ME, MY MUM AND COSATU: SAM SHILOWA SPEAKS PERSONALLY R4,50

WORK IN PROGRESS

WIP 94 • DECEMBER 1993

MILLIONS CELEBRATE THE END OF AN ERROR...

The Last White Christmas

Editorial comment

The Last White Christmas

This time of year, the buzzword is 'review' — a time when journalists and analysts knowingly cast their eyes back over the year that was.

There's a bit of looking backwards in this edition of *Work In Progress* — but not too much.

We believe it's important to review the past. However, we've put more effort into looking ahead, at what will probably be the most important year in South Africa's history.

It's a year, finally, that *all* South Africans get to play a part in the political process. And, finally, we start to take the first baby-steps towards democracy.

New roles

One of those steps will be to put popularly-elected politicians, for the first time, in parliament's snug leather seats. Some of them will take their seats wearing ill-fitting suits or dresses. More accustomed to overalls and t-shirts (or, if they were in exile, those fine Cuban shirts), they'll be wearing new clothes. It's quite fitting (no pun intended): They'll also be performing new roles, engaging in new forms of struggle.

They will have to grapple with the restrictions created by one of the world's most complicated negotiations processes — with agreements which, at times, were cobbled together at three o'clock in the morning. They'll have to work within the confines of the 'Government of National Unity', entrenched regional powers, groups prepared to hold a gun to the head of the 'new South Africa', and a growing disillusionment with the political process.

In other words, it's going to be another difficult year. But those in the new government aren't the only ones who'll have it tough. Outside the circles of influence, millions of unemployed, hungry for work and change, will probably find that life is still the same this time next year. The same applies to the rural poor, those battling to get an education or decent health care, those living in fear of death at the hands of the politically intolerant...

Fast forward

Because of this, the process of reconstructing South Africa will have to be a rapid one.

If there's one thing the GNU can't afford, it's widespread disillusionment after the election. No matter how much voter education groups try to temper expectations, people are going to expect the election to change their lives. The poor, in particular, will expect their quality of life to improve substantially — no matter what excuses the politicians or economists offer.

Next year will be particularly important for the South African Left. As our correspondents point out in this issue of *Work In Progress*, realignments in the tripartite alliance (the REAL freedom alliance) throw up a range of new challenges — not least of which is the need for a movement which can actively and methodically agitate for fundamental change.

Real change is needed. Real change is expected. Real change is necessary. And the need for vigilance, for pressure, is going to be just as necessary.

As we mark South Africa's Last White Christmas, then, our hope for the new year is that the next year will be a substantially better one for all South Africans. And every year after that better still.

— *Chris Vick*

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PHOTO: BRETT ELOFF (SOUTHLIGHT)

THE LAST WHITE CHRISTMAS

Out with the old, in with the new. But how new will it be? How many of the old faces are still going to be around next Christmas? And how many of the 'new boys' can offer anything new? WIP's correspondents probe the past 12 months and make a few electoral promises of their own

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Including...

A WORKING CLASS THAT'S IN LABOUR

Key Cosatu leaders are off to parliament. Nehawu general secretary PHILLIP DEXTER is one of those who's hoping their suitcases contain more than just suits — that they'll take with them a fair share of their members' aspirations and ideals

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PHOTO: WILLIAM MATLALA

briefs

MEDIA

Independent magazines unite

SEVERAL INDEPENDENT MAGAZINES — including *Work In Progress* — are forming a new centralised publishing house early next year in a bid to ensure their survival in a post-apartheid South Africa.

The magazines — *WIP*, *SA Labour Bulletin*, *Learn & Teach*, *SPEAK* and *Challenge* — have signed a declaration committing themselves to forming the Independent Magazines Group (IMG).

The IMG will consist of a centralised management unit providing a range of services to the five magazines' editorial units. The group will be governed by a trust.

Those involved in the merger have identified several advantages in the move, including:

- More effective use of existing resources, which will bring about fairly substantial savings.
- Increased bargaining power in dealing with printers, advertising agencies and other sectors.
- Greater exchange of ideas between the five magazines' editorial units.
- Increased access to local and foreign funding.
- Lobbying for state subsidisation of small publications.

The IMG magazines have a combined circulation of around 60 000 and a readership of almost half a million. All five magazines will be housed in a central office and, at this stage, will continue to publish as separate titles. ■

— Chris Vick

FORCED REMOVALS

A last kick for Dukuduku

THE GOVERNMENT'S FORCED REMOVALS policy gave one final kick in November — and 10 000 people lost their homes in the process.

The Dukuduku community, resident in a forest near Mtubatuba in northern Natal, was moved out after police demolished houses and transported people to a site just five kilometres away.

Dukuduku didn't die without protest; the forest people waged their own "war of resistance" against the police, digging deep sand traps and chopping down trees in an attempt to prevent the removal.

Some of those trees prompted the removal in the first place: the Natal

JOINT POLICING

Provinciall Adminsitration (NPA) wanted the Dukuduku people out to ensure the survival of the unique coastal lowland forest they called home.

As is often the case in "green" debates, the NPA argued that trees were more important than people — declaring at one point that removing the community was "in the national interest".

Three years ago, the NPA got a court order instructing the Dukuduku people to move. Several rounds of negotiations followed, during which residents questioned the need to move — accusing the NPA of even setting fire to sections of the forest in an attempt to flush them out.

As Qondukukhulama Mkhwanazi told *WIP*: "They nearly burnt the forest down trying to get us out. They say we are destroying the forest, but we live here peacefully with the buck, the birds and the trees.

"If they are so concerned, why do they allow the whites to chop down the forest and plant sugar cane everywhere?" ■

— Lena Slachmuijler

All in it together

ONE OF NATAL'S FIRST EXPERIMENTS IN joint policing — involving community representatives from both Inkatha and the ANC — is having surprisingly good results.

Joint patrols have been in place for just over two months now in the Bhambayi shack area in Inanda, after more than six months of discussions between the ANC Southern Natal region and the SAP.

Initially, the ANC demanded the removal of the SAP's Internal Stability Unit (ISU), which was promised by the regional police commissioner and then reneged upon. Only two months ago — after the IFP gained a foothold in the area and the Regional Dispute Resolution Committee (RDRC) became involved in peace talks — was progress made towards agreeing on joint policing.

Already its success is telling: At the time of going to press, not a single person had been killed in the area since early October, when the programme started. In the previous nine months, more than 250 people had died.

The system involves the ISU, followers of the ANC-aligned "Reds", the Inkatha-aligned "Greens", the RDRC and the Network of Independent Monitors (NIM).

Monitors from the Greens and Reds travel throughout the township together in police vehicles draped with a huge peace banner, and communicate with monitors at the SAP's operations centre.

Don't shoot us

NIM monitor Francis Armitage says it has taken a while for the community to get used to the patrols: "When we first started, Red and Green monitors would use the police loudspeakers to tell people they should not throw stones or shoot the vehicle, because their representatives were inside.

"They did this literally all night," Armitage explains, "so you can imagine that by 1am people were getting the message."

Both Red and Green monitors stress that their participation is aimed at policing the police rather than policing warring parties.

But they admit that the joint policing programme has also made it easier to resolve conflict among themselves.

If the programme continues to succeed, it is bound to affect relationships between the community and the police. Already, people are showing more trust towards the police; and, as the trust develops, those police members sincere about serving the community will be empowered to do so. ■

— Lena Slachmuijler

● *See also page 32: The people versus the people*

■ THE PEACE POLICE: Bhambayi's joint policing project prepares for patrol

briefs

■ **CALL BACK THE PAST: Days after the 1959 Cuban revolution, Fidel Castro hands over property rights to peasants. That scene is being re-enacted in 1993 in an attempt to revive the island's economy**

This land is my land

THE SCENES WOULD NOT BE OUT OF place in the drama of a young revolution's first few months: workers assembling to take control of the land they till. Only this time the stage is Cuba — and the land that is being doled out belonged not to the *latifundia* but to the state.

Under Cuba's first land reform since 1963, rural workers are getting life leases to 80% of the country's farm land (the rest already belongs to small farmers). Many are setting up farm co-operatives.

At face value, the move signals recognition of the inefficiency of the large state farming enterprises. But it also seems a shrewd manoeuvre aimed at boosting next year's harvest and shoring up the support of rural workers.

It's no secret that the Cuban economy is in crisis, buffetted by the US embargo and natural mishaps like the storms which brought huge crop losses and smashed the sugar harvest this spring. A summer drought has left little cause for optimism about next year's sugar cane crop. Industry is functioning at a fraction of its capacity, starved of spare parts, fuel and transport.

The new laws will give workers life ownership of the land they till, as well as the right to grow food crops for their families. But rural teenagers have their dreams set elsewhere: "I want to work in tourism, that's where the money is," says a girl living in a hamlet of sugar workers.

Tourism has mushroomed into a US $500 million-a-year industry and ranks as Cuba's third-largest foreign currency earner, behind sugar and nickel. The biggest source of dollars, though, is money sent by the Cuban exile community to families on the island — especially since the government relaxed rules on the possession of hard currency. One consequence of this is the emergence of a dollar-holding elite in Havana.

Against this background, transforming state farms into workers' co-operatives forms part of a broader strategy aimed at rescuing the social gains of the revolution. ■

— WIP correspondent

HAITI

The tail wags the dog

CIA DISINFORMATION, SABOTAGING A populist leader of a poor country, back-room agendas in Washington, White House inertia. All these are part of a coordinated campaign against deposed Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide coming from *inside* the US government.

In late October, the US Pentagon put back into circulation an old CIA disinformation document claiming Aristide, the democratically elected president of Haiti, was "mentally unstable" and unfit to run the country.

Aristide, a radical priest, won Haiti's first democratic elections in December 1990; nine months later he was ousted by Haiti's US-trained military.

The CIA "leak" came just as he was preparing (his bags literally packed) to return to Haiti under a UN-brokered plan, reinforcing suspicion that Haiti's junta still has loyal friends in the US security establishment. The military have blocked Aristide from returning. At the time of writing, he remained in exile in the US.

A recent *New York Times* report quoted a US government official saying key members in the military regime

SOUTHERN AFRICA

Reap what you sow

TALK ABOUT SOWING UP THE MARKET. Triumphant reports of SA's re-entry into big-time arms merchandising via the landmine clearing equipment of Denel corporation forgot to mention one unpleasant fact: most of the mines Denel might be clearing in Southern Africa were produced by it in its incarnation as Armscor.

A recently declassified US Army

were on the CIA payroll. It was unclear when or if the payments had ended, said the report.

There are also reports that the US Drug Enforcement Agency has evidence linking key figures in the Haitian military to drug trafficking worth up to US $100-million annually.

Disinformation

The allegations about Aristide have their origin in an old CIA document, dating from a time when US support for the Haitian oligarchy was even more enthusiastic than it is now. Interviewed on TV the weekend after a Haitian junta tugboat forced back the American battleship USS Harlan County, Lieutenant General Raoul Cedras exhibited the cockiness of a dictator. He wished for nothing but the most cordial relations with the US, he said, and felt affectionate about the long-standing special military relationship between the two countries.

After all, as he pointed out, "75% of our personnel is trained in the US".

The good general may be on to something. He comports himself rather as though he knew something that US President Bill Clinton did not. He also speaks as if he did not lack for friends in Washington, both official and unofficial.

The unofficial ones are reasonably well-known and consist of the sort of political white trash you might expect. Henry Kissinger's influence-peddling firm, for instance, has been helpful to those in the Dominican Republic who succour the dictatorship next door, and in a remarkable instance of what amateur shrinks call "projection", Kissinger himself has publicly referred to Aristide as "a psychopath and a murderer".

More important, though, are those who identify with the junta from positions of executive power. I had to make only one call to the White House to discover extreme annoyance at the Pentagon's well-timed leaking of the CIA psycho-babble study.

One might say that not since the military and intelligence "communities" were in bed with their buddies in El Salvador has there been such an open scandal. But the lying and corruption in the Salvador instance occurred at the specific behest of Clinton. What is sinister and remarkable about the Haitian business is the air of mutiny and subordination about it.

Time and again since Clinton took office, there have been clear indications that the armed forces are a law unto themselves. The Joint Chiefs of Staff openly sabotaged the homosexual rights pledge on which Clinton was elected. The White House order to refrain from the demented search for the highly visible General Aidid was, we are told, by some oversight "not conveyed" to the relevant commander in Somalia, who went ahead with the calamitous assault on south Mogadishu.

Is this vastly subsidised and privileged officer corps getting paid to obey *orders, or is it giving them?*

Clinton and US defence secretary Les Aspin may well be letting the Pentagon push them in the direction they secretly want to follow. But it's worth asking one question: Which side are you on? A good question to ask, not so much of the Haitian junta as of the US one. ■

— Christopher Hitchens, The Nation. Reprinted with kind permission

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Intelligence study names SA (along with China, Egypt and Pakistan) as one of the developing world's most ambitious marketeers of landmines.

Armscor started out in the business in the 1960s, thanks to technology introduced into SA by British firms like Marconi, Electrical Musical Industries (now Thorn-EMI) and Imperial Chemical Industries. It went on to excel at manufacturing deadly anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines, including copies of the American Claymore anti-personnel mines.

In the 1980s, tens of thousands of these SA landmines were distributed by the military to its allies in Angola and Mozambique, Unita and Renamo, while unknown quantities were exported to Iran and Iraq.

Denel is hedging its bets, though. While it flogs landmine-clearing technology to the world, two subsidiaries — Naschem and Mechem — are offering foreign buyers their jointly developed vehicle and helicopter-mounted landmine "distribution system". ■

— Africa Confidential / WIP

Sam Shilowa

■ **SAM SHILOWA: A shining example**

How are you finding your new job?
It's a challenge, in the sense that there's no routine. It's more about taking initiative and coping with whatever crisis comes up.

And have there been many of those?
No, it's been smoother than I thought. But Jay (Naidoo) and I have worked together before, so we're able to make inputs into each other's work.

What's the best thing about the new job?
The interaction with workers and shop-stewards. I've been able to find out more than I would from the affiliates at central committee or executive committee meetings. So when I plan, I'm aware of what the regions and the workers on the ground are feeling. The problem, though, is that you tend to get locked into boardroom meetings, so there's still not enough contact...

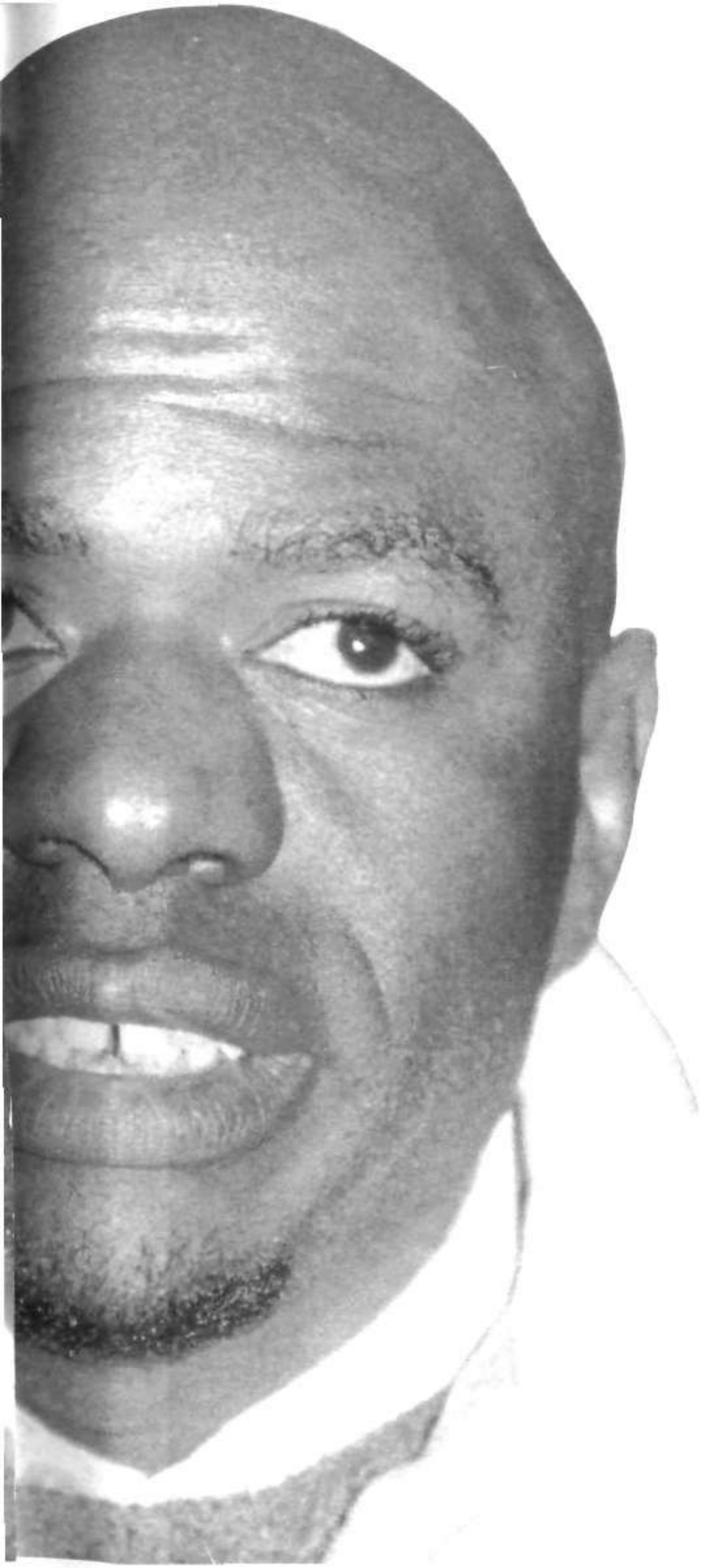
Is that the worst thing about it?
No. What's worse is that if things go wrong, you carry the can ... your neck's on the line.

Do you get the feeling your work rules your life?
Not always. There are times when I think about other things — my parents, for example, or how one can ensure the Northern Transvaal, where I come from, can be integrated into the mainstream of the economy. But it depends what's happening in the world around me.

Do you often think about your parents, and about home?
Yes. Despite the fact that I live in Johannesburg and have a house here, I remain a migrant worker. If I get a Sunday off, I drive down on Saturday night to see my family in Giyane. The one inspiration in my life is my mum, she's never stood in the way of my trying to do things. So when I want to run away from work, that's where I go — there's less access to a phone, for one.

How did your mother feel when she heard you'd been elected Cosatu general-secretary?
She was concerned rather than happy. She said she hoped I wouldn't betray those who had put their trust in me, and that if I tried to go it alone it wouldn't work. She said those people I had worked with before, I should try and carry along with me.

What sort of people are your parents?
My father has passed away. But my parents both come from peasant backgrounds — my father never worked, he was a war veteran and relied on a meagre pension. My mum went to school up until Standard Five, and has lived in



personally speaking

Cosatu's new general-secretary tells of trips home to see his mum, dancing on the tables at jazz festivals, and his dislike for Derek Keys...

PHOTO: ELMOND JIYANE

the rural areas all her life.

