance as least as good as they would be under the BCEA.—*Robyn Rafel*

- **WIP has decided to discontinue its strike tables •**





• Expelled: Former Cape Town Fawu branch chairperson MacWellington Mtiya

# Food for thought

Robyn Rafel reports on developments in the long-running dispute in the Food & Allied Workers Union, with special reference to the role of Cosatu's Western Cape region and the allegation that 'Stalinist' leaders have imposed an authoritarian political culture in the union

**T**rade unionists are seldom at a loss for words when it comes to attacking the bosses. When it comes to the internal affairs of unions, however, they are generally speaking remarkably reticent. But every now and again an issue arises which simply cannot be swept under the carpet. This is the position in which the Food & Allied Workers' Union (Fawu) finds itself.

During the course of last year, readers of the *SA Labour Bulletin (SALB)* have been treated to an unprecedented public airing of the union's dirty linen. At issue have been well documented claims that the union's Western Cape region and the national leadership have not only tolerated but indeed supported various unconstitutional actions in Fawu's Cape Town branch, which with some 10 000 members is one of the union's biggest. Criticism has also been levelled at Cosatu's Western Cape regional leadership for allegedly failing to enforce an agreement struck under its auspices, which could have settled the dispute.

Spearheading the attacks has been a grouping known as the Campaign for Democracy (CFD) headed by 5 worker leaders who lost their leadership positions when the Western Cape regional leaders suspended the branch in November 1989 and were later expelled, and the former secretary of the branch, Miles Hartford, who was dismissed in February last year. Those expelled are the former branch chairperson, MacWellington Mtiya, the vice-chairperson, 'Ginger' Erasmus, Joe Sidambe, Eric Dumbisa and Quinton Arendse. The CFD alleges that all the actions against them and Hartford contravened Fawu's constitution. The campaign claims the support of 20-30 of the 70-80 plants in the branch, saying these constitute the majority of the membership.

The CFD's allegations have been backed by the former general secretary of Fawu, Jan Theron, who has denounced the union's leaders as 'Stalinists' (*SALB* September 1990), saying they have created an authoritarian political culture in the union.

As a solution to the dispute the CFD has proposed that:

- the organisers be reinstated;
- all charges against Hartford and the others be put to a meeting of the branch executive committee;
- a branch AGM chaired by a neutral person be held to elect new office bearers;
- Fawu adopts a code of conduct which includes the following: respect for comrades; the rights of minorities to hold and





• **EXPELLED:**  
Cape Town branch  
officials Joe  
Sidambe (left),  
Quinton Arendse,  
Eric Dumbiza and  
Ginger Erasmus  
were expelled in  
May 1990

put forward their politics; respect for majority decisions; constitutional elections and accountability for all office bearers; no threats, violence or slanders; respect for the constitution.

Says Joe Sidambe, who was elected vice-chair of the shop steward's committee at his SAB plant last year: 'Workers are not accepting what has been done by the leadership. While some don't say anything in meetings, others don't even attend anymore because they see this union is full of lies, there is no truth in the whole thing.'

'Now we have a situation where the new shop stewards don't know how to handle disciplinary procedures or hearings; they don't attend meetings. There are no monthly meetings at the factory,' adds Quinton Arendse, who used to be chairperson of the shop steward's committee at Accolade Trading.

Their colleague, Eric Dumbisa, is equally critical of Cosatu's role in the dispute: 'Cosatu did nothing to help...They tried to bribe us...by saying they would take up our case if we withdrew our court application (to rule a branch AGM held on 4 February last year unconstitutional - see box on page 43). Once it was withdrawn Cosatu was not interested.'

The underlying issue in the dispute is a controversy over the role played by members of the South African Communist Party (SACP). According to the CFD, it is party members who have been responsible for the unconstitutional behaviour in the branch.

'Fawu's leaders have openly aligned themselves with an "undemocratic minority force" in the...branch and...assisted

them in their attempts to drive people out of the union against the wishes of the majority of the workers in the branch,' a CFD document proclaims.

Party members are also blamed for two previous disputes which rocked the union - financial impropriety during the 1987 Spekenham strike and a split in the Eastern Cape branch in 1989 following the dismissal and expulsion of various leaders after disagreements over attending the first Workers' Summit.

**B**ut the accusations go deeper than this. In his article Theron claims there has been a power struggle in the union right from the start of Fawu. (The union was formed in mid-1986 in a merger between Fosatu's Sweet, Food & Allied Workers' Union, the Food & Canning Workers' Union and the Retail & Allied Workers' Union.) One leader in particular is singled out as being responsible. Theron does not name him. But it is clear that he is referring to Fawu's president, Chris Dlamini, who is also vice-president of Cosatu and a member of the SACP's interim leadership group.

'If you were in favour with this individual, you were in favour with the faction (he heads). If you fell out of favour, you risked losing all position in the organisation,' wrote Theron.

'We've heard about Stalinism and Stalinist practices of the bureaucracy (in Eastern Europe). These are the very same practices we are fighting against in Fawu and it is no wonder that many of the Fawu national leaders are on the regional and national leadership of the SACP,' says expelled leader 'Ginger' Erasmus, former chairperson of the shop stewards

committee at FNP (Nestle). Last year workers at the plant insisted that he form part of the union delegation to negotiate wages. Fawu, however, refused to allow this, allegedly saying that if the workers wanted him as their chairperson, they should perhaps resign from the union.