Did they have anything to do with you getting involved in politics?
Some things happened consciously, and some unconciously. It was as a worker, in 1979, that I really got involved — firstly through the trade union movement, and then through people who were involved in the ANC and the Party. Bit by bit, I got sucked into political work.

When you were a little boy, what did you want to be?
At one point I thought of being a doctor. Even now, I sometimes think about it, or about teaching. But the key thing was to be a doctor, mainly because my mum has an asthma problem and I always had this nagging question: why couldn't we find a cure? We didn't have access to inhalers, so we had to try and make do with other things.

And teaching?
It's always appealed to me. I went back to the school where I did my matric, to speak to the history class, and realised teachers aren't making the connection between history and the lives people lead. They seem to teach by the book. It makes me feel that sometimes ... I don't know, maybe when I retire from Cosatu, to go in there and teach ...

Where do you see yourself in five years' time?
I haven't thought about it. It depends on the (Cosatu) affiliates. I feel comfortable within the trade union movement, in civil society. Going full-time into politics may seem like a career to some people, but not to me — you become one among many. And unless there's a proportional representation election, the tendency is to think you are answerable to no-one but the party caucus, rather than to a constituency.

How would you describe yourself?
Hard to work with, in the sense that I'm very critical. Apart from that, I think I'm easy-going, easy to associate with others — even those I differ from.

The last time I saw you was at a jazz festival, dancing on the tables — is that the sort of thing you do at weekends?
If I have time, I do that sometimes. But most times I go to see my family ... and there's usually some kind of social activity there.

Life doesn't revolve around politics and trade union work. You must be able to meet with others. You learn things that way. I can give you an example, from this weekend when I went to see my mum. I had a puncture a kilometre from a farm, and had to go and ask for help. I had a nice chat with the farmer there, and he ended up giving me a bag of his mealies, for my family. And we've made a second appointment to meet to discuss rural development in the Northern Transvaal.

Did he recognise you?
Not initially, but his kids did. They kept saying they'd seen me somewhere, and I said I'm an actor, but eventually they said no, we know who you are, we've seen you on TV.

You mentioned that your parents influenced you a lot. Any other role models?
In terms of accepting life as it comes, my parents were definitely my role models. They were willing to go without a meal so that myself, my brother and my sister could have an education. They were willing to sacrifice.

But Madiba is also an influence. If you look at how he concentrates in meetings, takes notes, responds to everyone's concerns, including the rightwing ... that's the sort of thing anyone in a senior position should take account of. You don't just take care of your own constituency, you have to take account of others. We have to listen to the other side ...

You must have been doing a lot of listening lately, with all those discussions in the National Economic Forum. Which of the employers do you get on with best?
They differ. But some are willing to listen and to take the initiative. Someone like Bobby Godsell (from Saccola) is on the other side but is willing to listen and even take chances in support of the position labour puts across.

Who's your least favourite?
Someone like Johan Liebenberg (from the Chamber of Mines) ... he just has a closed mind.

And your favourite cabinet minister? Do you have one?
I would rate Dawie de Villiers ... I heard him motivating for a constituent assembly, and it was like listening to someone from the ANC or the SACP. He's not motivated by being young and thinking he can still make it into the future cabinet — once he's convinced of something, he's willing to take a stand.

And your least favourite?
There's a grouping within the National Party: Kobie Coetsee, George Bartlett, Danie Schutte. If I had to toss, Danie Schutte would be the loser. But Derek Keys is not a favourite either. You can't work on finances as a technician — you have to take a stand, to make a political decision rather than saying, "I have to balance the books".

Joe Slovo had a lot to say recently about worker leaders in suits. How many suits do you have?
I don't know ... six.

A final question: If you were president for a day, what would you do?
I'd call a snap election for a constituent assembly — and move the country forward.
— *Interview by Chris Vick* ■

Sam Shilowa: The five best things about 1993

- **Cosatu took the decision to support the ANC in the elections.**
- **Setting the election date.**
- **Knocking sense into the government in the various forums. The days of them taking unilateral decisions are gone.**
- **Seeing the Nats pronouncing ANC positions on issues like the constituent assembly, the need for a government of national unity, etc.**
- **I've just finished building a house for my mum.**

Between the devil and the deep blue sea

What does it take to make a free and fair election? Well, it depends who you ask. There are the almost puritanical demands for a process free of any blemish. Or the worldly reminders that, even in established democracies, fraud, trickery, intimidation and other unsavoury activities are part and parcel of elections. And there are the doomsayers. **LOUISE STACK** and **HEIN MARAIS** prepared this primer ...

IF OUR FIRST DEMOCRATIC ELECTION next year is judged to have been "free and fair", it will mean, quite simply, that:

- All eligible voters were not only allowed to vote, they were *enabled* to vote.
- Those who chose to vote could cast their ballots, and register their political choices freely, without coercion or fear of reprisal.
- And the final result reflected those preferences accurately, without being distorted by fraud or vote rigging.

It sounds relatively straightforward. But from the vantage point of a society fraught by suspicion and racked by violence, each step of the process requires careful planning and monitoring. Still, it can be done.

The most perplexing variable in the election will be the fear, the threat and the reality of violence.

PHOTO: RODGER BOSCH

Violence does not inevitably accompany an election that follows on years of authoritarian rule or war. The Angolan vote was peaceful enough to have been judged "free and fair" by the UN. The Cambodian election came and went in a fashion more tranquil than anticipated. The comparative calm before, during and after Nicaragua's 1990 election stunned even observers.

But, like the Hydra of Greek mythology, the violence in SA has become irrepressible, diffuse and ambiguous enough to confound even the most well crafted countermeasures. We know this; after all, we speak not of "violence" but of "*the* violence", something that has established an almost autonomous presence in our society. Confining opposing armies to their barracks or demobilisation centres is not an option here. The lines of battle do not simply separate political foot-soldiers — they are fluid, fickle, confusing.

Armouring the election against violence will involve extensive "climate-control" efforts — creating a climate or a framework that stigmatises any orchestrated violence on the part of any of the political players.

Drawing in and committing all the political players to the negotiated agreement and peaceful electioneering would be ideal, but the Freedom Alliance's rejectionism makes this unlikely.

Setting up a legitimate, decisive and truly *Independent* Election Commission (IEC) — armed with the electoral act — is the key to a legitimate and relatively peaceful election. The IEC Act has been passed and provides for the establishment of the IEC which will include international members, an election administration directorate, an election monitoring directorate and an election adjudication secretariat.

The IEC will have to be more than an assembly of suits whose owners are skilled at mounting slick displays of displeasure. It will run (not merely supervise) the election, and be able to punish transgressors of the electoral code and electoral law, whether by registered or unregistered parties.

Let's face it: we're not going to see a *legitimate* law enforcement system before the election. But a free and fair vote demands effective policing that is *accountable* to, ideally, the IEC.

The visible presence of respected or reputable (local and international) monitors can help cement that authority, by encouraging confidence in the election process and persuading political parties to stick to the rules of the game.

Onofre dos Santos, director-general of the Angola's electoral commission, has this advice: "Violence must be dealt with parallel to the election process; you cannot predicate your election on a reduction in violence."

An election is a *process*, not a one- or two-day event. So limiting the violence on election day itself will be a happy, but insufficient, achievement.

No room for error

An election "works" if a majority of the population accepts the result as authentic and fair, based on their experience of, and trust in, the voting process. In a general climate of confidence, limited reports of instances of violence, intimidation or errors in vote counting, are likely to be seen as exceptions or aberrations and tolerated.

But dissension between political leaders, biased media coverage and widespread experience of irregularities will deepen suspicion during the election period. In such circumstances, the slightest evidence of electoral inaccuracies or voter coercion on the day of the vote can spread rapidly and undermine popular faith in the election result.

Angola taught us that, no matter how fervently experts then pronounce the election "free and fair", the suspicion can then grow rampant. And we end up in the ticking-time-bomb phase of the transition.

Ultimately, the lesson for our election is formidable but clear: there is very little room for error. ■

After the fact

Once polling stations close there will be just enough time for a sigh of relief — before the next hurdle has to be cleared.

■ Vote counting

Decisions, decisions. Should the count occur at the voting station or at a central location?

The count is done by election officials, with monitors peeking over their shoulders all the way.

At this stage, time becomes an incredibly important factor. "The announcement of results was the weakest point in the Angolan vote," Onofre dos Santos admitted afterwards. "The counting took longer than anticipated, and the delay gave Unita the chance to accuse that something was being cooked up," he said.

What will

The make or break part of a free and fair election is not so much the day of the vote but the months preceding it

Nuts and bolts

■ Electoral Law

Obviously, the electoral law is central to preparation and conduct of the election since it sets the framework and rules for the process. It covers matters like voter registration, media fairness, recruitment and training of electoral officials, the number and location of polling stations, balloting, vote counting, security and the certification of monitors and observers.

Once finalised, a summary of the law's essential provisions should be translated into all local languages, published and circulated widely. Political parties can then incorporate this into their voter education programmes.

The IEC will be the key to a free and fair vote. Not only must it operate effectively, it must also earn the confidence and trust of political players; if it doesn't a free and fair verdict becomes suspect and contestable.

An IEC that fulfils its duties will, inevitably, court controversy — by imposing sanctions and penalties against parties or individuals that violate election ground rules, and so on. This makes an effective media liaison wing essential for the IEC.

■ Voter education

Voter estimates vary from 20-million to as high as 23-million, the majority of whom have never voted before and a high percentage of whom are illiterate. An inordinately high percentage of such "disadvantaged voters" are women.

So a vast voter education campaign is essential for voters to understand the process. It can be carried out both by political parties (as part of their campaigns) and neutrally by independent organisations. The IEC will also be involved in voter education.

Rural voters, especially women, demand particular attention. Likewise the question of overcoming intimidation of women by their partners or husbands.

But effective voter education can only happen once campaign and voting procedures have been established. At the time of writing, negotiators were still haggling over several crucial details in the draft electoral bill.

■ Voter identification

Controversy will keep buzzing about the issuing of IDs. Already the ANC claims 2-million people do not have these documents. The alternative — an extensive and expensive voter registration pro-

...ke to make our election work?

gramme — seems foolishly ambitious. A more attractive option will be to enable ID-less voters to provide alternative proof of identity at voting stations on election day.

■ Access to media

The formal independence of the SABC and the introduction of a few drops of new blood into its production and management echelons seems already to be yielding some interesting breaks with the past. Some professional, non-partisan and probing current affairs programmes are seeing the light of day — though they're still the exceptions that prove a rather dismal rule.

The Independent Media Commission and various monitoring projects will help ensure that the SABC (and state-financed publications) stays under the spotlight. The problem, though, is not only one of conscious bias — often it's incompetence that yields skewed and inaccurate coverage.

Fairness and accuracy in reporting — not simply equal access — are the watchwords. And they should apply also to newspapers where, increasingly, editorial biases are being reflected in news reports.

■ Party registration

Valuable both as a formal prerequisite for taking part in the election and as a public commitment to accept the authority of the IEC, to foreswear violence and to abide by the election regulations and code of conduct.

■ Political campaigns

"No-go areas" are anathema to a free and fair vote. All political parties need to actively — not only rhetorically — help ensure that all contenders are able to campaign in all areas. Farms, mining compounds and "company towns" must be made accessible for canvassing.

■ Cooling off

A ban on official campaigning for the last two or three days before the election is recommended as one way to help douse the inflamed passions of supporters.

■ The ballot

The simpler the ballot, the fairer the vote. Party-determined list systems hand party elites a great deal of power, but they make for relatively simple ballots that can depend less on language and wording.

Ballot papers should be designed to make voting as easy as possible. A flexible interpretation of an acceptable mark is essential — for instance, a tick or a cross or a signature should all be accepted as indicating the voter's choice. By spacing the boxes (where you place your cross or tick) well apart, some prickly disputes can be prevented at the vote-counting stage.

Some voter education experts insist on black-and-white ballot forms, saying party colours confuse voters. Anecdotal evidence from dummy runs is plentiful — like the ANC supporters who placed their crosses next to Inkatha because they thought its colours (green, gold, black, red) signified the Tripartite Alliance.

D-Day

■ Voter count

A relatively accurate estimate of voters in each district is needed to avoid some polling stations being swamped by unexpectedly big voter turn-outs. (As reported in *WIP 92*, it is plausible that there are as many as 3-4 million more voters than anticipated.)

Logistical planning must prevent any polling station from running short of the paraphernalia of voting.

■ Accessibility

The 7 500 planned polling stations need to be accessible to all voters and be fairly distributed across the country. Transport might present `peacekeeping forces' with the biggest headaches, particularly since trains and taxis remain highly vulnerable targets for — and sites of — violence.

In the rural areas, transport remains a tough question. Will political parties that lay on transport for, say, farmworkers be allowed to travel onto farms to collect their supporters? Special official transport might seem a good idea. But if that system fails — whether through negligence or malice — the integrity of the vote is again undermined.

And an oversight that so often trips up even the most thorough preparations: will voting stations be made accessible to physically disabled voters?

Political campaigning should not be allowed within a specified distance from the polling station, to avoid harassment of voters.

■ Balloting

Electoral officials (politically neutral ones and counterparts from the different parties) and election monitors should be present throughout balloting and be well-trained in the details of voting procedure.

Voters who are unfamiliar with the process may need assistance and instruction. Ballot boxes should be examined before voting starts and should be correctly sealed once voting ends.

■ Double-voting

To prevent double-voting, the use of invisible, indelible ink stamps on the hands of voters who cast their ballots seems to be effective.

■ How many days?

One day of voting avoids multiplying the already daunting logistical problems and adding new ones — like security of the ballot polling stations during the evenings, billeting for election officials and monitors (at 7 500 sites!) and so on.

Experts say "first-time" elections tend to generate so much enthusiasm that most voters vote on the first day, anyway — like in Namibia, for example. Angola found its two-day period was justified, largely because of immense transport problems in rural areas.

Here, though, it is the prospect of violence that advises a second day of voting. The fear of violence and intimidation might deter millions from heading for the polls on the first (and only) day. If voting lasts two days, and the first is made to pass relatively peacefully, many of these anxious would-be voters might end up making the trip.

Not only does democracy win, but the vote becomes fairer. Because an involuntary voter "stay-away" will not do equal damage all around; violence prone areas will be hit hardest.

One thing is clear, though: election day must be a public holiday. ■

■ Get out there and vote!

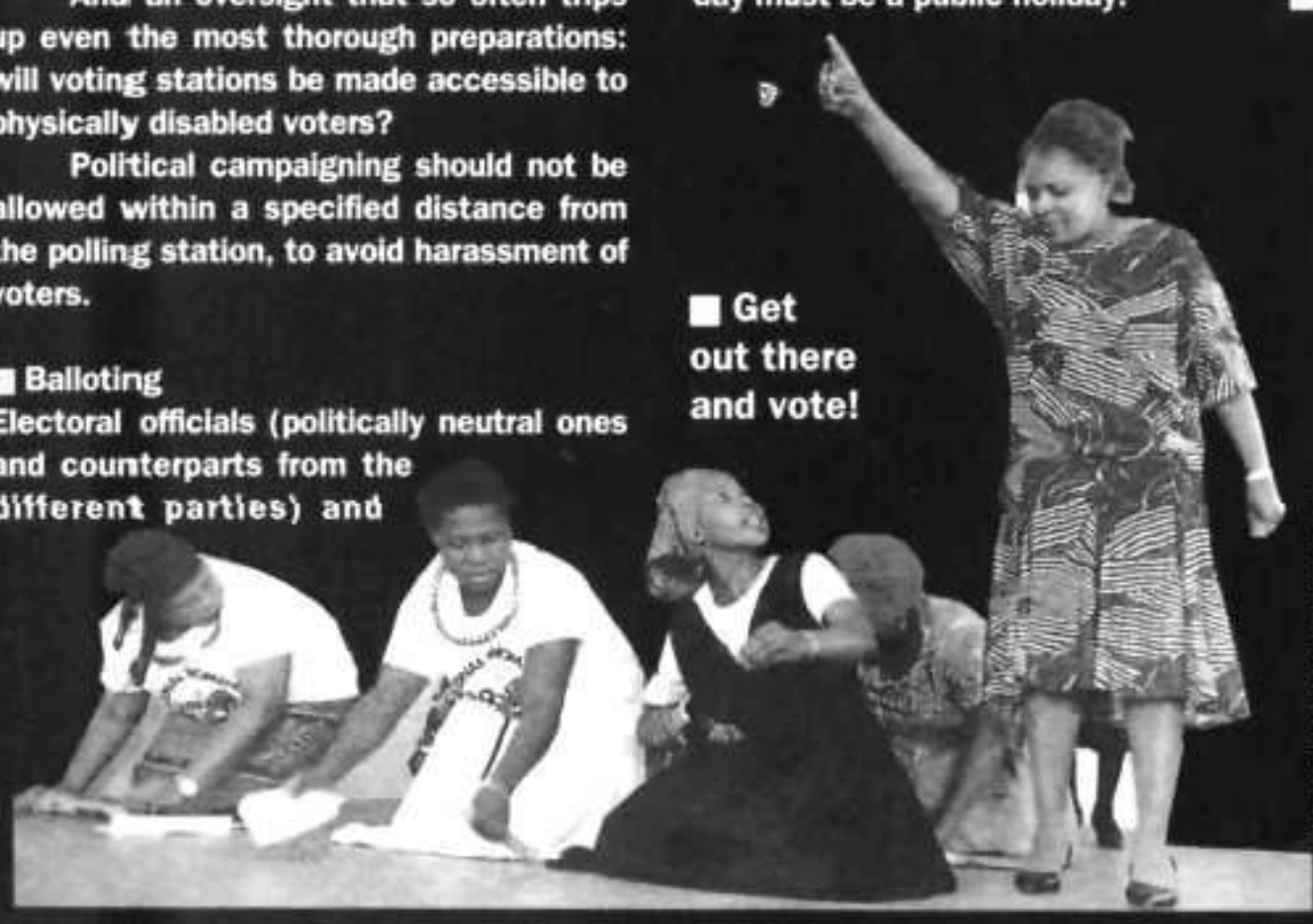


PHOTO: JEEVA RAJGOPAUL, SOUTHLIGHT


PROGRESS

THE LAST WHITE CHRISTMAS

An epitaph might declare 1993 the year when realignments that were meant to happen didn't. And the ones that did materialise were not supposed to happen. **STEVE FRIEDMAN** looks backward, sideways and ahead at what this bodes for 1994 ...

THE CHANGES TO THE SCRIPT OF our transition won't add to the enjoyment of spectators. But they do lessen the likelihood of a surprise ending to the drama — unless you're expecting an April election.

At the very centre of the peace process is the realignment that was supposed to happen — but didn't.

In the months after the September '92 Record of Understanding between the ANC and National Party there was a virtually automatic assumption that the two players had formed a solid centre committed to delivering a viable settlement ("centre" here meaning those committed to the stability of the emerging order).

Having reached a deal, we were told, they would push ahead to formalise it — and shield it against challenges from right and left.

As it turned out, this was about half true. Yes, the ANC and the National Party are, in effect, the only parties committed to the broad outlines of the deal emerging from the World Trade Centre.

And yes, there are areas (unlikely ones, such as policing and the military) where the two camps are edging towards what may become co-operation.

Only a few NP negotiators see anyone outside their fold as partners in anything

But if they were a solid centre, we should expect them to be banding together to defend the agreed negotiation process against its challengers. They are doing nothing of the sort.

It's important to understand what is at stake here. The fact that the Nats and ANC disagree about policy issues doesn't necessarily mean the centre is divided. Parties can disagree on just about everything and still be committed to an agreed settlement process. But a solid centre must agree on the nature of the process, that it is worth defending, and on how they are to defend it.

The most glaring evidence that our negotiating partners have not agreed on these aspects was FW de Klerk's suggestion that a referendum is needed to out-manoeuvre rightwing resistance.

If the NP is committed to working with the ANC to protect the settlement, we'd expect to see it first discussing defensive options with its "partners", and only unfurling them publicly once they have agreed to the tactics.

But De Klerk floated the referendum option without consulting his chief negotiation partner — and chose to do so at the Cape NP Congress, lest anybody doubt that the idea belongs to his party. And that, of course, made it impossible for the ANC — or anyone else — to support it.

By late 1993 there also is not agreement on the nature of the process; evidence suggests continuing disagreement on who is entitled to take decisions.

The NP insists that it stills run the show and will continue to do so until the election. So Energy and Mines Minister Bartlett and Housing Minister Shill listen politely to multi-party forums and then carry on making decisions as if the forums did not exist. They are not mavericks — De Klerk has been backing them with gusto, claiming the forums have launched an onslaught on his government's authority.

This is only the tip of a huge iceberg. Only a few NP negotiators and, probably, Derek Keys, see anyone outside their fold as partners in anything.

Part of the reason is the NP's almost instinctive failure to recognise its own limitations; the idea that a government elected by a minority is less representative than a multi-party forum still has to dawn on many Nat top-rankers.

How to alienate friends

And there's the fact that the Nationalists are divided on who their partners are. So we are told repeatedly that there is an NP lobby which wants to fight the election in alliance with the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and its friends.

But the allies favoured by some Nationalists are opposed to the entire process in terms of which the election is to be held. To suggest an alliance with those allies would amount to a signal that some Nats would rather stick with forces that oppose the settlement, instead of with their presumed partners at the World Trade Centre.

And that means the Nats have not collectively decided whether the ANC is an enemy or a partner.

Of course, the ANC is not exactly rushing to embrace the NP as a partner in transition either — whatever left and right conspiracy theories hold to the contrary. A movement which accuses its "partner" of deliberately sowing mayhem in the townships to depress

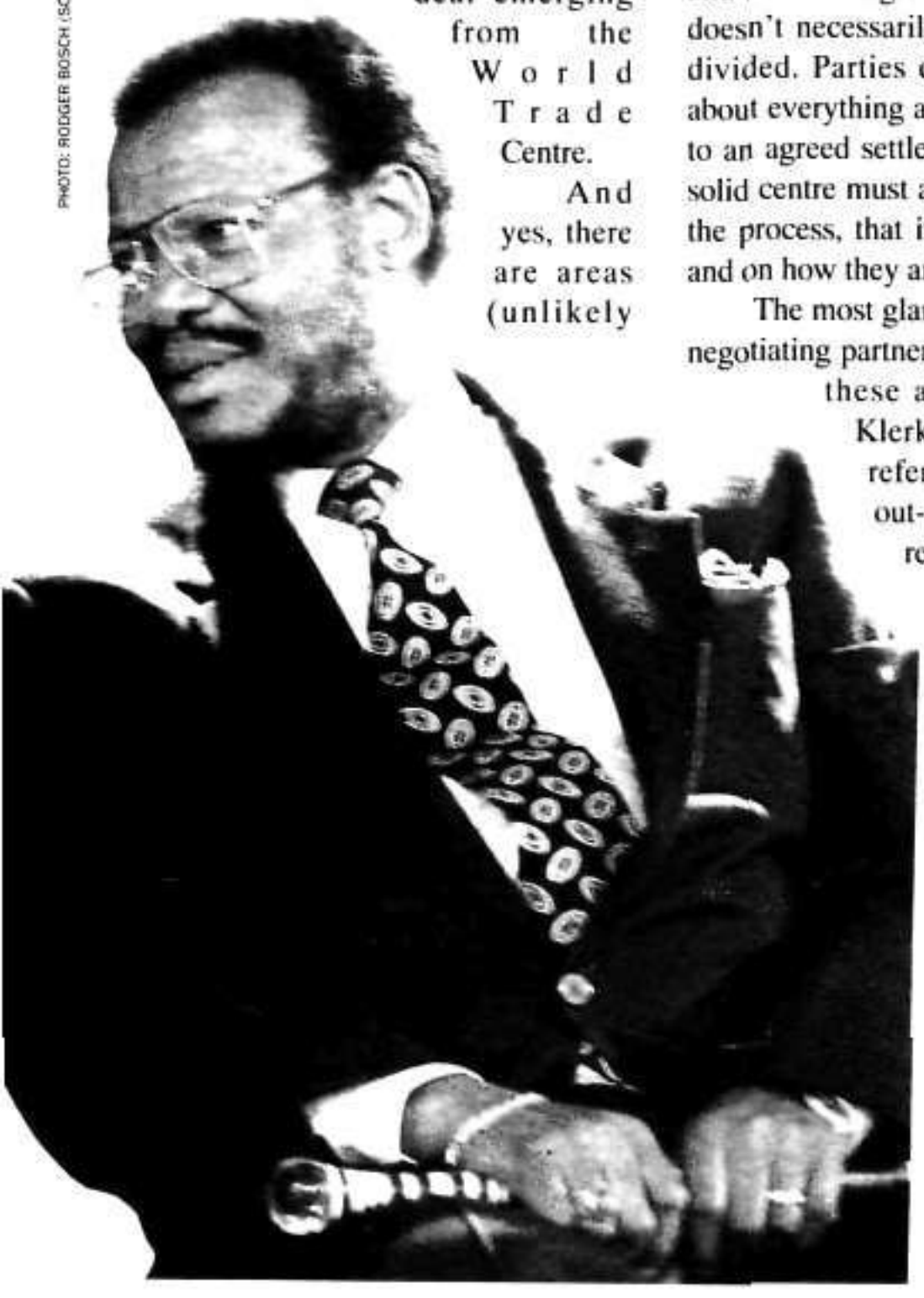


PHOTO: ROGGER BOSCH (SOUTHLIGHT)

■ **FAR OUT: Buthelezi**

PHOTOS: RODGER BOSCH (SOUTHLIGHT)

■ **WHO POOPED? De Klerk and Mandela: Now you see the smiles, now you don't**

the voter turnout in an election clearly does not feel it is engaged in a joint enterprise with it.

This may be changing, though. The NP-ANC deal in late October was followed by a rough De Klerk attack on Inkatha. Whether that means the "big two" are now banding together to take on the "spoilers" is not yet clear.

Surprise, surprise

Ironically, the surprise realignment of the year was prompted by a belief that the illusory realignment — the NP-ANC partnership — had indeed occurred. Of course, this was the creation of the Freedom Alliance, which departed from the initial script because Inkatha was supposed to be either an NP ally or part of an expanded centre. The transition has been seriously complicated by the fact that it is neither.

The Alliance is not necessarily an artificial marriage. Its parties have something important in common: they all want to hang onto a past where, to coin a phrase, power "comes with the territory".

The NP also wants to hold onto parts of the past, but is not primarily interested in hanging onto territory. It is, after all, a *National* Party and is therefore aiming to preserve its countrywide role.

Alliance members are fighting not for partial control of the entire country, but for total control of parts of the country — Kwazulu/Natal, the Boerestaat and so on.

For some time now, the white right has wanted a geographic share of the country. But at some point, Inkatha's Mangosuthu Buthelezi decided he preferred a (senior, he hopes) role in Natal to a (probably junior) role at the national centre.

Gone fishing

If this is all the Freedom Alliance is about, it may not be as serious a threat to transition as it now seems.

But the party which has to be reeled on board if the Alliance is to join the festivities is the IFP. Bophuthatswana and Ciskei can't derail anything without a great deal of help from their friends, so they are not cause for alarm. The white right has the capacity to disrupt a settlement, but the fact that it has joined an alliance with mainly black parties at all signals its acknowl-

edgement that the all-white dream is dead and that the right needs a strong black partner.

If the IFP comes in on the deal, the right will be left reeling at the dark.

(Part of the right does not believe the all-white dream is dead and may release its frustrations in very unpleasant ways. But there is no feasible settlement that will placate them. If they do try to blow the place apart, this may become more a matter for the police than the World Trade Centre.)

Will the IFP bite? If it is simply trying to get the best deal possible for Kwazulu / Natal, it may well be possible to hook it.

But there is another possibility — and this relates again to that realignment at the centre which didn't come about.

There is a theory which starts by noting that Buthelezi doesn't have a good track record of supporting initiatives which he didn't initiate.

It then suggests that Buthelezi's problem with the current process may not be his misgivings about its outcome (not enough regional powers). What displeases him is the fact that it is someone else's process. The argument has it that the moment Mandela and De Klerk convened Codesa (without inviting Buthelezi to be a partner), his support for the process was lost. And it will not be restored until he owns part of it.

But at this late stage, it's doubtful whether he can be given a share of the business without sending it into bankruptcy.

This is particularly so since the spirit of realignment has not left the ANC entirely untouched. There has for some time, of course, been some disenchantment with the transition among the ANC's left.

Despite calls for worker parties at trade union conferences, this is unlikely to produce any break-aways from the movement. It is, after all, the biggest game in town and one which is unusually accommodating of varying factions and positions.

But the prospect that sections of the ANC's tripartite alliance will prove troublesome to the leadership is already with us: at the time of writing Cosatu was planning an ANC-disapproved strike, Winnie Mandela was mobilising from her Sanco base, and Harry Gwala

Buthelezi's problem is not his misgivings — it's the fact that it is someone else's process

was resigning his NEC position to consolidate his control over the Natal Midlands. We're likely to see more of the same.

Despite Apla attacks and Azapo press statements, the ANC's "real threat from the left" is within the movement. But, precisely because it is closer to home, it may be far more troublesome.

Against this background, ANC leaders willing to meet Buthelezi's demands and jettison a constituent assembly may be courting the sort of spice and variety that tends to be reserved for those who work in war zones. They are likely to prefer a more sedentary fate.

Take a deep breath

So where does all this leave the world's longest running transition?

Well, it means an April 27 election is anything but certain. Holding a poll under current conditions raises some logistical nightmares. Setting up polling booths in Kwazulu, Bophuthatswana and Ciskei will be hazardous at best — and impossible at worst — as long as these homelands stay out of the process and retain the power to run their areas.

This leaves the soft centre with two options. The first is to work overtime to bring the "spoilers" in; this may not be possible in time for an April 27 poll. The other is to stabilise the country enough to make the election possible.

The second course would require that the NP and the ANC, as well as the SA Defence Force and Umkhonto weSizwe, work closely together to take some very tough and controversial action. Since they have not yet agreed to work together to take relatively simple actions, this may be asking too much.

They do not even have an institutional vehicle to undertake such a task — which, of course, is a symptom of the wider problem. Since the NP insists that it is in charge of the country until an election, the much-vaunted Transitional Executive Council is a flimsier reed than it appears: its job is to oversee the government, not to replace it.

A body designed, in essence, to blow the whistle if the security forces tilt the proverbial playing field is unlikely to be able to oversee a massive security operation.

Even if the NP and the ANC decide to work together to "create the conditions for democracy", this is likely to take them more than four months: double that period may also be a bit optimistic.

Game postponed due to weather

Either way, then, a postponement may be inevitable.

But that is not a risk-free option either. Until an election, the NP's desire to continue running the show on its own may continue, opening the way for continued stalemates; more importantly, the legitimacy of the centre will remain suspect, perhaps too suspect to allow it to enforce its will. And the longer an election stays on hold, the longer economic growth and development will be consigned to the same holding pattern.

Regardless of how this particular problem pans out, we face a centre which must hold the ring against challenges from right and left — but which stays divided within itself.

Against that background, it is quite possible to believe that 1994 will be the Year of Peace and Serenity. But it's also possible to believe that the national soccer squad will win a major fixture.

Despite all these strains, there is probably enough holding the country together to ensure that we get through 1994 and beyond.

But, unless the realignment at the centre is pulled off, the year ahead could resemble the one just gone in more ways than we would care to admit. ■

PHOTO: ERIC MILLER (SOUTHLIGHT)

Workers: Out of one tunnel and into another?

It was a watershed year for workers — a year in which the labour landscape started to change significantly. **PHILLIP DEXTER** does some surveying...

THE NEW SOUTH AFRICA IS FAST approaching, one which brings with it few guarantees. For South African workers, it seems, the only thing which is certain is that nothing is certain.

At the end of 1993, after almost 80 years of struggle, our major achievement seems to be some degree of democracy, and the space within which to struggle — can we regard five years of government of national unity (GNU), entrenched regional powers, a new constitution and entrenched property rights as major victories? Or are these compromises that should never have been agreed to?

Because of this uncertainty, there is a rampant pessimism among sections of the Left, with some people feeling all is lost. In fact, there are almost as many pessimists as there are optimists who believe the vote is enough to satisfy hungry people...

But neither of these positions is the right place to start if you're making a sober assessment of the state of Cosatu, and the working class in general. Because although democracy doesn't seem to be much, it is still relatively scarce in today's world, even in a form that is limited, as we will have for the next five years.

Within a democratic country, the opportunity to advance the interests of workers and the working class in general is obviously far greater that in a country under authoritarian rule.

And, after all, it will be the *content* of that democracy which determines the extent to which trade unions and Cosatu are able to further workers' interests.

As we draw closer to the establishment of a single, united, non-racial democracy (perhaps even one committed to non-sexism), issues of class interest have begun to come to the fore.

As a result of this, there is a lot of soul searching on the Left. In Cosatu in particular, a debate has begun about the role and character of the tripartite alliance.

Much of this debate has been sparked by the feeling that compromises are being made around issues like the right to strike, compensation for loss of land, or job security for civil servants.

As a broad liberation movement, the ANC is having to balance the interests of business, workers, women, traditional leaders and many other interest groups. This is not easy, and given the complexity of the political terrain it is hard not to admire the ANC for some of its achievements in this regard so far.

Right now, though, there is a sense that the very soul of the ANC is up for grabs.

Spheres of influence

It would be foolish for trade unions to underestimate the power and influence of the other forces at play in and around the ANC. Big business, small traders, farmers, professionals and other groups — all of whose interests stand in opposition to workers — have a stake in influencing the direction it takes.

This doesn't mean there is a threat of the ANC "selling out". But as time goes by these influences — together with the international community's conservative agenda and that of international capital in particular — are going to weigh heavily on the strength of the Left, both inside and outside the new government.

The negotiations process has made it clear that pressure to reach a settlement for the transition period has led to workers' interests being under-prioritised. And, as the process continues, it is unclear how many of the compromises around workers' rights are temporary and how many are going to be permanent. In a sense this situation is inevitable, if workers allow this to pass unchallenged.

So what about Cosatu?

Cosatu has been the single biggest influence in ensuring that workers' interests *are* taken care of, and the federation has certainly contributed to ensuring that the broader issues of the poor, the marginalised and the working class are not left out of the political process. But can this continue indefinitely?

Some of the Cosatu leadership are already entering the electoral fray on behalf of the ANC — yet with no substantial guarantee of worker rights. The recent controversy over employers' rights to lock-out workers being entrenched in the interim constitution gave an interesting insight into how workers' rights *could* be perceived within the movement. Some people seemed to think it was unreasonable for Cosatu to resist the employers' demand. They asked: "Why can't employers have the right to lock-out guaranteed if workers can have the right to strike?"

The fact that these two rights are even equated is a measure of how tightly we are gripped by the values and principles that govern liberal democracies around the world.

The effect of equating these two rights is a measure of the balance of forces between labour and capital. Clearly it is in the interests of workers to have their rights recognised as clearly and distinctly as possible, and not have them counter-posed to bosses' rights.

Those who doubt the wisdom of Cosatu's protests obviously don't realise that the federation's call for action actually strengthens the hand of the negotiators. It is an attempt to influence the outcome of negotiations. It is not some maverick, hysterical reaction, but workers taking care of their own interests.

Reshaping the playing field

Throughout the struggle for liberation, the influence of workers has been due to their own strength and unity. It is for this reason that Cosatu needs to continue its alliance with the ANC into the GNU phase.

But at the same time it must begin to more boldly chart its own course as an organisation. Only by ensuring that the ANC is under the influence of workers, so to speak, can they be sure it will act in their interest. This does not mean that Cosatu should, without informing or consulting its alliance partners, embark on action. This interpretation of "independence" can only lead to strains on the relationship of the alliance partners.

The new period is going to bring new economic, political and social conditions within which the new government, the unions and other organisations will operate. Contradictions will arise because of the differing interests of government, unions and business, forcing these formations to make crucial choices.

No doubt there will be a fundamental realignment of political forces in the GNU period; but how these forces pan out depends substantially on the trade unions, and the Left in general.

Cosatu's influence in this area will increase if it remains strong, militant and ready to fight for workers' rights.

But if the federation allows itself to be wooed into thinking that being in the alliance means it can never disagree with the ANC, or take action on its own, then Cosatu is bound to become an ineffectual "workers' club".

Dealing with the contradictions

The choices facing an ANC government after April 1994 will arise from the contradictions of attempting to improve the lives of all the people who have suffered under apartheid, while maintaining an overall macro-economic balance.

Wanton spending will not create

The ANC as employer

What happens when Nehawu finds itself at loggerheads with the new government over wages and conditions of service?

Obviously, we will take action — although such a situation will be more complicated than anything the union has experienced to date.

But it is not a new situation for Nehawu members to have comrades as 'bosses'. Many have worked for church-run schools, colleges and hospitals, or for progressive doctors. This does not mean the union has 'sold out' or compromised. By looking after its members' interests first, the union has sought to deal with these situations in a fair and reasonable manner. It is better to have a non-racist, democratic boss than a racist, authoritarian one.

When employers have responded with a similar attitude, agreements have been reached. When they haven't, action has been taken until workers' demands have been met.

Will facing an ANC-led GNU be that different?

■ **LEFT BEHIND: Workers will have to look after their own interests**

anything but inflation, but to distribute what resources there are will mean someone has to give up a piece of the pie.

Various studies predict the success of a programme of reconstruction and development, but it remains to be seen how true this is — or, in fact, to what extent workers will benefit from such a programme.

The need for such a programme is obvious, but again what is important is the content of the programme, and whether it will advance the interests of the working class. If the programme cannot be a socialist one, then it should at the very least be the foundation of a socialist programme and not stand in the way of attempts to move in the direction of socialist policies.

What is clear, though, is that the constraints of governing under prevailing conditions might well limit the ANC to playing the role of a facilitator for workers' rights and interests.

This will mean that workers themselves will have to look after their own interests. They can sit back and wait for the ANC to deliver — and when it doesn't, they can complain of being sold out.