Fawu's national executive committee (NEC) met on 24 and 25 November last year to discuss Theron's *SALB* article and the CFD's claims. Afterwards it was announced that Theron's paper had been discussed in the branches and there was unanimity on the approach the union should adopt in response: the national office bearers would respond in detail. The matter would then be closed as 'members were not prepared to enter into an intellectual struggle or debate in the press.'

Nevertheless, the NEC did adopt a guiding resolution on the issue. In this resolution it was stated that: Fawu would not be led by 'individual interests'; members and officials had to guard against the 'destabilisation' of the union by the CFD and Theron and ensure that their structures are at all times democratic; as a progressive trade union in the national democratic movement, Fawu would continue to undermine all 'reactionary and counter-revolutionary' forces; Fawu disassociated itself from the activities of the 'reactionary and counter-revolutionary' forces.

The NEC also invited Theron and the CFD to approach FAWU structures officially 'to discuss democracy and all their allegations'. The NEC had not issued its response at the time *WIP* went to press.

Theron is highly critical of what has

• To Page 44



# The Fawu dispute in brief

**1989** - Fawu's Cape Town branch has a troubled year. Branch meetings are disrupted by political arguments and personality attacks. Opposing the leadership is a group which allegedly supports a rigid version of the SACP's two-stage theory (national liberation now: socialism much later) as the only road to socialism.

**4 November 1989** - Fawu's regional executive committee (REC) suspends the Cape Town branch on the grounds that it is not functioning as a result of divisions and because proper branch executive committee (BEC) meetings were not being held. The branch chairperson at this stage is MacWellington Mtiya. The vice-chairperson is 'Ginger' Erasmus. The other worker leaders on the BEC are Joe Sidambe, Eric Dumbiza and Quinton Arendse. The Campaign for Democracy (CFD) claims the suspension of the branch was unconstitutional as Fawu's constitution does not give regions the power to do this. Furthermore, it was not as if BEC meetings were not called, but rather that disruptions meant they could not proceed normally.

**4 February 1990** - The Western Cape regional leadership of Fawu calls an AGM of the Cape Town branch which is attended by several national office bearers and chaired by Fawu vice-president Peter Malepe. The secretary, Miles Hartford, is dismissed and new branch office bearers elected. The main charge against Hartford is that he disbursed 10 cheques from the branch account on which the treasurer's signature was forged. The CFD claims that both the meeting and elections were unconstitutional because, amongst other things, insufficient notice was given of the intention to hold them. Furthermore, there was no longer a quorum at the time the elections were staged. Hartford's dismissal was also unconstitutional, according to the CFD, because the charges were never properly investigated, he was not given notice that he was to be charged and was not given a chance to answer them. Furthermore, only the BEC has the power to hear disciplinary matters and to dismiss. Shortly afterwards 2 organisers who left the meeting in protest - Grant Twigg and David Fredericks - are suspended by the new branch leadership. Organiser George Xashimba resigns in protest a while later.

**21 February 1990** - The Western Cape REC endorses the decisions taken at the 4 February branch meeting.

**23 February 1990** - Fawu's national executive committee endorses the 4 February branch meeting decisions.

**19 March 1990** - After numerous appeals to the Fawu national leadership and Cosatu's Western Cape region to intervene, Hartford, the old office bearers and the organisers file papers asking the Supreme Court to rule the February AGM unconstitutional.

**2 May 1990** - At a meeting convened by Cosatu regional executive committee (REC) an agreement is struck to settle the problem. It provides for Hartford and the others to withdraw their case and for the calling of a BEC to discuss the suspensions and prepare for an AGM at which Hartford's dismissal would be discussed and new elections would take place. Shortly after this the case is withdrawn.

**25 May 1990** - Fawu's NEC meets and, notwithstanding the withdrawal of the case and the rest of the 2 May agreement, decides to dismiss all the organisers and expel Mtiya, Erasmus, Sidambe, Dumbiza and Arendse for 'taking the union to court'.

**August 1990** - The *SA Labour Bulletin (SALB)* publishes an article by a member its editorial board, Di Cooper, outlining the problems in the branch. In the same issue Fawu national organiser Alan Roberts, on behalf of the union's office bearers, writes that Hartford was guilty of gross neglect of duty in that he: failed to organise proper BEC meetings and on 7 occasions did not submit financial statements at such meetings; failed to forward reports and statements to the REC and head office in an attempt to play down the problems in the branch; refused to hand over branch financial records to the regional office when requested; and forged 10 cheques. Furthermore, Hartford, Mtiya and Erasmus had engaged in 'political censorship' to suppress debate in the branch.

**September 1990** - The *SALB* publishes an article by former Fawu general secretary Jan Theron in which he charges that a tight caucus has taken over the union, employing purges and untruths to do so. Theron also defends Hartford's management of the branch, pointing out that the branch convened more meetings in 1989 than any other Fawu branch.

**November 1990** - The *SALB* prints a letter from Hartford in which he denies being guilty of financial impropriety. The same issue also carries a letter from Roberts retracting the allegation that Hartford forged cheques or defrauded the union.





**The leadership has two alternatives: To accept criticism and take steps to put matters right, or to continue suppressing criticism'**

— Jan Theron

happened so far: 'The union has not had the courtesy to inform me about its November decision: I read about it in the press. But the fact that not a single factual issue has been disputed speaks for itself. My article was in part a response to what Fawu national organiser Alan Roberts said in the August 1990 issue of the *SALB*. In part, it tries to understand what has gone so badly wrong in the union. Roberts was writing on behalf of the national office bearers of Fawu. Some of what he said is blatantly untrue and he has had to retract it. Almost all of what he said was irrelevant and misleading. I regard it as a deliberate attempt to cloud the real issues.