On the other hand, they can start to prepare themselves for being the most powerful organised force in the country.

Whether the ANC stays a facilitator or becomes a true "people's" government depends entirely on the muscle that Cosatu has and is prepared to use. The Left, in the form of political parties, and other organisations such as civics and women's groups, will have a vital role to play. And there is no doubt that they are going to have to close ranks to drive the political process in the direction they want.

But ultimately, the power of the working class lies squarely with Cosatu — and it will have to be prepared to use it.

Two ANCs

There is talk of two ANCs — one in government, the other outside. If this happens, the dichotomy between the ANC in government and the ANC outside government is going to be difficult to manage.

The tensions between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary struggle are bound to give rise to problems within the organisation.

If there is to be support for the ANC-led government then this government must move in line with its constituency. To move behind the people may be advantageous, but it is a dangerous game to play as expectations cannot always be met. This means confronting these other parties in the GNU with the facts.

There is also no reason why "revolutionary moments" will not arise in this scenario, and the alliance will need a strategy to deal with these.

If there is to be stability in this country, it is vital that the masses begin to see a qualitative change in their lives.

Because of this, there is much to be said for a Left political party, and the SACP and other Left forces should begin to strategise now as to how they will function in this new political arena.

Government of the workers

In the first few years of the GNU, the ANC will have to balance forces to consolidate democracy. In a country such as ours, with no real tradition of democracy outside the democratic movement, the temptation to slip back into authoritarianism will be great. Counter-revolutionaries will try to retard progress to democracy and resist attempts to empower workers.

Only those formations which are strong, well-organised and militant will be able to pressurise society to meet their demands.

This could mean acting in support of government. In such cases, it is important that any action taken concides with governments attempts to begin qualitative change.

Will such a government be a workers' government? The answer must be no. But that does not mean it cannot *become* a workers' government, or that democracy will preclude such a government.

If one looks at the needs of the people of this country, the poor, the unemployed, the workers still exploited under a harsh capitalist regime, it is clear that at some stage the government will have to choose which constituency it is prepared to go with.

It is up to Cosatu to ensure that this will be no choice at all. ■

● *Phillip Dexter is general secretary of Nehawu. He is one of Cosatu's nominees to the ANC parliamentary list.*

Shilowa on the alliance

Sam Shilowa is one of Cosatu's 'remainees' — the federation's new general secretary is not on the ANC's parliamentary list, and will therefore not be going to parliament next April.

He predicts Cosatu will play an increasingly challenging role within the tripartite alliance, and told WIP: 'Both the ANC and the Party have to take account of, and be sensitive about, issues coming from Cosatu.'

Explaining the federation's call for a national strike over the controversial 'lock-out' clause, he said: 'When you're caught between your own organisation's mandate and the concerns of the alliance, you can't be ambivalent about your own position.'

Shilowa believes the national strike debate strengthened the alliance: 'If Cosatu can't raise certain things with the ANC now, it will not be able to raise them when the ANC is in power.' he explains.

'And if the Cosatu leadership can't abide by the mandate of its own constitutional structures, then the very future of democracy will be aborted.'

Shilowa believes there are advantages and disadvantages to having Cosatu leaders in parliament: 'The advantage is that Jay *(Naidoo) and the others* know our modus operandi — they will be sensitive to some of the issues Cosatu campaigns for.

'A disadvantage is that some of those in parliament may feel that because Jay and others have agreed with something, that means Cosatu agrees.'

PHOTO: WILLIAM MATLALA

■ **FREE TRANSFER: Jay Naidoo leaves the field after being 'promoted' to the new National Assembly team**

Can the Left score in extra time?

Get the feeling there's not much Left at the end of 1993? **JEREMY CRONIN** warns against eternal pessimism, drawing on Gramsci's advice that we plan for the worst — but still fight for the best

AFTER BEING ROASTED FOR THE Umtata massacre by his fellow Nobel peace prize winner, all De Klerk could say was: "I will not reply to Mr Mandela in kind. I will continue to play the ball, not the man."

After you have unravelled the rugby-speak, that still doesn't sound like sorry, does it?

That was several weeks ago. Now, as I write, a *Beeld* columnist is warning Buthelezi that "we are already into injury time", and De Klerk has just said that it's "the last ten minutes of the match." All of which leaves me wondering whether we shouldn't outlaw rugby metaphors. It would reduce our opponents to complete political incoherence.

Anyhow, the negotiations process that has been under way for over three years is now hopefully about to open onto a new political situation that will swing around the April 27 election. But what lies beyond the election?

To begin to answer that requires a brief glance back over the immediate past.

Within our country, we reached a turning point in mid-1992, when rolling

mass action compelled the regime to sign the Record of Understanding. Yes, many of the agreements have not been implemented in practice. But the main significance of the Record of Understanding was that it forced the regime to accept, for the first time, the ANC-alliance's two-stage transition scenario (that is, with an elected Constituent Assembly as the key institution for a democratic transition).

This, in turn, laid the basis for a much more effective and constructive bilateral process between the two main antagonists — the ANC and the regime. The negotiations, disguised as a discordant symphony orchestra, became in effect what we wanted them to be — a duet.

In turn, these developments smashed a key component of the NP's political scenario — a strategic alliance with Inkatha (or, as they tended to put it, using their ethnic calculations, between "Afrikaners and Zulus"). Some kind of electoral marriage, in pursuit of Buthelezi's mythical four million Zulus, may still be cobbled together. But it will be a cynical affair, and everyone will know it.

Not all in the NP leadership were convinced of the irreversibility of the new situation last year. In the first months of this year De Klerk himself began to wobble, showing signs of growing sympathy once more with the Kriels and Coetsees. But the national crisis and mass response following Chris Hani's assassination in April definitively marginalised the spoilers.

Changing gear

Locating where we are now in this way is, I believe, critical. Above all it is important to constantly remind ourselves that the qualitative shifts in the situation have all been mass-driven.

When we talk about a mass-driven negotiations process we sometimes imagine this in rather mechanical terms — a picket a day outside the World Trade Centre. But make no mistake, the events of August last year and April this year continue to have a profound resonance on the whole process.

I say all of this against the backdrop of a 1993 that has had a mixed character from an internal ANC-alliance point of view. Opinion polls suggest that the broad majority constituency shows rising hopes and very real expectations around an ANC election victory next year.

By contrast, within ANC-aligned activist circles the mood, I think, has been somewhat different. There is an air of sad resignation in the face of the "irresistible". Gramsci called on revolutionaries to cultivate "a pessimism of the intellect, an optimism of the will" — meaning, roughly, that you should plan for the worst but fight confidently, with all you can muster, for the best.

I suspect a significant proportion of the Left has been walking around with a pessimism of both intellect and will this past year.

Take for instance a recent assessment of the Cosatu Special Congress by Karl von Holdt, editor of the *SA Labour Bulletin*. I greatly respect Von Holdt's opinions, but the assessment in the current issue of the *Bulletin* is very much in the genre of pessimism of intellect and will. It raises many important points and warnings, but in an altogether ungenerous way.

If push comes to shove, he asks, will the SACP have the guts to break its alliance with the ANC? But Von Holdt never really looks at the objective basis for the alliance, and therefore hardly deals with its desirability. How will Cosatu exercise its independence of an ANC in government? The Reconstruction Programme "reads like a well meaning wish-list...But where will the money come from?" How will Cosatu "resolve the tension between alliance and independence?", etc, etc.

Many on the Left have been walking around with a pessimism of both intellect and will this year

Reasonable questions, but isn't it the responsibility of leftwing intellectuals not just to produce an inventory of worries, but also to suggest some positive answers? Or are there none?

All of this wilful pessimism, not just Von Holdt's, is going to be self-fulfilling if we are not careful.

Reasons to *be* cheerful

So what's needed for intelligent optimism?

Without offering a complete theory, let me list a few items:

- Let's take stock of where we are at the end of 1993 (we have made progress which should neither be underestimated, nor exaggerated). And let's not forget how we got here (my point about a mass-driven process).
- Drawing on this, let's ensure we move forward (beyond *Beeld*'s "injury time", and De Klerk's "last ten minutes") with a growing capacity for mass

involvement and empowerment. How, I have heard many comrades ask, will that be possible next year when "the ANC is the government"? "How can the ANC march on the ANC?"

Mass involvement and empowerment need increasingly to shift from protest towards a mass movement and struggle for reconstruction and development. It means popular involvement in huge programmes of electrification, housing and job creation. It means a co-ordinated struggle for adult basic education, including literacy. It means getting infrastructure to the most marginalised rural communities. It means community radio. It means unleashing a thousand energies.

I've no doubt that to sustain all of this will require not just the fullest mass involvement, but also mass protest from time to time. I've no doubt the ANC will be marching in various directions, including *on* the ANC...And so what?

● Which means that to be loyal to the ANC means defetishising the ANC. The ANC is not a monolithic block. There are left and not-so left forces within the ANC. The ANC is a broad church, necessarily so. Left views have every right to speak up openly, in a forthright manner in the defence of the ANC's long revolutionary traditions. That is not sectarianism, nor is it disloyalty. We should not become demoralised by countervailing currents and tendencies. Let's speak up against them.

To be loyal to the ANC means defetishising the ANC ... it is not a monolithic block

● Wait a minute, my pessimism of the intellect interrupts, let's go back to your second point. What's all this stuff about huge programmes of electrification, housing and job creation: Where is the money going to come from?

After two years of research and consultation with a wide range of progressive economists locally and internationally, the high-powered Macro Economic Research Group (MERG) — backed by the ANC and Cosatu — is about to release a major report. The report sets out to answer Von Holdt's question. It presents a perfectly reasonable and coherent approach.

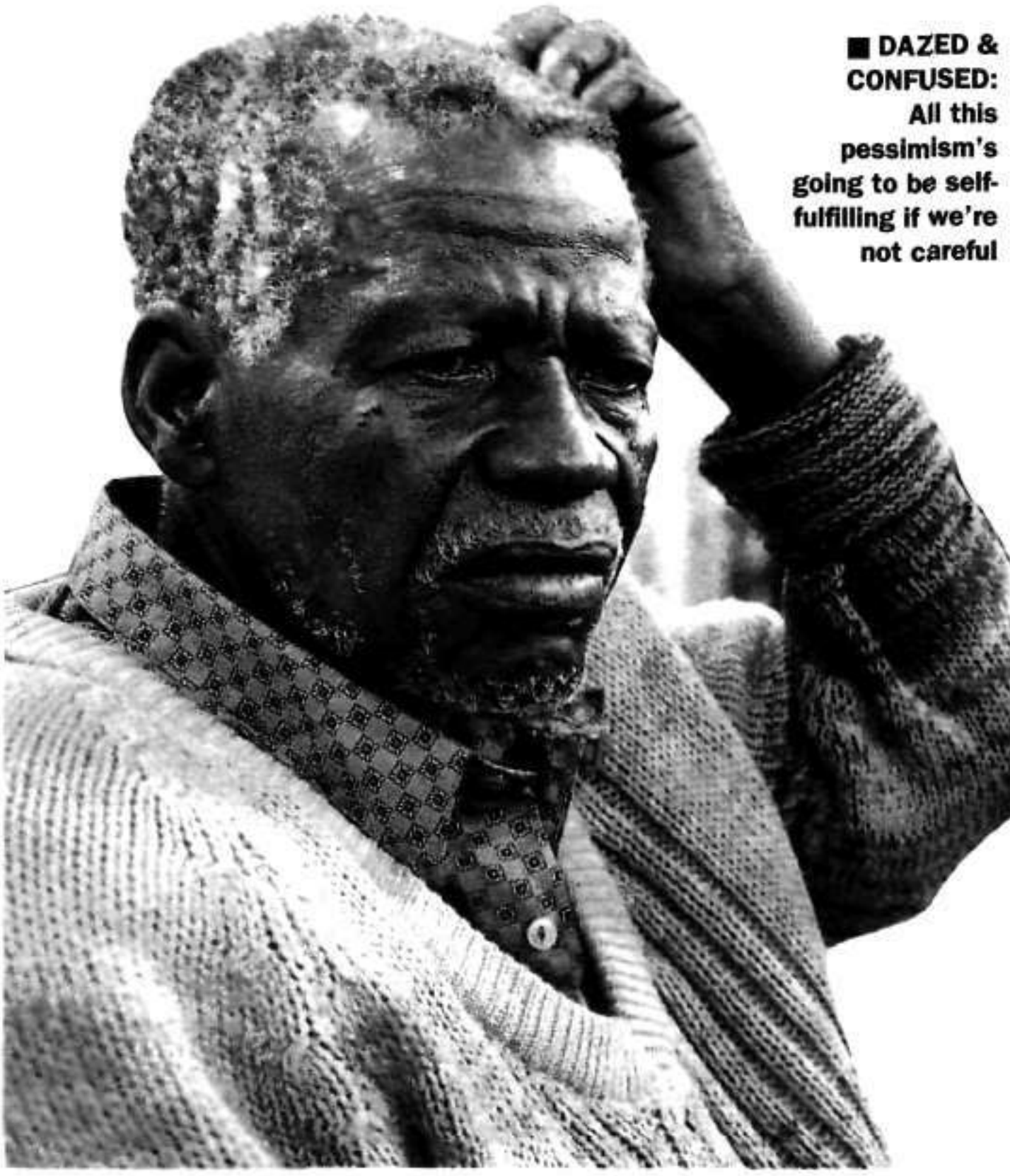
Of course, not everything in the 365 page report is gospel. Mass-based formations need to digest and revise where necessary. But here, for the Left, is a broad macro-economic framework that shows we can reconstruct without resorting to voodoo economics. Moreover, it shows that it is only a reconstruction perspective that can provide any coherent strategy for South Africa.

But, once more, the danger of left pessimism, and the related danger of regarding the ANC as monolithic, creep in.

In the weeks before the MERG report has even been released, our opponents (the real ones, whose mouthpiece is *Business Day*) have begun their campaign of vilification. They are trying to present it as "populist", as "unreconstructed old-thinking", as all about "mindless nationalisation". They are also trying to exploit differences within the ANC, and between ANC economists and MERG economists.

Their agenda is transparent. They hope to debunk any coherent, overall macro-economic position from our side; they hope to transform debate and differences within our ranks into chasms. And from there, they hope to slide us all the way back into the waiting arms of Reaganomics.

None of that needs to happen. But to guard against the worst we need a Left that remembers where we have got to and how; a Left that doesn't forget some of its optimism. And, above all, a Left that keeps its eyes (as De Klerk and Doctor Khumalo would both say, meaning different things of course) firmly on the goal. ■



■ **DAZED & CONFUSED: All this pessimism's going to be self-fulfilling if we're not careful**

PHOTO: RAFS MAYET

Not a tea party

South African women end 1993 in pretty much the same position as they started it. Will 1994 be any different? A group of women activists are trying to make sure it is — by launching a bold new women's party. **MIKKI VAN ZYL** reports

OUR COUNTRY CONTAINS TWO majorities: an African majority and a female majority. As we proceed along the transition to democracy, the first majority is being included. But what about the other?

The question stands at the heart of a new political force: the South African Women's Party (SAWP) recently launched in Cape Town, and the country's first women's party.

The party's platform is anti-sexism (which encompasses body politics — reproductive rights, rape, violence against women), gender issues and environmentalism. Supporters come from varying backgrounds, but share a concern about where women's issues go in the new era. For them, the signs are not encouraging.

What is to be made of a draft Electoral Act that finds it necessary to insist explicitly in its code of conduct on "the full participation of women in political meetings, party structures and electoral activities"?

The implication is that women shy away from such activity, even though the contrary is true. Women *are* and have always been active in organisations, spearheading campaigns, sustaining activities and more. The problem is that, generally, they remain in subservient roles, while men define the issues and agendas.

The six-member Status of Women sub-council in the new Transitional Executive Council (TEC) hardly breaks with this tradition. It serves in an advisory rather than participatory capacity: men still define and prioritise the political agenda.

"Everywhere I looked, if women were there, they were in some sort of

PHOTO: KEVIN CARTER (SOUTHLIGHT)

advisory capacity or lobbying position," says Estelle Hefer, who sits on the SAWP's interim working group. "Women were still excluded. Why can't they just do it for themselves? That's what this party stands for — we believe women are qualified and skilled enough to represent themselves."

In the Transvaal, Nina Romm from the Women for Women in Government lobbying campaign wants to see at least a 30% quota of women in parliament: "Out of 12 million, there must be at least 120 competent women."

The women's sub-council in the TEC, women's ministries and lobbying groups, as well as the ANC's 30% quota and Cosatu's 10% quota for women, are to be welcomed. But there's no guarantee that those ranks will be filled by women (or men) who strongly support women's issues. The question of gender representation is not answered merely by female tokenism, but by a politically conscious commitment to anti-sexism.

Stand and deliver

It is on the issue of sexism — the point where women's and men's interests collide — that the SAWP intends to take a firm stand.

"If you know that political women don't necessarily champion gender interests," says Michél Muller, a founding member of the SAWP, "the future looks bleak for addressing crucial gender questions — things like a woman's right to control her own body, marital laws and taxes, community health care,

PHOTO: KEVIN CARTER | SOUTHLIGHT

■ **PLEASE BE SEATED: Women have remained in subservient roles in most political organisations**

Gender representation is not answered by female tokenism, but by a politically conscious commitment to anti-sexism

freedom of sexual orientation and protection from violence against women." She sees these issues, and environmental planning, as the focus of the SAWP's campaign.

Thus far, besides Azapo and Inkatha, the SAWP is the only political party to take a clear pro-choice position around abortion: "Women want control over their fertility because they realise that fertility is central to their economic situation and education," explains Muller.

The SAWP believes women should decide for themselves when it comes to reproductive issues. They must have a choice, which also implies adequate health care and safe, affordable contraception for women. "If we want to see long-term economic stability, women need to control their fertility," says Muller.

The reasons behind setting up a women's party seem obvious. History demonstrates constantly how women's issues are sidelined, she declares. "We have sincere questions about whether the new government will merely be a transfer of power to a multiracial brotherhood, or whether it implies real social transformation for women."

Although every major political party has its "women's sector", there is little evidence that women or gender issues will be adequately represented. The Women for Women in Government lobby believe that one way of putting gender issues on the agenda is by supporting a women's party.

Thorny questions

But the thorny question of constituency remains. "To get someone into Parliament we'd have to get between 30 000 and 50 000 votes," calculates Hefer.

Broad-based movements like the Women's Alliance, Women's Coalition and others have long been trying to unite women around women's issues. How will the SAWP be able, at such short notice, to muster a constituency large enough to win a seat?

"Inevitably many women side with political viewpoints that are larger than women's issues," admits Muller. "We want to attract a new generation of women who are probably [politically] non-aligned but who have a vision to unite around common issues and rights for women. We want the Women's Party to become something that will make women sit up and think."

Then there is the practical matter of organising a political campaign barely six months before the election.

The plan is to remain regional. "It is sound business practice," says Hefer. "As soon as we have set up a proper infrastructure here [in Cape Town], we can start organising nationally. We have two full-time workers, but need many more volunteers, especially good fundraisers." The SAWP needs to raise R10 000 and get 500 signatures to register as a political party.

Although women's parties have not been massively successful in Canada or Scandinavia, gender issues have found safe havens in the various anti-nuclear and green movements in Western Europe.

But alas, there now appears to be a backlash against gender politics in those]Here, the backlash seems preemptive, as men defend their "right" to subordinate women in the name of "tradition" and custom.

In other countries, strong feminist movements have tended to become absorbed into other political movements.

Muller believes it can be different in SA: "The timing is different — we are going for a transitional structure. We're in a different situation. First world women are not a fair example, women's voices are emerging the world over." ■

Learning Aids

The theme for World Aids Day 1993 was 'Time To Act'. That such a challenge is still required after two decades of the disease dramatically unveils our failure to come to grips — and to terms — with Aids. But the irony, as **MARY CREWE** shows, is that it's teaching us lessons that stretch far beyond the epidemic

NOW MORE THAN EVER, IT IS "TIME to act". But it's also time to learn the piercing lessons Aids has taught us about ourselves and the ways we relate to each other.

Especially in SA, where our Aids campaigns, with isolated exceptions, have been timid, conventional and limited in scope. Sure, we debate HIV/Aids and research peoples' attitudes. But very little has been done to enable those most vulnerable to infection to act and protect themselves.

Aids raises all sorts of issues traditionally ignored in SA. It has revealed our inability to confront many aspects of sexuality, relationships and morality; in addition, it has highlighted our tardiness in tackling migrancy, poverty, homelessness and poor education.

The failure also stems from how the disease has been typified in the media. As we know, Aids is a debilitating, lethal and frustratingly mysterious disease. Many authorities regard it as the greatest health crisis of our time. The scientific label "Aids" generally

■ **WRITING ON THE WALL: Graffiti outside the Johannesburg Community Aids Centre tries to convince passers-by of the need to change**

refers to a real clinical syndrome, an infectious condition caused by a virus, HIV. Those who study it understand a good deal about its behaviour (though they have thus far failed to outwit it).

But "Aids" does more than merely *label* this illness. The name also *constructs* or encodes the illness, helping us make sense of it. We know that something is happening, that it's killing real people. Whatever we call this "something", however we end up construing or representing it, we cannot wish it away. But the names and representations we attach to this illness nevertheless influence our cultural relationship to it. It affects the way we relate to Aids, the place (if any) it occupies in our lives, the interventions and countermeasures that become feasible.

This means we have to struggle to grasp the nature of Aids and its effect on society, on strategies for liberation and progress, and on our personal relationships.

Deep divisions

Aids brings to bear an unprecedented complex set of social problems. Before we can even begin to address them, we need to acknowledge that it has demonstrated an enormous capacity to generate *meanings* that escape our full control. Once Aids enters the arena, the entrenched division between "them" and "us" — men and women, "guilty" and "innocent", gay men and "the rest of us", employers and employees — become even more problematic.

Our early representations of the disease centred on images of immoral behaviour (the characterisation of gay sex), along with images of promiscuity and licentiousness (the characterisation of prostitutes) so common in the dominant descriptions of marginalised groups. So most people found it easy to dismiss Aids as, first, an illness which *would not* affect them and, second, a construction of identity which *could not* affect them.

For the mainstream, which believes itself to be neither gay nor promiscuous, these representations made it "easy" to deal with the epidemic — by confining it to another realm, to the life experiences of marginalised, stigmatised sectors. Quite rapidly, though, the illness came to represent these behaviours. Soon Aids was synonymous with "immoral" and "illicit" lifestyles, promiscuity etc.

This made it difficult for individuals — no matter how they had contracted the virus — to come to terms with their infection. To admit to infection meant inviting the social representation of the disease. One became not simply an Aids sufferer but a member of some "deviant" sector.

Still encoded

We have not rescued Aids from this historical positioning, from this code it has become. And these representations make it very difficult now to arouse people to fight against the epidemic. The strength of those early representations forces us to persuade people to distrust virtually everything they have been taught about Aids, and to recognise that it can *infect* and does *affect* us all. This is very difficult, because the early campaigns introduced extremely durable and powerful associations with the disease.

We've reached a point where we can no longer simply undo those representations. Broader attitudes, patterns of deprivation, prejudice and discrimination allowed those categorisations to take hold in the first place; now, we cannot combat Aids without combatting the stigmas.

HIV/Aids is an epidemic which flourishes amid social unrest, dislocation, poverty, discrimination, unemployment and a lack of access to education and health care. It flourishes in a society which refuses to recognise how long-standing patterns of deprivation, discrimination and prejudice engender the epidemic.

These aspects of HIV/Aids are widely recognised. Less acknowledged is the fact that the stigmatisation makes it very difficult for communities to

Facts & figures

- **More than 15 million people worldwide (6 million of them women, 1,3 million children) are infected with the HIV virus.**
- **More than one in five (3,4 million) of HIV-infected people have developed Aids; the greater majority of them (3,2 million) have died.**
- **In Africa, HIV infections in the past six years have increased from 2,5 million to 10 million. Women account for 40% of infected people**
- **In SA, an estimated 600 000 people are infected. 500 new infections occur each day.**
- **By the end of the century, 3 million South Africans will carry the virus and 160 000 people will have Aids.**
- **Caring for the disease could consume up to three quarters of the national health budget.**
- **Botswana spends three times more than SA does on prevention and treatment of Aids.**

■ LONE VOICE: A major part of the b psychological barriers

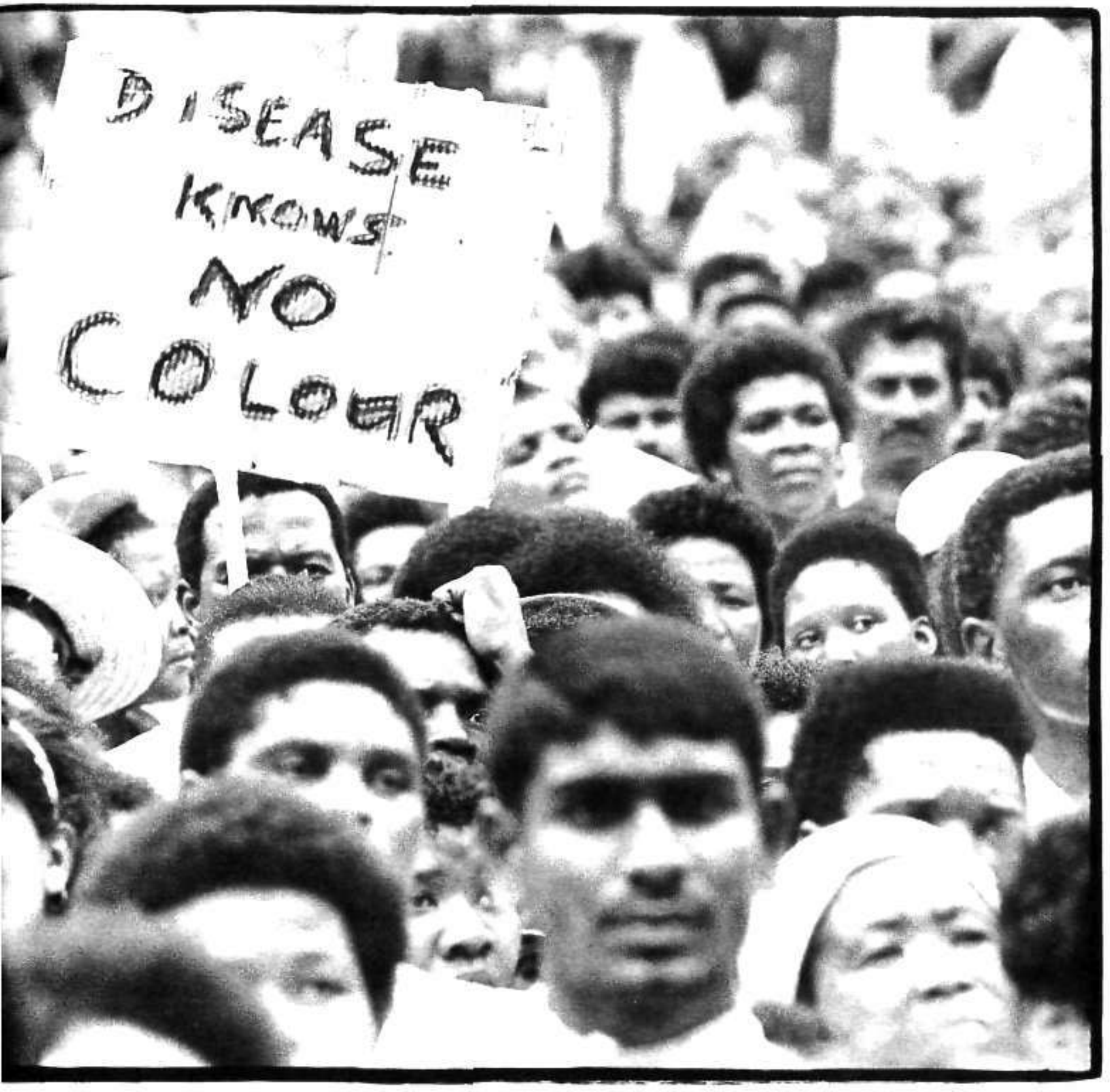


PHOTO: RAFS MAYET (SOUTHLIGHT)

gainst AIDS is breaking down

break the pattern of infection.

Women's increased vulnerability has singled them out as the group most in need of Aids action and education, and a debate has developed around the empowerment of women, around how women can take up the issue of HIV/Aids and through it transform their lives (see box).

With proper health care still out of reach for most South Africans, women are made to shoulder the burden of care, of educating their children (and partners) about HIV/Aids, of ensuring

Locked out of privilege. Locked into Aids

It's not simply personal behaviour that makes people vulnerable to Aids. Research shows that the most vulnerable sectors of society tend to be those who are most deprived of resources, marginalised, discriminated against, and locked out of the cycle of privilege and power. Sectors such as:

- **Youth who are sexually uneducated, insecure and pressured into becoming sexually active. Living in situations where they are subject to rape and sexual exploitation renders marginalised youth especially vulnerable.**
- **Women who are economically and structurally dependent on their partners, who are unable to negotiate safer sex or even raise the issue. The tacit social acceptance of multiple partners for men also renders them more vulnerable.**
- **Domestic and migrant workers who are separated from supportive and loving family environments. The precariousness of their work and living circumstances heightens their vulnerability.**

Women at the cutting edge

Women are especially hard hit by Aids — for three main reasons, which experts call their 'triple jeopardy':

- **Their biological vulnerability. Women are ten times more at risk of infection with every sexual encounter than men, and if infected have a 20 to 40% chance of infecting their babies.**
- **They are less able to defend their sexual safety.**
- **They have to shoulder the responsibility of care, and bear the brunt when a breadwinner is lost to illness or death. That loss also weakens women's ability to direct their own futures.**

The burden of HIV falls heaviest on the poorest women in the poorest communities. Aids obviously has to be positioned within the broader debates around gender, empowerment and liberation. We must find ways for women to say 'no'. Not just to undesired or unsafe sex, but also to inequality, discrimination and the lack of choice — all of which combine in a web of vulnerability.

A debate has arisen over how this can be done when these issues quite clearly are not addressed in other arenas. And how does one link the complex issues that surround Aids with the wider processes of development and liberation?

So, whereas the broader issues are often structural ones which seem to be addressed at a wider social level, Aids forces us to grapple with questions of transformation and control at a very difficult, personal level.

Often our approaches lack a firm grasp of how women's experiences are mediated and what realities hinder them from acting on the basis of awareness programmes and information. In many ways, our approaches have been too populist.

— Mary Crewe

safer sex occurs. But why should this be the case?

Too often, Aids awareness programmes which target women tend to position men as the antagonistic "other". Instead they could be seeking ways to fight Aids through joint programmes which address issues both partners need to confront. In our work with civics, youth and churches we've found such programmes very successful.

Programmes also tend to assume inadequacies in participants. Women are taken to be powerless, weak, oppressed etc, and that some process needs to be set in motion to circumvent or overcome this.

New ways

The challenge, though, is of a greater scale. Women cannot take control of their sexual lives merely because they have been taught negotiating skills and have condoms at hand.

The whole way in which they have been positioned and portrayed in the Aids discourse needs to be tackled. It's not just their position vis-a-vis men that must be challenged, it's the language we use to describe and encode women and Aids. We need to discover new ways of conceptualising both the oppression and possible liberation of women. And we need to recognise that the Aids programmes are not working.

The flip-side to this might be the emphasis so often placed on male workers. HIV/Aids hits workers hard. The personal consequences of infection are combined with the effects of working in an environment where the epidemic becomes very visible as greater numbers of the workforce are infected.

Workers, too, are expected to combat Aids and take control over their sexual lives. Of course, men have the advantage of workplace training and support, of collective action that is already structurally a part of their lives.

The way Aids has been taken up in the workforce mirrors in some ways the inaction and apathy in wider society. Managements have couched the disease in terms of its impact on insurance, pensions, production and labour relations. Beyond that it's a *union* issue. And unions couched it as part of the struggle in the workplace, and the wider issues (which might be more immediate) tend to take precedence.

Where Aids programmes have been introduced, they've stuck to the doctrine that information changes behaviour. So it's usually a matter of displaying a few posters, providing some condoms, maybe a pamphlet or two. But seldom a programme that articulates Aids and workers socially and historically.

Up to now the question of HIV/AIDS has been posed individually — to you, me, not us. It's *your* choice, we're told; instead of finding ways for, say, partners in a relationship to address it *jointly*.

What we need to realise now is that the women we target (in one way) and the workers we target (in another way, as a separate "target group") are often people who share a lived reality, a home, a relationship. They're the partners Aids workers refer to when they say: Talk to your partner.

Too little, almost too late

We've allowed valuable time to be wasted. We tried to come to terms with the disease, but we've been unable to design effective strategies to contain it.

Largely this is due to how we have constructed the disease. But it's also because we have not subjected it and our response to critical investigation. We need to recognise how restricted our methods of understanding and interpreting this disease have proved to be. We need to figure into our responses an understanding of how people mediate their realities, and how they assemble their knowledge. And we need to find new ways to confront the code in which the disease has become encased.

This does not mean we forsake the aims of empowerment, nor that we forgo democratic processes. But it does require that we become much more mindful of the complex personal and social dynamics at play when we embark on social missions like empowerment or education.

Ultimately, the lessons Aids compels us to learn echo far beyond the disease itself. Aids challenges us not only to discover new responses to old problems, but also to inject them with the acute insights and urgency this epidemic demands. It's a challenge, I believe, we're up to. ■

● *Mary Crewe manages the Community Aids Centre in Johannesburg*

debate

Now is the time

If there was ever a time to begin a movement for an independent workers' party, it's now, argue **B RAMADIRO** and **S VALLY** — while the space and opportunity still exists

THE DEBATE AND SUPPORT THAT has greeted the call for a Mass Workers' Party comes as no surprise. After all, it is clearly an idea whose time has come.

As the urban and rural poor grow disillusioned with the negotiations process, the limitations of black nationalism are being exposed vividly to workers.

Shopstewards and other workers in the independent trade union movement, workers active in other organs of civil society, and many democratic socialists are questioning whether any of the existing political organisations are advancing working class interests.

There has emerged a need within the workers' movement to set in motion a viable alternative to the disastrous strategy of negotiations for power-sharing. Within the Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action (Wosa) we are trying to clarify such a new road.

No compromise

Why form a workers' party? Why not encourage workers to join the main national liberation organisations like the ANC and the PAC?

What we need is an independent organisation of socialists that will advance the long- and short-term demands of working people — within the national liberation struggle and without any compromise.

Inside the nationalist organisations this was possible to a limited extent only, and mainly during the period of armed propaganda. But it remains possible for democratic socialists to work with nationalist formations on issues that affect workers, issues like jobs, housing, land, one-person-one-vote. After all, most members of these organisations are workers.

We cannot forget, however, that all nationalist organisations are multi-class. And, in the anti-apartheid struggle (except for a short period in the mid-1980s), the voice and interests of the black middle class have tended to dominate those of the working class.

Nowadays we are told that workers have to help put the (capitalist) economy of our country "back on the road" to profitability and efficiency. We have to help it become competitive internationally, so more jobs can be created. This is wishful thinking.

It is precisely the power of such illusions and deceptions that confirms the need for an independent workers' party that will constantly and without compromise promote the interests of workers. It will certainly not support such class-collaborationist policies. It will expose the deception behind the "unbundling" of some monopoly companies that suddenly are discovering that "small is beautiful". It will refuse to pay an apartheid debt (that runs to billions of rands) to foreign banks and agencies which all along financed the apartheid system.

Rather, it will take a new road to continue the struggle of working people for emancipation, food, jobs, peace, land and liberty; a struggle that inevitably is waged against the capitalist class and its allies.

An error in two stages

But isn't this exactly what the SA Communist Party (SACP) is doing? Why form another party? Why not join hands with the SACP?

The answer is clear. The SACP cannot provide leadership to the working class at this crucial phase of our history. Having abandoned its role of promoting the class struggle without compromise, it stands without an independent policy. In large part, this is due to its two-stage strategy of revolution, based on the theory of colonialism of a special type, and the decades of co-operation with the ANC which it accepted as the leader of the (first) "anti-apartheid" stage.

Today, there is no difference between the political positions of the

■ DOES THE CAP FIT? Addressing Cosatu congresses is a long way from defending working class interests

PHOTO: WILLIAM MATLALA

What is the Mass Workers' Party?

We see the MWP as a party of the workers, for the workers and controlled by the workers. It will function openly and transparently. Everything from the formulation of its programme of principles to membership lists, finances or campaign planning will be open to all members and the general public.

Membership will comprise workers and their allies who have transcended 'mere' trade union consciousness and who are prepared to struggle for an independent working class position on all issues, not only so-called 'bread-and-butter' questions. Hence, the party will not be a party of the trade unions, not even in the style of the British Labour Party. Nonetheless, many, if not most, of such a party's leaders will come from the organised ranks of Cosatu, Nactu and unaffiliated unions.

Its programme of action will focus on tangible issues that affect the working class such as retrenchments, unemployment, jobs, housing, health care, a living wage, price increases, education, self-defence, women's workers' rights, environmental issues and socialist measures, such as nationalisation under workers' control.

Will it be 'vanguard' party? Any group of politically conscious people who band together to promote a certain world view or programme are by definition a 'vanguard' of sorts. But the question is really only answered once the struggle has been won.

The MWP will be the creation of workers who stand united in their opposition to capitalist exploitation and continued racial oppression. They will not have the same idea of what the post-capitalist society should look like.

The right of tendencies to exist is the essence of inner-party democracy, so there will be different and changing tendencies or 'platforms'. They will constitute themselves around questions of goals and objectives, strategies and tactics. The flip side to that right is the duty to adhere to decisions arrived at democratically.

To define the shape and content more precisely at this stage would be to pretend we have a blueprint, which we in Wosa don't. Instead, much debate is being invested in clarifying the many issues that surround the MWP among ourselves and others on the Left.