'The real issues are whether a national leadership of a union can disregard its own constitution and remove a branch leadership it does not like, and whether it is acceptable that officials are dismissed and worker leaders expelled for challenging the national leadership over its disregard for the constitution. Further, if the national leadership gets away with these things, what will the long-term consequences be for the union, the union movement and the progressive movement in general? The last issue is the one that particularly concerns me.

'After the publication of my article, the leadership has two alternatives. One, accept criticism and take steps to put matters right. Two, to continue suppressing criticism. Fawu has clearly shown that it has chosen the latter course. What they are saying can only mean that anyone opposed to the national leaders represents 'individual interests' and 'reactionary and counter-revolutionary force'. And the national office bearers, the very people who stand indicted, are the people the NEC has delegated to respond'.

**A**s for the invitation to approach Fawu structures, Theron does not believe that will help. 'I was invited to a meeting with an NEC delegation some time ago. I went, taking with me five Fawu members, two of whom had been expelled. The delegation refused to discuss anything in the presence of the two. As long as workers can be expelled for criticising the leadership, there is clearly no point in any meeting'.

But what of the allegations against SACP members? Were they involved in a plot to take over the leadership positions in the union? Party spokesperson Jeremy Cronin says not. 'As a party we would absolutely deny that there was some kind of centrally-guided party move against any of the trade unions - be it Fawu or any other. We are very strict about this. The party cannot act as a

behind-the-scenes caucus - if we did that would blow up in our faces. This has been the guiding principle of our work inside the ANC and the trade unions,' he told *WIP*.

But he adds: 'That is not to say that individual comrades may not sometimes act in undemocratic ways. It is not impossible that there are party people and party supporters who in the past have been very dogmatic and pushed themselves forwards in sectarian battles as the party. We find that unacceptable.'

Should the party intervene in the Fawu dispute since there are question marks over the role of some of its members? Cronin again says no. 'We would be reluctant to intervene. But if it is shown that there are party members who are acting undemocratically then it is certainly our duty to intervene, although not in the union per se: these issues should be sorted out within the organisation. If the party can play a role in resolving something we would certainly listen. But for external organisations to intervene would be a last resort.'

Garth Strachan, a member of the SACP Western Cape interim leadership, echoes Cronin's sentiments: 'At a regional level perhaps we could add that there have been suggestions that there is some kind of plot because the party occupies the same building as Fawu, the Vuyisile Mini Centre in Guguletu. It is important to place on record that along with other organisations we just rent an office here. The centre gives us access to our most important constituency, namely the African working class. To imply that the party has collapsed into Fawu simply because we rent an office is mischievous.'

What of Dlamini? What is his response to Theron's allegations? 'I don't know what Theron means (about a plot). I always thought he supported the party. When there was the threat of a split in Fawu in 1987, Jan organised a delegation to go to Lusaka and ask Comrade Ray Alexander, who is a communist, for advice. When he came back he acted on her advice and the problem was solved. Therefore, if anyone was trying to use the

party as a vehicle to take over the union it was him.'

Dlamini also denies the allegations made about him personally. 'I was elected president of Fawu on the day the union was established in 1986. Theron supported my election. Since then I have been re-elected. If I had done the things I am accused of people would have opposed my election. There has not been anything like that. I have never imposed myself on anyone.'

He adds: 'There are no divisions in the union. There could be differences - but that does not mean divisions. Differences can be solved through debate.'

Theron rejects Dlamini's comments about himself. He says there was no threat of a split in Fawu at the time he and others travelled to Lusaka. Nor did the meeting take place at his initiative. Rather, it was Sactu that issued the invitation. 'I am not a member of the SACP and have never approached the party formally,' he told *WIP*.

**T**heron's critics say he has a difficult personality, is unable to communicate effectively and has not been known to act in an autocratic manner himself. Even if this is true, it's hardly relevant. There have also been suggestions that Hartford has acted in the way he has for purely political motives. He is a Trotskyist, it is said, and it is for this reason that he is opposed to the SACP and SACP people.

*WIP* asked him whether these allegations are true. 'I don't like to go on labels,' he responded. 'I certainly subscribe to basic Marxist philosophy and continue to do so. If that makes me a Trotskyist then I am a Trotskyist. I am a member of the ANC and self-confessed loyal member of Fawu fighting to defend the union's constitution. The point at issue is whether political differences are tolerated in the union.'

Cosatu's Western Cape region has refused to be drawn into a discussion on these issues. When *WIP* approached the regional secretary, Lucy Nyembe, for comment, she responded with undisguised aggression: 'I am not prepared to discuss the matter. I don't think it is something Cosatu should comment on.' She then declared that *WIP* should not even say that it had spoken to her.

There can be no further clarity on the dispute in Fawu's Cape Town branch until the NEC releases its response to Theron's *SALB* article. The key question then will be whether the allegations are addressed adequately. If this does not turn out to be the case, it will reflect very badly on the national leadership. ●



In the end, Johnny Gomas was going to cut a sad figure. Somewhere, a light had gone out.

There was failing health. There was the loneliness: 'We didn't meet together as friends, you see', he said in the last years of his life, looking back on his former comrades. 'We met together as members of a party who had to do a job, to carry through a mission'.