— B Ramadiro and S Vally

SACP and those of the ANC — even if individuals in the party criticise its theory and strategy. It has forsaken positions aimed at defending working class interests, but which may conflict with those of the ANC. In fact, the SACP leadership has on many occasions been instrumental in spearheading moderate positions — for example the "sunset clause" and power-sharing.

Nevertheless, there have been constructive and mature contributions by some comrades in the SACP (such as Langa Zita, Fareed Abdullah and others) around their conception of a Conference of the Left. This opens the possibility of, at least, a joint platform between our organisations and others on the Left. Such a platform would promote the interests and fight for the democratic and social demands of the working class.

We need to shift away from nationalism towards the socialist alternative; an independent mass democratic workers' party will be one of the vehicles to achieve that. And comrades in the SACP who are unconvinced that the ANC can be transformed into a "mass socialist party" should join in efforts to build such a workers' party.

It is today quite obvious that the strategy of negotiating for power-sharing has forced the nationalist organisations into deep compromises with the apartheid state and capital. Indeed, we hear the voice of the capitalist class speaking from within these organisations in the ex-liberation movement. "Realism" has become the watchword.

What became of the demand for nationalisation? Even the moderate demand for a constituent assembly is being compromised. The list goes on. The negotiations process has made a mockery of some of the most important ideals of our liberation struggle.

Even the demand for one-person-one-vote stands compromised by the decision to tie the nationalist organisations and SACP into a so-called "Government of National Unity". Leaders of the liberation and trade union movements will be allowed to take office. But calling shots from the wings will be capital and its imperialist allies in the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and various US, European Community and East Asian interests. It is with these class forces that the national liberation movement is expected to

■ **FIGHT THE POWER: Building a mass**

"transform", "restructure" and even "liberate" SA!

The truth is that the middle class and a tiny layer drawn from skilled organised black workers are being absorbed into a restructured ruling class alliance that has the task of rescuing the decaying capitalist system in SA.

Black nationalism has walked its last mile. Forced to compromise with the capitalist class on all the major aspects of social policy, it can no longer promote (even inconsistently) the interests of the urban and rural poor. Instead, it finds itself trying to drum up faith in policies which only yesterday it was denouncing as reactionary and untenable.

Scores of workers still believe in the promises of the nationalist leaders. Hence they remain members and supporters of the ANC, the SACP, the PAC. They will leave those parties if and when they lose faith in their effec-

PHOTO: WILLIAM MATLALA

workers' party presents the Left with an opportunity to coalesce rather than fragment

tiveness.

This means that, in the short term, a workers' party will necessarily be an opposition movement. It will fearlessly promote what it considers to be the real interests and demands of the working people of our country. In doing so it will hinder the ruling parties' attempts to implement their class agenda. In the longer term, it will build the capacity to take over state power and to transform society along radically democratic lines.

The time is now

We call on all democratic socialists, trade unionists and civic activists who realise the urgency of the hour to establish a movement to promote the Mass Workers' Party.

We are not calling for its immediate establishment; comrades are encouraged to form committees for a worker's party at their workplaces, in the townships and in educational institutions. In some provinces, regional interim committees have been set up already.

We hope to see these initiatives lead to the formation of an interim national steering committee. It will convene a National Conference of the Mass Workers' Party early in 1994, where the movement for such a party will be launched and equipped with a programme of action.

It is obvious that such a party can only be launched on the crest of a campaign around some of the fundamental demands of South African workers. So, the conference will also have to focus on practical campaigns.

Speculation about whether such a movement would contest the April 27 election has generated a lot of heat but very little light. Such issues still have to be assessed as we build a workers' party movement, and, naturally, they will be debated at the MWP conference.

At this point, Wosa could be convinced that it makes sense tactically to contest elections through a workers' list — as part of the movement for the party.

Building a Mass Workers' Party is without doubt an idea whose time has come. It presents leftwing groups in SA with an historic opportunity to coalesce rather than fragment. If we miss it, we will have only ourselves to blame.

It is crucial that we begin the process now — while the space still exists. It will become much more difficult once the Government of National Unity consolidates itself. For, at that point, with the bureaucratic labour and civic leadership co-opted, we can anticipate much more direct coercion being directed at struggles on the ground and at the Left in general. ■

● *The authors are members of Wosa. This article has been edited.*

The people versus ... the

Popular justice will have more popular appeal if it's driven by the communities it's intended to serve, argue **ZELDA HOLTZMAN** and **DANIEL NINA**

PEOPLE'S COURTS, STREET AND yard committees, anti-crime committees, disciplinary committees ... The names vary depending on where you are, but each represents a different expression of the same phenomenon: popular justice.

The emergence of popular justice in the past decade had many reasons — related to apartheid, non-Western value systems, and the nature of the political struggle.

But basically, it expresses another — parallel — definition of law and order. And it rests on creating organic dispute resolution mechanisms, mostly concentrated in African communities.

Popular justice emerged during the 1980s as part of the United Democratic Front's campaign of "organising people's power". The guiding ideology was to establish organs that could foreshadow structures of state power, enabling people to build parallel institutions. Rethinking Lenin.

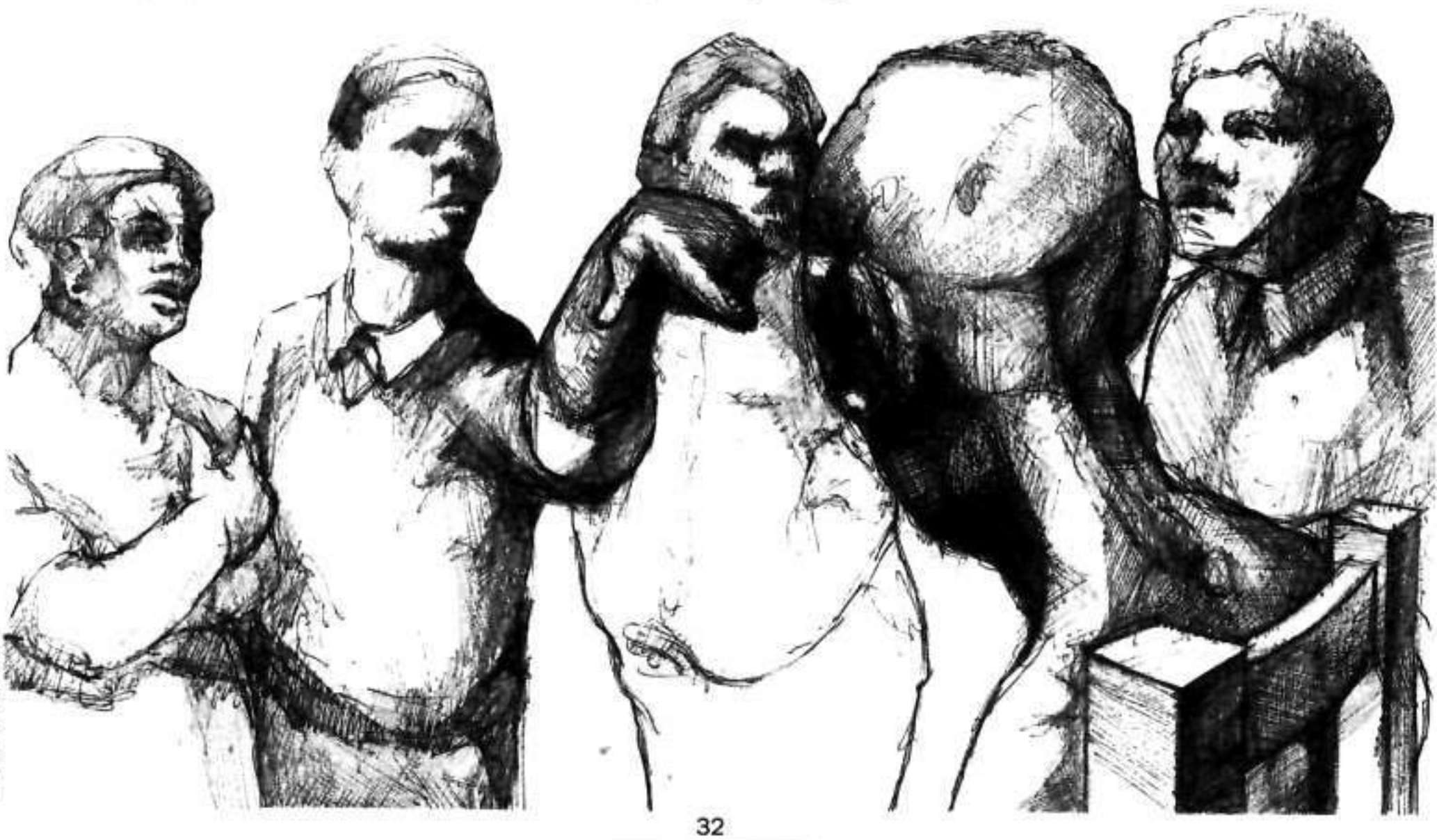
Of course, that process came to a halt. Nowadays, not many communities are talking about taking state power, at least not in that "traditional" sense. The political transition has redefined the struggle in general, and this has affected popular justice in particular.

Popular justice, then, is at a crossroads. Either it continues to operate outside the realm of state justice and private conflict resolution projects — as a kind of explicit challenge or subversion — or it sets about transforming and democratising state and private justice.

Many organic expressions of popular justice still operate throughout the country. In most cases, these structures are solving disputes among community dwellers — so we're looking at street and disciplinary committees. In some communities organs of popular justice are also involved in crime prevention, especially in the Eastern Cape.

In contrast to the 1980's, these community structures today have to compete with a variety of other dispute resolution initiatives that do not originate within the community. Alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, organised by the private sector (including non-governmental organisations and lawyers' groups), are redefining the nature of "conflicts" in communities and are introducing new counter-measures.

The state is also setting up new and less formal courts which offer easi-



GRAPHIC: RHETT MARTYN

people

er access to justice. (The so-called "short process courts and mediation" for certain civil matters is a good example.) So popular justice is being questioned and squeezed by the interventions of both state and private forces.

But neither these state or private justice initiatives attach much value to the important contributions that popular justice has made to help achieve peace and stability in many communities.

Generally, popular justice is symbolised by necklacing and *sjambokking* — activities widely documented by the media. This is the brutal side of popular justice.

There's no denying that popular justice has been — and occasionally still is — expressed in such ways. But it has also come a long way from those "brutalities". In many communities popular justice today functions on the basis of the consent and approval of residents. Gramsci hegemony at its most basic. The reason is straightforward: popular justice is meant to represent residents' efforts to solve their problems and rebuild their communities.

Collective participation and debate, redefining state legality and sentencing policy, democracy and accountability to the immediate community — these have become some of the features of popular justice in the past years.

Organs of popular justice derive their accountability from their links to civic structures. And those links legitimise and regulate their operation. These organs, like civics, continuously have to earn their legitimacy. This requires that they be accountable to residents, that they function democratically (through collective participation and decision-making), that they respect human rights and solve problems efficiently and in ways that satisfy the parties involved.

Eastern Cape headaches

In contrast to many instances where organs of popular justice operate smoothly and are accountable to the community — like in Guguletu, in Cape Town — there are also reports of 'derailed' operations.

In early November, members of the ANC Women's League marched against the Anti-Crime Committee (ACC) in Motherwell, about 20 kms from Port Elizabeth. They were protesting human rights abuses committed by the ACC in its handling of 'criminal' cases.

Local SA National Civic Organisation (Sanco) officials deny the *march occurred. But township residents and journalists confirm it* was no hallucination.

Having spent months earlier this year developing (with Sanco regional) a plan to *regulate* the ACCs in the Eastern Cape, I must admit deep concern about the Motherwell debacle. Indeed, unless rectified, the ACC situation in that region looks headed for disaster.

Why? One central reason is Sanco regional's failure to thoroughly discuss the regulation plan with the whole region. There was a good start, but then the funding for the consultation process dried up and 'experts', like myself, left town.

Another reason lies with the strongest civic in the region with the most functioning ACCs, Sanco Port Elizabeth, having its own ideas about the future of these community crime prevention schemes. In fact, their agenda seems a bit at odds with the Sanco regional one. This opens the door for multiple approaches to ACCs, which will further hamper and complicate regulation and co-ordination.

So, distinct initiatives continue to operate virtually autonomously in PE. It's a situation that, I fear, can only lead to disaster — as the march against the Motherwell ACC confirms.

The beat goes on

Meanwhile, the Port Elizabeth ACC has emerged, drawing glowing publicity and praise from the business community for its success at combatting crime and retrieving stolen goods. Even the SAP are keen to work with it.

But, as Sanco officials will tell you, this ACC and its executive was not elected by the community; they are self-appointed, well-meaning community activists. The irony is obvious, as are the problems created by its lack of accountability to community structures. How do we square this with a commitment to democracy and the strengthening of civil society?

And, finally, there's the SAP, with its new 'smooth-talk' about community policing. Not surprisingly, it has a lot to say about the ACC goings-on in the Eastern Cape. It's also quite aware of the divisions within the civic movement around the question of ACCs — schisms that allow the SAP to push its definition of community policing as the only viable one.

And that definition, of course, revolves around the SAP. Meanwhile, the ACC approach argues for community-centred policing which can be assisted and liaised with the SAP, but not controlled by it.

The tension between these approaches will increase in the months before the election. And it's up to communities, via their civics, to decide which way this struggle goes.

What seems certain, though, is that debacles like the Motherwell case and the disunited and fractious context in which it has occurred, end up favouring the SAP's idea of 'community policing'.

One key lesson is that, to successively prevent crime, organs of popular justice must be accountable, democratic, law-abiding and respectful of human rights.

— Daniel Nina

Popular justice needs to engage in a hegemonic project of influencing and transforming the dispensation of justice in SA. This means injecting popular and democratic culture into the practice of those other sources of justice.

The experiences of some Eastern Cape communities offer pointers. Sanco Eastern Cape has decided to follow a new route and not take advantage of the monetary benefits of private justice or be co-opted by the state.

They proceeded to organise their own mechanisms to dispense justice — which later would become linked to the formal judicial system. In May, at a conference hosted by Sanco's Eastern Cape region, it was decided to begin regulating the anti-crime committees and create community courts. That process has begun. Each such community court comprises a group of people elected by civic structures and tasked with serving their community by dispensing justice and resolving disputes (see box).

These courts are a step beyond people's courts. Because of their accountability to community structures and dwellers they are more democratic than other initiatives, whether state or private.

The new Bill of Rights will become the guiding framework for these courts.

In addition to the community courts, Eastern Cape communities have developed crime prevention structures — the so-called Anti-Crime Committees (ACC). Their task is to help prevent crime and facilitate crime investigations.

But they are not vigilante groups or neighbourhood watches. An ACC is accountable to the civic in its area and responds to its authority. ACCs don't ignore the existence of the South African Police (SAP); instead, they redefine the SAP's role and force it to become accountable to community structures. What is emerging is a process of collaboration between community structures and the SAP — with the aim of achieving peace and stability in these communities.

Along the N2

Another, often overlooked but important difference between popular and state justice is the emphasis on achieving some degree of organic stability and order in the community. Street committees (affiliated to Sanco) operating in Guguletu in Cape Town, for example, aim to solve problems and disputes in ways that satisfy the parties involved and keep the community together. State justice, in contrast, tends to concentrate on securing a conviction, regardless of whether it disturbs the stability of the community and further divides it.

Community structures have to compete with private sector 'alternative dispute resolution mechanisms' and less formal courts set up by the state

This is important. If projects of popular justice are co-opted by the state, this goal (which is central to creating and maintaining unity in a community) runs the risk of being eroded and compromised.

Thus far our discussions with street committee members in Guguletu have focused on maintaining the community's responsibility or "jurisdiction" for solving conflicts. The idea is that the police, magistrates and any other external institutions be invited to help solve a conflict only after community structures have failed to do so.

Another critical aspect is that financial logic of popular justice and state justice systems. After securing a conviction, the formal courts apply punitive measures either by imposing fines (which exclusively benefit the state) or by imposing prison sentences (the financial burden of which falls on taxpayers, including the victim). The only consolation for the victim is the fact that the offender is behind bars.

Guguletu's street committees also show clearly that prison sentences are not the only solution. Community work is a common type of "sentence" in Gugs. Apologies, returning stolen goods, referral to social workers or other state service agencies (like the SAP), and (in the case of minors, with the consent of the parents) limited *sjambokking* are other solutions that are applied.

Cul de sac?

What is desirable for a community and what conforms with the norms and customs of society, is not necessarily the same thing.

By operating within the logic of community life, popular justice in the form of street committees can satisfy the needs of both the victim and the community. Through the return of stolen goods to the victim and compensation for any losses, the wronged party gains direct benefit. Moreover, the community can consolidate itself by becoming responsible for rehabilitating wrongdoers within the township.

Furthermore, street committees are not isolated entities, but are part of civic structures. Their lines of accountability are therefore clear. And their very existence depends on community support, which cannot be imposed — it must be earned.

Ultimately, the questions are: Who should benefit from a justice system, whether state, private or popular? And on the basis of whose values and to what ends is justice dispensed?

One can argue that these different systems operate at separate levels and have different capacities to dispense justice. But a more progressive and creative way forward might lie with the ability of popular justice to "connect" with state structures and private agencies, influencing the character of those other sources of justice.

It might be necessary to take the N2 to avoid the cul de sac: if organs of popular justice do not engage creatively with state and private justice today, they might face isolation and marginalisation in the "new" SA.

This is the challenge for popular justice projects: to relate to the state and private agencies in ways that make those structures and agencies more accountable to the community, where the balance of forces is reversed in favour of the principles and values of organic mechanisms of dispute resolution. ■

● *Zelda Holtzman (Community Peace Foundation, UWC) and Daniel Nina (Institute of Criminology, UCT) have been holding workshops on community policing with street committee members in Guguletu.*

debate

Gimme shelter

Unless radically rethought, SA's grand new housing policies will end up nourishing the 'new middle class', and leave SA's poorest households high and dry (and homeless). But it needn't be that way, says ANNE JELLEMA — provided we have the nerve to review a couple of doctrinal taboos

HOUSEHOLDS EARNING LESS THAN R800 a month are the people most urgently in need of shelter; people living in shack areas, rural informal dwellings.

Yet it's these households that will benefit least — if at all — from a housing policy designed to deliver conventional homes and loans primarily through formal markets. And that's precisely what the new housing policies being fashioned by the National Housing Forum (NHF), ANC and government are geared for.

No-one can deny the importance of helping salaried workers buy affordable homes and secure mortgage bonds. Success would represent quite an achievement, with pay-offs for the economy in general and not just the new home owners.

But let's not pretend that those South Africans most in need of homes will be the beneficiaries.

Such an outcome, of course, would confirm the gloomy predictions of a "50/50 society" (see, for instance, *WIP* 87); where economic marginalisation denies the poorest 50% the benefits of liberal capitalist democracy, reinforcing an "underclass" or "fourth world".

But the "structural forces" said to propel this trend are not — yet — immune to political choice. Policies aimed at redistributing urban resources can prevent this march of marginalisation.

To achieve that, we need more than an effective housing policy. We need alongside it a settlement policy that can provide essential services, building materials, credit access and technical support cheaply to as many people possible. And that, in turn, will require urban land reform to provide secure, affordable, serviced land for such settlements.

■ SHACKING UP: Poor families just can't afford to pay more for housing than they do at the moment

PHOTO: ANNA ZEMINSKI

The small print

The housing programme being drafted by the NHF offers a lump-sum capital subsidy which, once combined with a mortgage bond, will make basic houses in the R20 000-R65 000 range affordable to people earning between R1 000 and R3 000 a month (according to figures being discussed at the time of going to press).

These loans are a crucial part of the NHF scheme. They enable low-income households to invest in a substantial asset that will appreciate in value and provide access to other forms of credit.

But even the NHF working reports admit that households earning under R800 a month are unlikely to be able to afford bond repayments under the scheme.

One can argue that families who are ineligible for a loan could still get the subsidy grant, which they can use to buy a serviced site. Any money left over can be used to build a "self-help" house, or to rent one from a housing

association or private landlord. True, but it's hardly an effective way to address the housing needs of the poorest 40% of South Africans.

Why? First, the programme contains no commitment to provide an adequate supply of cheap serviced sites or rental units. That's left to the *market* (or the magnanimous foresight of local authorities). Developers are unlikely to embrace this end of the market when houses worth up to R65 000 will also be eligible for NHF grants.

Under the new housing policies, serviced land for informal settlements may remain scarce, become more costly, and be even more effectively controlled by bureaucrats tasked with ensuring that sites are confined to "appropriate" areas. For all its shortcomings, at least the current dispensation seldom required that people buy a site.

Subsidies will be difficult, if not impossible, to obtain for people who have no choice but to live in unauthorised settlements. Unless serviced sites are provided in adequate numbers and at affordable prices, the subsidy programme might end up increasing competition for the current stock of official serviced sites. More sources of division and opportunities for corruption are not what these embattled communities need.

And second, without a home loan, capital subsidies will basically become a lump-sum payment to certain families. They will improve the position of the head of household (generally, men) in the short term. But does it help alleviate structurally imbedded poverty, or promote the more equitable distribution of social resources in the long term? Not likely.

NHF supporters point to co-operatives and land trusts as options that allow people to pool their money and thus afford better housing.

Hypothetically it's a good idea. But co-ops and trusts work when they are able to contain or shut out market pressures. How compatible are they with a scheme that's geared to promote market forces?

The scheme is thin on incentives that can ease financial or legal obstacles facing would-be collectives. Likewise on mechanisms to finance their ongoing administrative costs — costs that are usually high enough to make co-ops most viable for middle-income groups. In Zimbabwe, co-ops were heartily promoted in rhetoric — but the lack of practical facilitation meant few ever got off the ground.

Moving targets

Certainly, housing is one of the most difficult areas of social spending to target effectively. As affordable urban shelter becomes scarcer, competition grows fiercer. The poorest sections vie with those better-off for access to subsidised projects. This yields black market deals, patronage and cheating — all of which end up sabotaging efforts to impose means tests or restrict resale.

Whether houses are delivered through the state or by a subsidised private sector, the middle classes cream off the benefits. And after a few years, the programmes prove too expensive to be sustained.

There are other, discomfiting questions we need to pose. The "right to housing" has become a politicians' piety. But just how central a priority is the subsidised purchase of a conventional home for poor households — compared to other needs like subsidised transport, improved basic education, primary health care, free childcare for working parents, or an income support "safety net"?

Informal settlements provide more shelter, more quickly and more cheaply than 'formal' projects can

■ **KNOW YOUR PLACE: New housing**

Surveys show that poor households in SA are spending a tiny portion of their budget (well under 10%) on housing. Now black communities are being pressured to pay service charges that range from R30 to R80 per household every month. But many poor families are neither willing nor able to increase their total housing and service charge expenditure by more than a few rands a month.

The upshot is that conventional home ownership does not aid the survival strategies of the urban proletariat.

Hit the road

Urban and peri-urban workers, especially those engaged in casual and informal jobs, have to stay on the move within and between towns. They also find themselves in varying domestic partner-

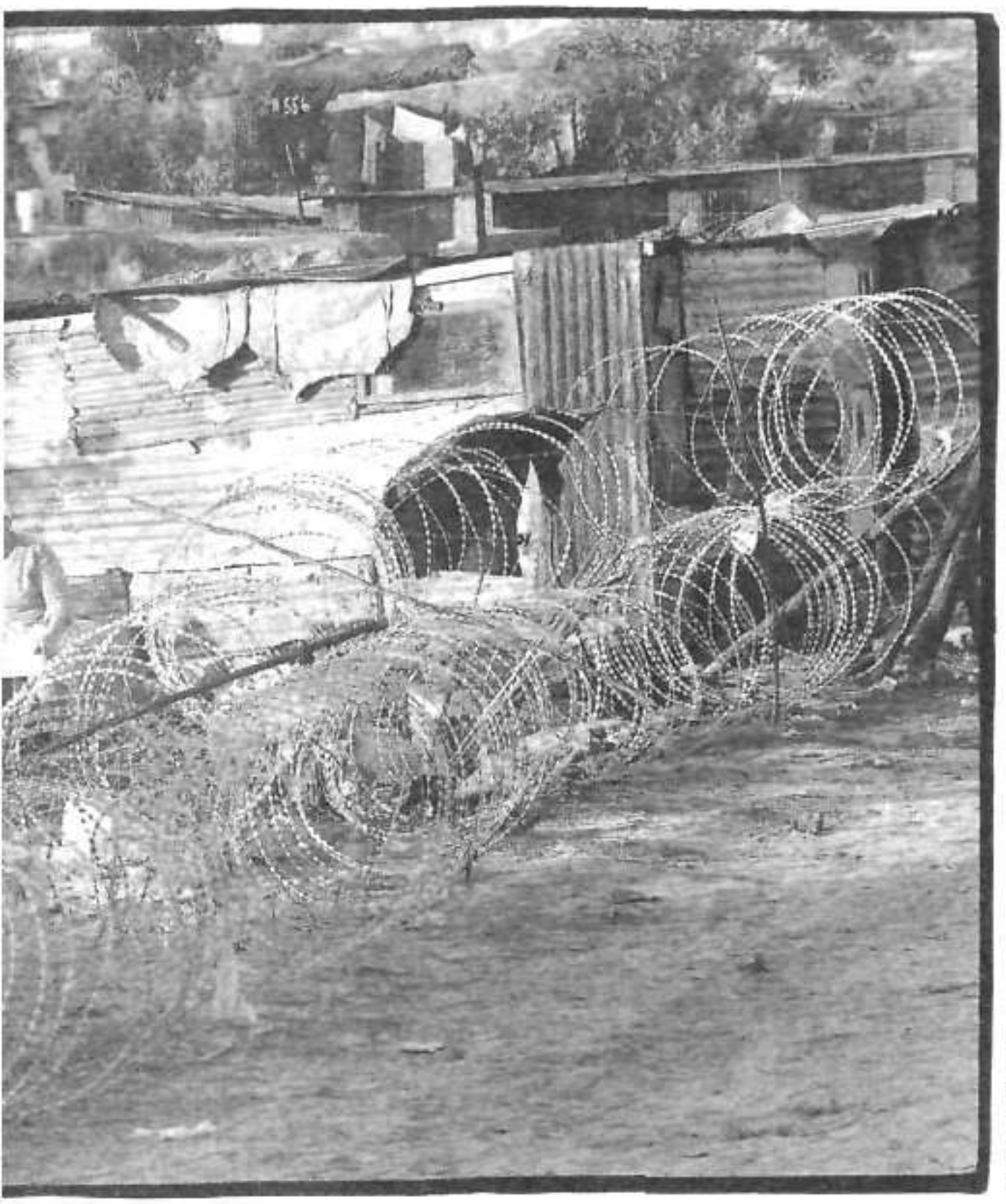


PHOTO: ANNA ZIEMINSKI

y to deny the poor any benefits of a liberal democracy

ships and living arrangements. Sinking resources into a house tends to tie people down, both to an area and particular domestic alliances. Which makes it socially and economically costly for them to move.

A toilet policy?

Lack of space prevents me from exploring all the options and perils that await efforts to provide shelter to the very poor. Rental and collective ownership, for example, are two complex areas that are now enjoying some innovative attention.

But one currently under-debated approach deserves particular reflection: support for self-help or "spontaneous" housing processes, combined with a settlement and urban land policy that can enable as many people as possible to gain cheap or free access to:

- Serviced, well-situated land.
- Training and materials.
- Small loans to finance the construction of adequate self-help dwellings.

Habitat International, like many progressive housing activist groups across the world, has come to embrace assisted self-help processes as the best way to provide more poor people access to more secure and more liveable shelter.

Isn't it time we took another, longer look at this option — which became a taboo in our debate after its ill-fated adoption by the government in the mid-1980s?

It will be controversial, to say the least, to include self-help programmes as a major component of a national housing strategy. After all, they are seen as a fatal concession in the struggle to provide a decent, minimum standard of accommodation. In Moses Mayekiso's memorable phrase, they amount to a "toilet policy rather than a housing policy".

The irony is that this argument may end up being used to support a pattern of housing investment that mostly benefits middle-income groups

Investing in the future — without any money

One of the biggest benefits of home ownership is supposedly its value as an investment. This value appreciates over time, and it serves as collateral to help families secure further credit.

But families need to be relatively secure economically, and quite firmly anchored in urban social networks, if they are to pursue such long-term investment strategies.

The reality is that most poor South African households are not the famous 'consolidators' of development theory. They struggle to mobilise whatever savings they have in order to meet short-term crises and opportunities; things like children's education, joining a burial society or taking out life assurance, starting a small business, or spending money on a rural home.

Habitat International's recent plea to Third World governments is applicable also to our reality. It called on them to 'minimise expenditure on direct construction, increase investment in provision of infrastructure and services, and give the highest priority to institutional changes that increase local access to resources and which guarantee personal and local freedom to use them properly'.

PHOTO: ANNA ZIEMINSKI

— while funding only a very small number of projects accessible to the poor.

Many housing activists in Latin America and Asia now argue that it is strategically necessary to accept the continuing need for informal shack housing and inner-city "slum" areas. They recognise that these forms of housing simply provide more shelter more quickly and more cheaply than can any formal "projects" manage to do.

Public investment should not try and directly control or replace these "spontaneous" housing processes. Instead, it should try to provide a maximum supply of cheap land and materials, small loans, essential services, and technical back-up and support for self-help upgrading.

At the same time, project-by-project approaches need to be slotted into a *coherent set of institutional reforms.* These would include programmes that can generate continuous investment in the development of land, infrastructure and services — from public transport to primary health care and public works employment schemes. The aim being to undo some of the broader inequalities and constraints that block access to urban resources.

Latin American activists suggest that preference go to projects that use local labour and local organisations to install or upgrade services that benefit all community members.

In their recent work, *Squatter Citizen*, Hardoy and Sattherthwaite calculate that US $20 million, disbursed to 150 community organisations for improved upgrading and services and the development of new sites, could ultimately benefit 450 000 community members (with $5 million left over for the construction of clinics or schools). The same sum, spent in $2 000 lump-sum grants to individuals, would benefit only 60 000 households, with no cost recovery.

A big bonus of such an approach is its potential for spurring and facilitating organising activity.

As in Mexico, Brazil and Singapore, money would be budgeted and structures established to advise, assist and train community representatives whose task it will be to mobilise and manage participation. Even relatively weak, divided and insecure groups

Preference should go to projects that use local labour and local organisations to upgrade services

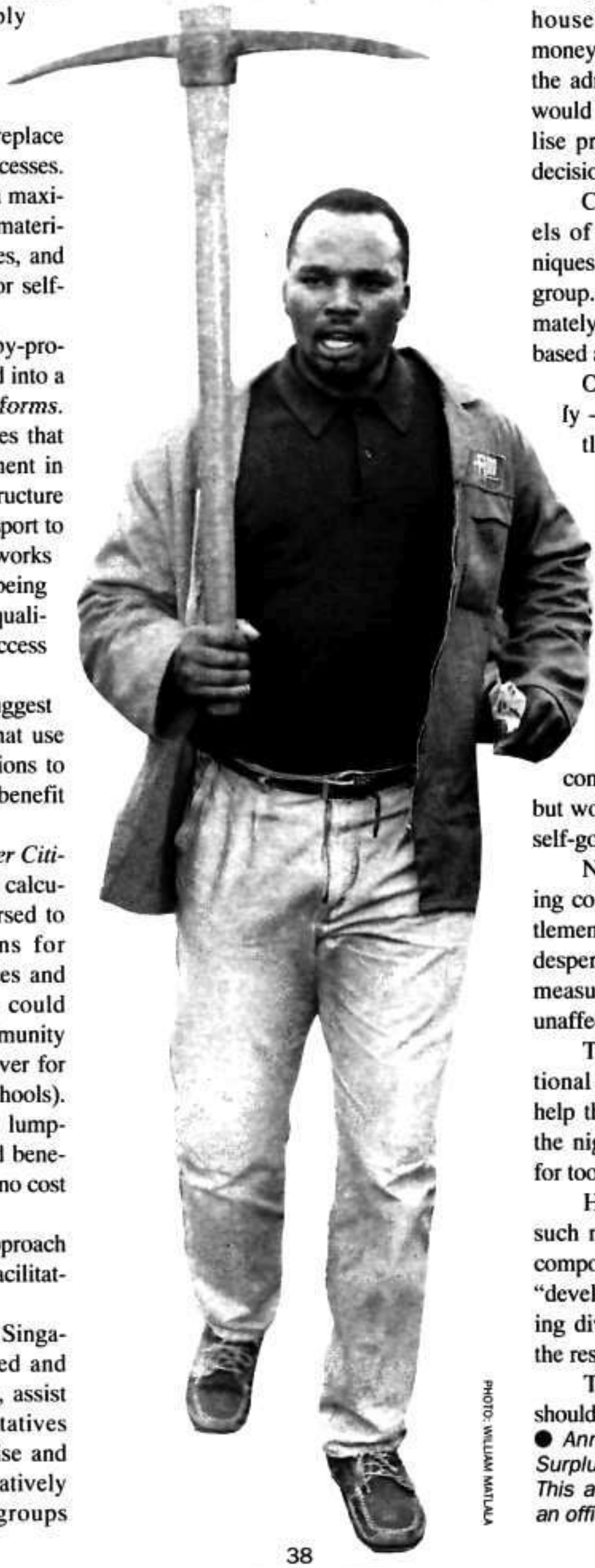


PHOTO: WILLIAM MATLALA

might be able to coalesce around such projects — especially where the gains are collective, rather than individual.

In conventional South African "development" efforts, local leaders often become little more than resource brokers, with accountability to the funder/developer, rather than to the community.

But in projects where member households "own" and control the money (subject to standard controls of the administering agency), local elites would find it much tougher to monopolise processes of communication and decision-making.

Choices about layout, design, levels of servicing, materials and techniques would be made by residents as a group. Successful projects would ultimately help build more stable, broadly-based and accountable structures.

One could object — pragmatically — that many of SA's shack settlements have become too fragmented by political factionalism, violence, crime and social disruption to make a community-managed upgrading approach feasible.

Many other informal settlements, especially where there have been enough sites and other resources to go around, have contained their conflicts and developed tenuous — but working — informal institutions of self-government.

New settlements are mushrooming constantly and new unplanned settlements will continue to appear, as the desperate search for shelter and some measure of security proceeds, largely unaffected by interim NHF policy.

The right kind of financial, institutional and technical assistance could help these areas save themselves from the nightmares of violent competition for too-scarce resources.

History brims with examples of such nightmares, too often created or compounded by inappropriate forms of "development" that ended up aggravating divisions between the poorest and the rest.

There's no reason why we, too, should go rumbling down those paths. ■

● *Anne Jellema is a researcher with Surplus People Project in Cape Town. This article does not necessarily reflect an official SPP position.*

debate

Back to the land!

On the eve of a democratic South Africa, there is a quiet but steady awakening of a rural people's voice. **ESTELLE RANDALL** looks at where it's coming from, and why...

THE CAMPAIGN TO RESTORE THE land to South Africa's dispossessed is starting to bear fruit. Organised around the slogan of "Back to the Land", rural communities have made significant gains in the past few months — despite some deft government manoeuvring around the question of land allocation.

The "Back to the Land" campaign started in earnest in August, when representatives from 80 rural communities converged on the World Trade Centre. They confronted negotiators with their objections to the proposed property clause in the interim constitution's bill of rights — chief of which was the fact that the clause would entrench current (white) property rights and effectively make it impossible for a new government to implement large-scale land restoration and redistribution.

The demonstration (the first of its kind for rural communities) bore fruit: the clause was amended, and the state is now obliged to take factors other than market value into account when determining compensation.

In addition, the negotiators finally agreed to include in the bill of rights a clause *guaranteeing* restoration of land rights to victims of apartheid dispossession — a significant victory for South Africa's landless people.

Labour tenants

There were other victories for rural people: Increasing organisation among rural communities has, for example, seen some success in negotiations

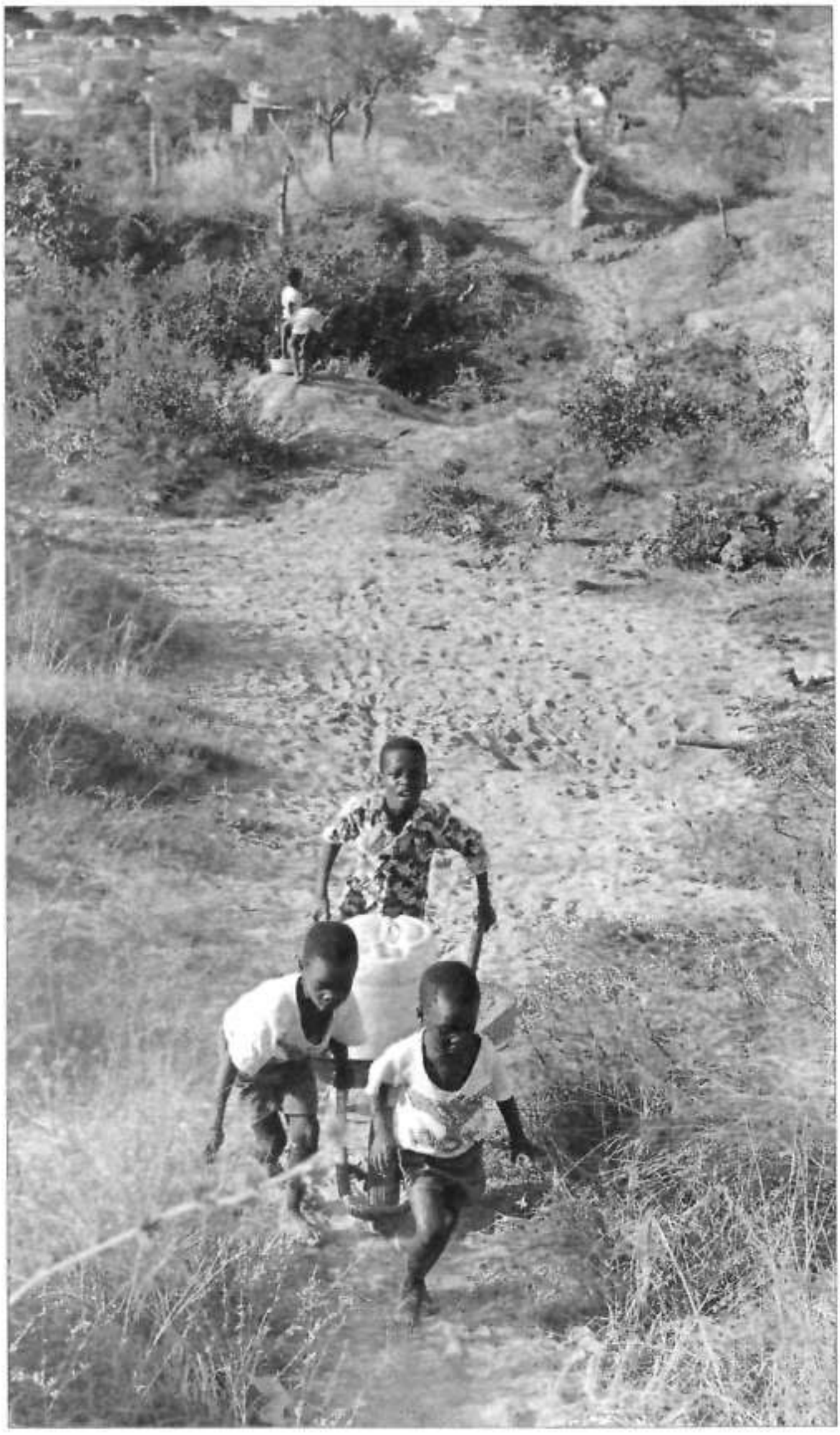


PHOTO: SAMSON SELEPE

■ **YOU CAN HAVE IT BACK NOW: Multi-party negotiators have agreed to land restoration**

between labour tenants and individual landowners. Tenant communities have also campaigned for recognition of their land rights.