But there was more than loneliness, poor health and age. There was the sour taste of resentment. For one, he had never been sent to the Soviet Union. La Guma had. The Buntings had. Eddie Roux had. But Gomas had never visited the land of, as he put it, 'freedom only' and 'the mighty Volga'.

There were other things as well. Like what are we to make of the life-size photograph of Joseph Stalin on the back of his bedroom door? And then ... there were the whites in the party.

Doreen Musson's political biography, *Johnny Gomas: Voice of the Working Class*, invites us to reflect back upon the first decades of what has become today's tripartite alliance, upon its origins, its ups and its downs. Gomas, a pioneer trade unionist, communist and ANC activist, embodied the beginnings of the alliance in his own life.

Johnny Gomas, Boeta John, was born on 8 April 1901 into a community of independent coloured farmers eking out a living from their small-holdings in Abbotdale, Malmesbury district. Abandoned by his father, Johnny and his mother Elizabeth went to live in Kimberley in 1911. His mother worked as a domestic. And it was there, in Kimberley, in 1915, that Johnny started his own working life as an apprentice tailor.

It was there, in Kimberley, that he had his first brush with the law, doing time for theft. ('Johnny was always where there was trouble': Elizabeth Gomas, his mother).

And it was there, in Kimberley, in 1919, that Gomas joined the ANC, the ICU and the ISL - all three in the same year. The ISL, the International Socialist League, was the immediate forerunner of the Communist Party of South Africa. Trade unionism, the national liberation movement and communism - tack and stitch - this was the cloth from which the rest of Gomas' life was now to be cut.

It wasn't going to be an easy life.

But there was a time when he was deeply fulfilled, at the height of his adult powers. He had moved to Cape Town in the early 1920s and became a full-time ICU organiser in 1923. He belonged to those pioneers of the trade union movement, one of the first generation who,



## Boeta John

### JOHNNY GOMAS: VOICE OF THE WORKING CLASS

By Doreen Musson  
Buchu Books, R23

flying the banner of the ICU, set the country alight. In a year or two Gomas had recruited hundreds of farm labourers (still no easy task) in Stellenbosch, Paarl, Wellington and Montagu. He became a leading light in the ANC, and in the party.

Two captivating photographs from this decade, published in Doreen Musson's biography, tell it all: photograph number one - 'ANC (Western Cape) Officials: Stanley Silwana (Assistant Secretary); John Gomas (Acting President); Bransby Ndobe (Provincial Secretary), September 1928, after release from Roeland Street Prison'.

They have just done three months hard labour for 'inciting hostility between black and white'. Three young men, in their suits and bow-ties, stare proudly out at us.

And the second photograph is 'John Gomas, after his release from prison in 1931'. Thirty years old. He has just done another three months hard labour. This time for public violence arising out of stone throwing against scabs breaking a clothing workers' strike. Gomas was alleged to have had eight stones in the pocket of his overcoat when arrested. That makes one and a half week's labour per alleged stone (not counting those already thrown, of course). The photo is

a study in determined composure. The face belongs to now. It seems to come from Cahac, or Cosatu, or the barricades in Bonteheuwel. But the date is 1931.

1933 is the next photograph. And now something has vanished. The face is gaunt. Perhaps I am imagining it, but surely a light has gone out?

Maybe it was just a rotten day? Or maybe it was going to be the whole damn rotten decade. 1933. The year marks the beginnings of the terrible Stalinist purges in the Soviet Union. Tens of thousands of CPSU members were to be liquidated, men and women with calloused workers' hands, Bolsheviks, Red Army soldiers, underground veterans.

These terrible events, in which the Revolution tore itself apart, had already begun to have their distant echo in South Africa. The heavy hand of Stalin's Comintern reached into CPSA ranks. At the beginning of the 1930s there were re-criminations and counter-attacks, and a string of expulsions from the South African party.

In 1932 Gomas' closest associate and comrade, the man with whom he had shared a single trade unionist wage, Jimmy La Guma, was expelled because he allegedly 'failed to control revolutionary work in the Red Trade Unions'.

The expulsion notice was signed:  
J Gomas.

'We didn't meet together as friends, you see. We met together as members of a party who had to do a job, to carry through a mission'. By 1933, then, a light has gone from his face. But the internecine, factionalised battles within the CPSA were not the only front of trouble. Already in 1927 Gomas, Cape provincial secretary of the ICU, had been summarily expelled from the organisation when it took a rightwards lurch with a resolution that 'No officer of the ICU shall be a member of the Communist Party'. Expelled with Gomas, and refusing like him to renounce his communism, was none other than Jimmy La Guma, then ICU general secretary.

In 1930, the ANC for its part, also took a rightward lurch.

Josiah Gumede, the president general, the man for whom Gomas deputised as provincial ANC president, lost his post to conservative forces. The strong bond between the party and the congress, which had developed in the previous several years, was ruptured.

In the space of a few years, the three formations that the 18-year-old Gomas had joined with high hopes back in Kimberley in 1919, were all in rapid decline. The most dramatic being that of the ICU, which had grown to a gigantic move-



## BOOKS

ment of, perhaps, 250 000 members in the space of a few years. It was now declining even more rapidly than it had grown.

But 1933 was far from being the end of Gomas' activism.

For many years he remained a leading trade unionist, a major force in the party, an associate of the independent ANC that continued the mass line in the rural towns of the Cape, a leading figure in the All Africa Convention, and the National Liberation League. But a light had gone out, and he was not going to be central, as he had perhaps once deserved, in the revival of the party in the 1940s, or of the ANC and the trade union movement in the 1950s.

In the 1940s he became less and less noticeable in the party leadership. And yet it was a time (notwithstanding biographer Musson's claims to the contrary) of rapid growth for the party especially in the new burgeoning industrial townships of the East Rand, Port Elizabeth and Durban. The 1950 banning of the CPSA, and Gomas' own banning and two years of house arrest, 'granted him', says his biographer, 'the reprieve he seemed to have needed so badly'.

The 1950s, then, for Gomas meant being banned ... house arrested ... more isolated than ever. The man of action and mass meetings now begins to speak alone to his diary-memoirs. Gomas tries to figure it out for himself, his trajectory, his life and times. It's a political self-therapy for the sour taste in his mouth, for the disappointment, for the sense of something lost. But Gomas is steeped in Bolshevism, remember one of the first generation, the old school, a worker-intellectual who had once requested Lenin's 'Materialism and Empiriocriticism' as reading matter in Roeland Street Jail. And so he tries to turn his memoirs into Theory. And the Theory starts to become Pan Africanism.

But it is eclectic theory, eclectic Pan Africanism, stitched together from different fragments of cloth. He is self taught and he is largely alone in his bedroom (with or without the life-size portrait, now, I don't know).

Dear Robert Sobukwe,

'Allow me to congratulate you on the establishment of the Pan African Congress and hope every endeavour will be made to make it the decisive organisation to achieve African emancipation. Since 1951 I was beginning to think and realise that it was hopeless in the way the ANC and other non-white organisations were being led and that no headway can be made that way.

However, I am pretty isolated and do

not know what is happening. I am trying to get in locally. I would like to know whether you are issuing some information on policy and activities. I am enclosing a circular expressing some views which speaks for itself. Further find out from Dr Eddie Roux about me. I shall be glad to hear from you. Carry on brother, it can be done'. The letter is signed: John Gomas, May 18 1959.

Pan Africanism, Sobukwe's PAC split from the ANC, and Gomas' attempts to unravel the essential threads of his own life trajectory - they start to be stitched together in a theory-cum-grudge: namely, the whites-in-the-leadership-of-the-party.

Part of the grudge is the selection of white CPSA candidates in municipal and other elections. 'Every Dick, Tom and Harry (Harry is well up now) [a not very subtle reference to the ex-communist Harry Snitcher-JC] comes forward and swears to all that is sacred that he will fight with all in his power for the rights of non-whites'.

Well, you could easily find a subjective motivation in this. Gomas had once had to abandon his own candidacy for a District 6 municipal ward election, when a second (and white as it happens) party candidate also stood. Personal grudge, perhaps, but don't forget that some of the leading white CPSA election candidates of the 1940s very rapidly forgot their (now much less fashionable) communism when the party was banned in 1950. Another grudge. Gomas had never been sent to the Soviet Union. But the Buntings had, and Eddie Roux had. Looking back, Gomas tells his diary-memoirs in 1956 with some satisfaction that the 'imperialist attitudes and chauvinist attitudes of Bunting, his wife and E R Roux' had met their just desserts in Moscow in 1928. 'They were told are (sic) white chauvinists and treated with contempt as they deserved'.

**T**his is the very same (white Dr) Eddie Roux that we have just seen Gomas quoting as a character reference to Robert (yes) Sobukwe three years later. But if the white-in-the-party grudge is often disproportionate, and at times grossly unfair, it is not necessarily all wrong.

There in these diary-memoirs, or at least the parts that Musson quotes for us, are truths and part truths, perceptions and convictions that cannot be dismissed.

Gomas is raising awkward things that are too often swept under the carpet. The whites controlled things, says Gomas to his diary, because they had cars and spare-rooms. When a leading African

comrade from up-country was in town, it was they who picked him up and housed him. And all this picking and putting up gave them time to caucus and to influence.

'The political line and directions is (sic) decided on in Hillbrow and Orangezicht', he tells his diary. 'That is where the Freedom Charter was formulated mainly and activity for its acceptance directed from. Apart from the fact that the FC was one of the finest programmes drawn up, the ANC only adopted it more than 12 months later'.

Can we be entirely sure we have quite shaken off this kind of problem in the 1990s? Is there someone in the liberation movement today who will be telling his or her diary-memoirs something similar in twenty years time?

Gomas diary-memoirs are there to ask us these awkward questions.

PS: Virtually all the information for the above comes from Doreen Musson's biography. Anyone interested in more information should read the book. But it's only fair to prospective readers to warn that, in my view, Musson's book is uneven and not always reliable.

Some of the basic facts are way off the mark - for instance, as just about everyone else knows, MK was not launched in September 1962, as Musson inexplicably claims (p.123); nor is her statement that 'Bunting and Roux saw white workers as the main revolutionary force' (p.62) remotely correct. In fact, it was precisely SP Bunting and Eddie Roux who led and successfully won the revolution to Africanise the CPSA.

In her handling of the 1960 pass-burning campaign Musson gives the false impression that it was a PAC campaign belatedly joined by the ANC. In fact, it was the ANC campaign that the PAC hastily jumped into ahead of time.

If at times the scholarship is weak, at other times the book is encumbered with totally redundant scholarly flourishes. Do we really need to be told, by way of explanation for Gomas' youthful venture into robbery, that 'Crime has been defined as behaviour defined by the dominant political group in a society...(and is)...linked to the social formation and in an examination of the economic, social and intellectual roots of institutions such as reformatories and prisons a thesis has been advanced which makes a direct link between crime and industrial capitalism in South Africa'.