The ANC, in its land policies, has undertaken to recognise labour tenant land rights — and the World Bank's land reform proposals for SA, presented in October 1993, suggest that labour tenant land claims be part of a future restoration process.

Land claims

The question of land claims remains a difficult one, however, and the government-appointed Advisory Commission on Land Allocation (Acla) has failed to act as an effective mechanism for either land restoration or redistribution.

Since the commission's establishment in 1991, it has heard 42 cases. Of the 23 cases on which it made recommendations, 11 involved claims from removed communities. Only six of these communities who brought claims will have their land returned.

Proposals for an alternative to Acla have not been implemented, but are likely to happen once a new government is in place.

Calls for a more effective land claims mechanism — one which is able to make decisions about claims and disputes — are already starting to get wider support from, among others, agricultural unions and the World Bank's researchers in SA.

The bank's proposals — despite their market-based approach — are perhaps the most comprehensive presented so far. In terms of land restoration, they propose either an administrative tribunal or a land claims court to deal with claims.

Claims which would qualify are those resulting from removal after the 1913 Native Land Act — which would include black spot, bantustan consolidation and labour tenant removals.

The bank argues that white property owners who may have been expropriated through racial land policies should be excluded from the land claims process, on the assumption that they have been adequately compensated and have had access to the political process denied to victims of apartheid.

To meet land redistibution needs, the bank suggests a basic grant and a matching grant. The basic grant would be enough to pay for a major share of a rural housing site and would be available to people who meet the requirements for redistribution. The matching grant would support increased access to productive land and those wanting land would provide part of the purchase price.

Back to the land

● Rural communities and service organisations are planning a national community land conference for early 1994

● At the conference, communities will draw up a land manifesto which will serve as an organising tool

● They will also use their document of demands to influence political parties' election manifestos

The bank argues that if beneficaries are exempted from paying for part of land redistibution, and current owners and farm creditors also have to be compensated, the state will have to pay all land acquisition costs. Given large resource requirements for other social needs, redistributing land on only a grant basis would mean either drastically reducing numbers of beneficaries or stretching out the programme over several decades.

Government attempts to restructure land allocation

While debate about mechanisms for land restoration and redistribution raged on, the government continued to dispose of state land in various ways. Among these was the administrative transfer of about 1,2 million hectares of state land to bantustan governments (see *WIP* 93). These agreements included the possibilities of state land being transferred to ownership of "tribes" and parastatals in the bantustans.

The government also hastily passed nine new land laws affecting land distribution in July (see *WIP* 91). The National Land Committee warned that the laws would effectively alienate large amounts of state land and land belonging to communities in favour of bantustan and tricameral authorities.

The laws would also entrench privatisation of land, and force privatisation of communal land on people without proper debate about other more creative options for secure tenure. They will also entrench complex bureaucratic processes of managing land allocations. The NLC believes these processes would be better handled at local level.

The government has also tried to secure its place in broad rural restructuring through renaming old discredited departments, such as the Department of Development Aid — now split into the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Regional and Land Affairs.

Challenges for 1994

While a lot of attention was focused on getting broad consensus on land claims, it remains unclear how and when substantial land reform will be managed in SA.

Rural government

Issues of rural local government and rural development have also been largely neglected, in part because of the ambiguous status of bantustan governments and the weak organisation among rural people.

As an interim measure, rural local government arrangements are likely to mirror those for the urban sector.

Broadly, these involve racially-based councils being replaced by non-racial transitional councils, comprised equally of people drawn from statutory bodies and non-statutory bodies, such as civics.

Forums

Forums proliferated and became potential centres of decision-making around development. But, in most of these, rural issues remained peripheral. An exception was the National Consultative Forum on Drought, which, although set up to coordinate a national response to the drought, found itself having to take on broad rural development by default.

Various forums have begun to seek ways to include rural concerns. But, the challenge remains of effectively including a rural community voice, when communities are still in the initial stages of organisation. Another challenge is to streamline and rationalise the plethora of forums so that emerging community organisations can effectively engage with them. ■

● *Randall works for the Association for Rural Advancement (Afra)*

document

The hit list

US president Bill Clinton recently justified US military action against Iraq by saying it was 'essential to send a message to those who engage in state-sponsored terrorism'. But the US government has its own history of 'state-sponsored terrorism' — the extent of which is detailed below, in this list of prominent foreign individuals whose assassination (or planning for same) the US has been involved in since the end of the Second World War.

- 1949: Kim Koo, Korean opposition leader
- 1950s: CIA/Neo-Nazi hit list of numerous political figures in West Germany
- 1955: Jose Antonio Remon, president of Panama
- 1950s: Chou En-Lai, prime minister of China (several attempts on his life)
- 1950s: Sukarno, president of Indonesia
- 1951: Kim Il Sung, premier of North Korea
- 1955: Jawaharlal Nehru, prime minister of India
- 1957: Gamal Abdul Nasser, president of Egypt
- 1959: Brigadier General Abdul Karim Kassem, leader of Iraq
- 1959, 1969-72: Norodom Sihanouk, leader of Cambodia
- 1950s-70s: Jose Figueres, president of Costa Rica (two attempts on his life)
- 1961: Patrice Lumumba, prime minister of the Congo (Zaire)
- 1961: General Rafael Trujillo, leader of Dominican Republic
- 1963: Ngo Dinh Diem, president of South Vietnam
- 1960, late 1980s: Fidel Castro, president of Cuba (many attempts on his life)
- 1960s: Raul Castro, high official in government of Cuba
- 1965-66: Charles de Gaulle, president of France
- 1965: Pierre Ngendandumwe, prime minister of Burundi
- 1965: Francisco Caamano, Dominican Republic opposition leader
- 1967: Che Guevara, Cuban leader
- 1970-73 Salvador Allende, president of Chile
- 1970: General Rene Schneider, commander-in-chief of army, Chile
- 1970s: General Omar Torrijos, leader of Panama
- 1972,1988-89: General Manuel Noriega, Chief of Panama Intelligence
- 1975: Mobutu Sese Seko, president of Zaire
- 1976-79: Michael Manley, prime minister of Jamaica
- 1982: Ayatollah Khomeni, leader of Iran
- 1983: Miguel d'Escoto, foreign minister of Nicaragua
- 1984: The nine comandantes of the Sandinista National Directorate
- 1985: Sheikh Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah, Lebanese Shiite leader (80 people killed in the attempt)
- 1981-87: Muammar Qaddafi, leader of Libya
- 1990-91: Saddam Husein, leader of Iraq

— William Blum/Covert Action

PHOTO: THIS MAGAZINE

■ **BAYONETS INTO POTATO-PEELERS: A demobilised Sandinista, at work in potato fields outside Managua**

Over the volcano

It's almost four years since the Sandinistas were floored by the 'impossible' — an election defeat. On a visit to Nicaragua, South African activists **SALEEM BADAT** and **FAIZAL ISMAIL** find a Left that's still picking up the pieces ... and wrestling with some familiar dilemmas

FLYING INTO MANAGUA, IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE NOT TO RECALL THE HOPE, EXCITEment and inspiration that the Sandinistas' July 1979 victory had provided in South Africa.

How activists devoured the literature of the Nicaraguan revolution. How we learnt from links forged between the political and other mass organisations, and debated the strategy and tactics of building a popular front.

And yet, as we left the country some days later, it was tough not to feel despondent. More than one million people live in Managua today, but it is really no more than a huge village. Everywhere, the effects of the February 1990 electoral defeat at the hands of the US-backed UNO coalition are obvious. Economic hardship, social dislocation and political instability seem rampant.

Combine this with a US security establishment that neither forgets nor forgives those who defy it. Add a geography that places the country in the path of spo-

radic earthquakes, volcanoes, tidal waves and hurricanes ... and that sinking feeling grows.

The Sandinistas' electoral defeat sparked a searching debate in their party, the FSLN. The leadership's top-down style, the lack of internal democracy, the submissive behaviour of mass organisations, the concept of vanguard applied by the FSLN — all this was criticised.

Dora Maria Tellez, joint head of the Sandinista bench in the National Assembly, expresses the problems well: "The internal changes in FSLN did not necessarily fit with the social model proposed — one of political pluralism, mixed economy and non-alignment — because we went on functioning as the *sole party. We took the initiative but* lost the advantage.

"We opened political space, but remained trapped between reality and the preconditions of the socialist models we had known about up to this time.

"What we knew of socialism was the one-party system. We had a pluralistic vision, but our concept of a party in power didn't correspond to it ... We wanted to democratise the country, but we functioned internally in an eminently military style. It was all so contradictory!"

Like in South Africa, Sandinistas and Left intellectuals are now debating issues of civil society, social movements and the state. Their revolutionary process spawned a range of civil society formations such as labour unions, civics, women's and student organisations. But with the FSLN as government, those formations were reduced to appendages of the state — transmission belts for the dictates of the FSLN leadership.

Since the 1990 election, mass organisations have left behind their role as parastatal bodies. They have also become much more independent from the FSLN, and have grown more democratic.

Instead of simply advancing and defending the FSLN's revolutionary project, they concentrate on mobilising and organising around the interests of their constituencies.

Two legs good...

But discussions with activists revealed some disturbing (and familiar) trends. In the standard view, the "vibrant", "independent", "autonomous" civil society now incarnates all that is positive, virtuous and democratic. And, conversely, the state has become demonised.

We also noticed that, in the midst of healthy critiques of the form and nature of the political party, a tendency has developed to downplay the significance of the party as a political instrument.

The fundamental flaw of this "good" civil society conception is, as Robert Fine recently put it in *Searchlight Southern Africa*, its "idealisation of civil society itself as an independent realm of benevolence". He reminds that "bourgeois civil society is the realm of violence, self-interest, inequality and *exploitation; none of the associations of* civil society ... are immune to these forces nor to their 'colonisation' by the state".

In Nicaragua, the many ways by which the state *does* intervene in and shape the terrain of civil society also tends to receive scant analysis.

A crucial problem is that once the state is demonised, its democratisation becomes neglected. The form, character and practices of state structures and institutions cease to be issues.

As in SA, Nicaraguans seem to be paying little attention to the area of state / party / civil society relations.

A "vibrant and independent civil society" in and of itself does not guarantee that social life becomes democratised. In fact, there is a danger that progressive social movements and networks (in the name of "autonomy" and their "watchdog" function) might retreat into distinct spheres and concerns of a very specific and immediate sort. And this would marginalise them when it comes to engaging political parties and the state around matters like public policy formation.

A right to rebel

The Sandinistas still control the armed forces, police and judiciary. But a majority grouping within the FSLN (including former president Daniel Ortega and armed forces chief Humberto Ortega) have pledged to respect the 1990 election, uphold the constitution and "institutionalise" democracy.

This group seems intent on entrenching constitutional democracy, attracting foreign resources for eco-

Nicaragua's death trap

Under the Sandinista government, Nicaragua held out against neo-liberal *economic prescriptions*. But that changed in 1990.

To attract aid and loans from the US, the IMF and World Bank, the UNO coalition led by Violeta Chamorro implemented neo-liberal policies and applied structural adjustment programmes. The familiar routine ensued — private ownership, deregulation, social service cuts etc.

A key part of the 'adjustment' was to drop tariffs and open the economy to imports — with devastating results: bankruptcies are soaring as industrial and agricultural enterprises are unable to compete with cheaper imports. Consumer goods for the rich are being imported at a staggering rate, while exports are declining, due largely to the fall in coffee and cotton prices.

But not all Nicaragua's economic woes can be blamed on UNO's policies. The unequal balance of power in the global economy, the burden of large debt repayments, and a reliance on foreign aid are major factors.

Like many developing countries, Nicaragua finds itself in a debt trap — what writer Susan George calls the *death trap*. Its foreign debt is (US)$10,8-billion, the largest per capita debt in the world! Much of it was accumulated by the Sandinistas to finance the war against the Contras or to deal with trade deficits. This debt is clearly unpayable. In 1992, $200-million was spent on interest payments alone — without reducing the principal amount at all.

The country still relies heavily on foreign aid. Of the $1,2-billion it received in 1991, almost 70% was spent on debt repayments and imports. Most of that aid came from the US, which had just lifted a five-year trade embargo and extended 'exceptional treatment' status to its new ally, the UNO government.

Hardest hit are the small-scale producers and traders, workers, peasants, low-ranking civil servants and former combatants. Of Nicaragua's 4-million citizens, almost 900 000 are either unemployed or under-employed.

The minimum wage is about $60 a month (R210), which puts many consumer items out of reach. Even the middle classes are severely affected. Academics earn about $300 a month, and it's not uncommon for professionals to make ends meet by holding down several jobs.

Still, in the midst of this poverty one encounters a conspicuous moneyed stratum, reflected in new restaurants and flashy cars.

nomic reconstruction, and avoiding a new round of US destabilisation. The focus is on the 1996 elections, and on tempering UNO's neo-liberal policies.

When we met him, Daniel Ortega spoke openly about the dilemmas confronting the FSLN. There is a view, he said, that the FSLN should be a "revolutionary, democratic and anti-imperialist party that defends popular interests and draws on the Nicaraguan people's historic tradition of struggle".

But he is concerned that the FSLN might fall "in the trap of those who, in the name of modernisation, would change the FSLN's very nature and purpose". He defends "the right to rebellion" and argues that "modernisation must be understood as a tool to defend the revolutionary project, not to bring back capitalism".

Ortega claims that the FSLN could easily seize state power. But this would put at risk all the gains of the revolution, since the US would almost certainly intervene.

The main challenge for the FSLN is to advance in three key areas: development, unity and democratisation. This means striking a balance between supporting the demands of the mass organisations, building effective opposition to neo-liberal policies and preserving political stability.

For the moment this is the accepted approach within the FSLN. But the impact of neo-liberal policies, economic decline, rising unemployment and social hardship are strengthening calls for the FSLN to become a more militant oppositional force. Some want it to resolutely support demands of Sandinista mass organisations that go on strike, fight retrenchments and protect property rights.

So the FSLN is faced with a delicate juggling act. It remains to be seen how, and to what extent, it can reconcile the intensifying demands and struggles of workers, peasants and popular movements with a strategy that emphasises political stability and a 1996 electoral victory.

Hallo, we're back...

Some of the most interesting recent struggles centre on property rights. During the 11 years of FSLN government, enterprises, land and property were not formally — in legal terms — transferred to workers and peasants.

Now, exiles have returned to claim their old properties, and many state-owned enterprises have been privatised. Workers and peasants have reacted with campaigns to defend as many as possible of the revolution's gains. In July 1990 they embarked on a national three-day strike that almost toppled the fledgling UNO government. Workers took over the running of enterprises and demanded legal ownership of occupied property.

Workers who claim a share or full ownership of enterprises face many challenges. Apart from the struggle to obtain proper legal title, they need credit from the state and hostile private banks. They need to improve the technology and productivity of enterprises while being battered by competition from foreign products. They must develop managerial and marketing skills, and so on.

Against the odds

These formidable challenges are yielding interesting responses —ones that South African workers could benefit from by monitoring and linking up with their Nicaraguan counterparts.

The pessimism that gripped us as our plane lifted itself over Managua is countered by the fact that Nicaraguans are used to setbacks. Much of their history is marked by profound instability and grievous disasters.

The US has staged at least nine military interventions in Nicaragua since 1800. Less than 30 years ago, the Somoza family still owned a tenth of all arable land, the airline, the textile mill, the newspaper, the sugar refineries, and ran the government.

Yet the will to continue the struggle for social justice and human dignity persists. And there are numerous sources of strength: the combativity of peasants and workers, the critical debate among activists, and a Sandinista leadership which, though tarnished, remains committed to a revolutionary project and embodies considerable talent and experience.

And not least is the capacity of Nicaraguans to live with adversity and still enjoy themselves. For, despite all its hardships, this is also the home of *merengue* music, the *salsa* dance, and some of the best baseball players in the world. ■

Conversations with the Contras

RAYMOND SUTTNER interviews demobilised Contras at Reconciliation centre outside Managua. Three hundred Contras live side by side with 700 of their former Sandinista foes.

Suttner: Is reconciliation possible in Nicaragua?
Contra: **After 10 years of war, it's difficult to talk about reconciliation. We have to be realistic. Those of us who fought the war still have wounds, so we are the ones who least want another war. Because of that, we believe reconciliation has to take place at grassroots level. It can't be a reconciliation of the elites. It also has to happen in a very natural way ... it should never be imposed by anyone.**

What unites us with the Sandinistas is the fact that our needs are the same. We may differ ideologically, but we all have problems with land, housing, education for our children. We have problems readjusting to society, so from a psychological point of view we have similarities with these people.

The transition from living in a war to living in a peaceful situation has been difficult. We realise we have to respect each other's identity, including our own political identity.

Suttner: Has it been difficult to respect each other's political identities?
Contra: **No, the problem has been that some sectors want violence in Nicaragua, sectors on both sides. But the grassroots and the people, the ones who suffered in the fighting, don't want to live those terrible years again.**
Second Contra: **In many sectors, we have already taken joint action to try and make the government fulfill its election promises. At the last march in front of the Presidential