Boeta John would not perhaps have disagreed, but he would have put it a whole lot simpler. As in life, so in death, Johnny Gomas has not quite got the cut he deserved. - *Jeremy Cronin* •



# Waste not, want not

**WATER, WASTE AND WILDLIFE -  
THE POLITICS OF ECOLOGY IN  
SOUTH AFRICA**

**By Eddie Koch, Dave Cooper and  
Henk Coetzee**

**Penguin Books, R14,99**

from severe air pollution - these are some of the health hazards they point to which cut across the barriers of race and class to undermine the health of thousands of South Africans. But of course the worst affected are the poor and the powerless.

But the poor and the powerless are no longer waiting passively at heaven's gates. The book describes how environmental awareness is growing and people are organising in environmental pressure groups throughout the country. The authors achieve a fine balance between identifying abuses and describing people's efforts to mobilise against them. They have produced an inspiring and empowering book.

The book, the third in Penguin's Forum Series edited by Mark Orkin, reads very easily. The language is accessible, though there are a few 'trip words'. (What on earth is 'flocculation'?) However, there are three reasons that this reader has for feeling a little disappointed.

Firstly the three authors are all exceptionally well informed. Koch is from the Weekly Mail, Cooper from the Environmental Development Agency (EDA) and Coetzee from Earthlife Africa and together have a superb overview of the environmental challenges in South Africa. So it is disappointing that they don't share more with us. Clearly, space was a real constraint, but there should have been far more references and suggestions for further reading.

There are tantalisingly brief references to important questions - such as the links between nuclear energy and nuclear weapons for example. The reader should have been directed to further material on this and other crucial topics.

This is the first book on 'the politics of ecology' to appear in South Africa. Given this pioneering role, one must question the authors' choice of water, waste and wildlife as priority areas. Writing in the latest issue of *African Wildlife*, Farieda Khan urges environmentalists 'to confront the land issue' and 'its bitter, divi-

sive legacy of negative effects on environmental attitudes'.

Energy is another key policy area - both in a global sense - the West's energy-intensive lifestyle is a key factor in the current crisis in the Gulf - and in South Africa.

The authors advocate 'long-term environmental sustainability' but I would have liked a more in-depth discussion of this notion. Sustainable development will be crucial to policy formulation in South Africa's future, as the key concept linking economic development to environmental protection.

Unlimited energy supplies can be sustained indefinitely from renewable resources such as the sun and the wind. Sustainability also means re-use, repair and recycling - learning to consume less and conserve more. As Gandhi said, 'There is enough in the world to meet everyone's need but not for their greed'.

It is significant that this concept of sustainable development is not foreign to us in Africa. The role which traditional cultures have played in conservation was recognised at the Conference for the New World Conservation Strategy in 1988 which said: 'Conservation has always been integral to the survival of indigenous peoples. Without renewable resources to harvest, they lose both livelihood and way of life. Traditional cultures have developed management systems to assure sustainable yields of renewable resources from their environment'. The Richtersveld community who mobilised to secure the legal right to continue to use a proclaimed national park for grazing and to participate in its management said: 'We want to leave a legacy for our children, not crumbs'. This is a concrete expression of the principle of sustainable development.

The authors could have drawn on this principle to provide a stronger critique of the free enterprise approach to environmental problems. As the Brazilian environmentalist, Jose Lutzenberger, has said, the problem with 'market solutions' is that certain key players cannot participate in the market. There are no 'market mechanisms' to cover the needs of future generations.

We are beginning to have the tools to protect the two pillars of all future progress - children and the environment. But these tools will not be used until the mass of the people demand it. This will only happen when people have more knowledge and understanding of environmental issues. There is an urgent need for us all to get informed and to get active. 'Water, waste and wildlife' is an important starting point. - *Jacklyn Cock* •

For millions of years our planet has sustained a rich diversity of life. Now, one single species - humankind - is putting Earth at risk. People the world over are suffering the effects of pollution, deforestation and radiation. Species are disappearing at a terrifying rate. The warming of the atmosphere threatens us all with devastating changes in climate and food production. These threats are both global and local. As the advertisement says, 'South Africa is a world in one country'. With our mix of first-world environmental problems such as acid rain, and third-world environmental problems such as soil erosion, we are a microcosm of the environmental challenges facing the planet. With one of the most unequal distributions of income in the world, we are also a microcosm of the exploitation and injustice that divides the world into the rich countries of the industrialised first world, and the impoverished third world.

In most approaches to these environmental problems in South Africa there has been a focus on victims. The authoritarian conservation perspective focused on the preservation of wilderness areas and particular species of plants and animals. Within this perspective 'overpopulation' was often identified as the main environmental problem. It was people who were perceived to be responsible for destroying trees and creating waste. This 'victim blaming' approach has been countered by a 'victim weeping' approach. As in the television film 'South Africa: the wasted land', our people are presented as passive and pathetic victims of environmental degradation.

Now a book has appeared which signals a new approach. This approach views people not as passive victims but as active agents engaged in struggle to resist all forms of exploitation and injustice. The needs of people are at the centre of the authors' approach. They emphasise that the first priority should be 'the meeting of basic needs - clean water, fuel, food, health services, education and housing. Poor people only strip the environment of its natural resources when they have no other choice in order to survive.' (p. 58) The book emphasises the importance of linking the struggle against the abuse of the environment with the struggle against social injustice and the exploitation of people.

The outcome is compelling reading. While the book focuses on the three crucial issues of water, waste and wildlife, the authors write about the frightening range of environmental problems which threaten us all. Asbestosis, cancer caused by herbicides, respiratory disease



One day, as I recall in 1983, I went to see late Azapo secretary general Muntu Myeza to interview him about the Freedom Charter for an article for *Drum*.

We had first met when, as a journalist, I had covered his days in the dock in the Saso-BPC trial in 1975-76.

'Ja, Howard', he said as I entered his shabby office, 'your white arse has been saved again'.

'What do you mean?' I asked.

'Slovo's gone and done it again — another ANC bomb this morning'.

It's an irony which I've tried to have my more conservative relatives understand: that, rather than damn Slovo, they should be grateful for him. Without the likes of him, Ray Alexander, Ronnie Kasrils, Beyers Naude, Marion Sparg, and a few others, there'd be little basis for black people to believe whites are potentially worthy compatriots in the future.

But, if some of the political luminaries quoted in Julie Frederikse's book are to be believed, Myeza and I could be wrong — moreover, politically backward.

Because we hear Terror Lekota declare in Frederikse's latest book: 'All of us who embrace the non-racial line do so not because there are some white people participating in the struggle — we embrace the non-racial line, first and foremost, because we consider it to be right'.

And Nelson Mandela intones on the cover: 'We have no Whites; we have no Blacks. We have only South Africans'. Really? Rhetorically, Mandela's statement no doubt expresses a noble wish shared by many. And who are we to question it?

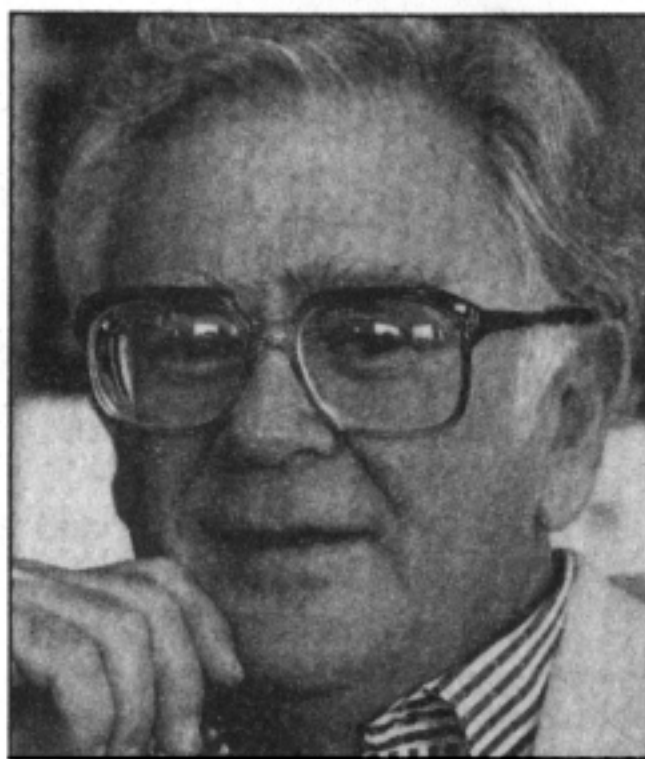
Who indeed?

It is a point to which I will return below.

But first to Julie Frederikse. She has distinguished herself as a journalist and author able to present in clear and accessible form ideas and processes which are often needlessly over-complicated by others.

Her method is to bring forward the statements and symbols of politicians and parties; her authorial hand is active only in the selection of these statements, their juxtaposition and minimal inter-linking commentary.

Many readers will remember her other two excellent popular books on southern Africa. *None but Ourselves* revealed the different mindsets of the antagonists in Rhodesia's bloody transition to Zimbabwe. *A Different Kind of War* displayed the popular and potentially insurrectionary character of the South African



## Crossing the divide

**THE UNBREAKABLE THREAD:  
NON-RACIALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA**

By Julie Frederikse

Ravan Press and Anvil Press,  
R29,95

conflict.

In style *Unbreakable Thread* is the least popular of the three, but still readily accessible and no less worthy. It is a difficult project, well put together, which many will find interesting. In it Frederikse is again concerned to bring forward others' statements and, through them, to trace the remarkable survival of a stated commitment to non-racialism at the centre of opposition to apartheid — something which baffles some foreigners, me and, I sense, many more whites on the left than care to say so.

She conducted more than 200 interviews for the book, mainly with political activists who span several generations and different experiences, and excerpts from 118 appear in it. In the process, she has collected a treasure trove of oral history to which, to her considerable credit, she has generously allowed others access, mainly through the hitherto Harare-based Popular History Trust, which is now linked to the South African History Archive. Her book, like her records, will be of considerable value to historians of the recent period. In particular, for anyone attempting to understand the peculiarities of the South African conflict over the past 30 years, here is a window overlooking the battlefield

of ideas unshuttered by what is often in other cases unnecessarily turgid analysis.

*Unbreakable Thread* also foretells the bright future for which we are headed in South Africa if wishes are indeed the horses that pull history along and good intentions are their oats.

She has Xhosa chiefs recording their anguish to the British forces who invaded their lands in 1818: 'You came at last like locusts. We stood — we could do no more'.

Now, some 170 years later, Stanley Mabizela, deputy head of the ANC's international department, accords to the invaders a higher status on the evolutionary scale: 'Whites are human beings like ourselves, except that they have got the wrong ideology in their heads. And with time they will change and we will stay with them as brothers and sisters....'

I've seen it happen, this change of which Mabizela speaks. A crusty old white civil servant in Harare told me about two years after Rhodesia had become Zimbabwe of how, one day, down a mineshaft, he was moaning yet again about the 'munts' in government. A young white mining engineer turned on him and said: 'Well, if you don't like it here, then fuck off somewhere else'. 'That young chap was right, you know', he told me. 'He got me thinking. And I decided to stay and get to know these dusky fellows. They're OK'.

Rare as this kind of Damascene encounter is among old colonials, I find it a great deal more credible than some other routes, ostensibly to the same result: the pat, egg-head conversions to non-racialism within the white intellectual community; the guilt-induced irrationality, often mistakenly called courage, that has driven young whites, often unconsciously, to seek martyrdom in their anti-apartheid activity; or, on the black side, so glib an account of the transition to non-racialism from an elemental nationalism that the hearing of it leaves one gasping for breath, agoraphobic, looking for some feature of credibility on their political landscape.

And this is where both the strength and weakness of Frederikse's book lies. The strength is the freedom (sometimes to engage in deception of self and others) that she allows her interviewees. But here, too, is the problem: everyone who speaks in it is, apparently, so *sincere* — in politics a much over-rated quality requiring that the speaker believe his or her own propaganda and suffocate problematic insight.

I found myself welcoming the few exceptions to the sanctimonious verbal



## BOOKS

parade from Congressites; and I found myself heaving a sigh of relief at the comments by some of my retrograde friends in black consciousness and the PAC. As her style dictates, Frederikse leaves Congressite protests of sincerity unchallenged.

Recent contributions in the study of language argue convincingly that, through language, we do more than reflect some notionally objective reality; rather, language can be said to construct reality. It is, yes, important that we hear what people think, or what it is we believe we think. But it is also vital to understand how it is that we think — what assumptions and connections underlie the way we construct reality. Between languages and cultures, and between classes within one language group, assumptions and connections can and often do differ markedly.

It is for this among many other reasons that race and language consciousness remains with us — we come from many and varied backgrounds — and it persists even among those who would style themselves the most politically advanced. Though not of itself racist,

this consciousness is racism's essential ingredient. Within the Congress movement at the moment, we can see many examples of this consciousness which, in some regrettable instances, are being injected with racist undertones. Some backstabbing attacks on what is referred to as the Natal 'cabal' form one example of the latter. Even more shameful is the anti-Indian character of some of the gossip directed against those involved in 'Operation Vula'.

And, among some whites on the left, myself included, the ironical sense of humour that keeps us this side of madness often straddles the thin line between this racial consciousness and racism.

Those variants of Marxist thinking which have underpinned so much of the development of militant opposition thinking in South Africa have held that the development of one nation is the desirable and necessary solution to the South African conflict. Moreover, that this is possible.

But history has been somewhat heretical recently in other multi-language and multi-ethnic contexts — examples we simply cannot ignore. The Soviet

Union and Eastern Europe are foremost among them. These instances are complicated by Stalin's nationalities policy, but still we must ask what questions they direct at us. Here in South Africa we face the resurgence of a Boer variant of Zionism and talk of partition; we have one or two ANC leaders patently mobilising ethnic or tribal bases; and we have serious conflict in some townships in which ethnicity, however bolstered by scarcity of resources and shadowy manipulations, has a real determining value for those involved.

Few on the left, myself included, would argue against the objective of non-racialism. We have, however, to avoid confusing what we consider to be the nobility of this aim with the intractable and divided present which the past has delivered to us.

Historical optimists can be a most dangerous breed. And a number of the contributors to Julie Frederikse's book show symptoms of this, sometimes verging on the pathological. Although I am sure it was not her intention, she has done us a great service in making this apparent. - *Howard Barrell* •

### SUBSCRIPTION RATES 1991

#### Rates for 8 issues

#### SOUTH AFRICA

Individuals, trade unions and community organisations	R38
Companies, libraries and institutions	R104
Donor subscriptions	R104

#### SOUTHERN AFRICA

Individuals, trade unions and community organisations	R50
Companies, libraries and institutions	R115
Donor subscriptions	R115

#### USA, CANADA, AUSTRALASIA

Individuals, trade unions and community organisations	\$57.50
Companies, libraries and institutions	\$115
Donor subscriptions	\$115

#### UK and WESTERN EUROPE

Individuals, trade unions and community organisations	£23
Companies, libraries and institutions	£46
Donor subscriptions	£46

Please send subscriptions for South Africa, Southern Africa, USA, Canada, New Zealand and Australia to:

Southern African Research Service  
PO Box 32716  
Braamfontein  
2017

Please send subscriptions for United Kingdom and Western Europe to:

Central Books  
Att: Bill Norris  
99 Wallis Road  
London E9 5LN

Cheques should be crossed and made payable to:

Southern African Research Service  
Enclose payment with order. Subscriptions begin with current issue unless otherwise specified.

-----  
Enclosed find payment of ..... for 8 issues of WIP.

NAME: .....

ADDRESS: .....

.....  
.....  
.....



**SHE GOT A'S IN MATRIC  
FOR MATHS AND PHYSICS.**



**BUT SHE'S GOING TO FAIL HER FIRST YEAR AT  
UNIVERSITY.**

Our education system is in crisis. Teachers are desperately underqualified. Schools are troubled. Students are unprepared for the demands of university and employment. For Shell, the issue is clear. We must help where we can: with scholarships, teacher-training projects and university teaching centres. It's part of being in a new South Africa.

Working  
to make a difference.

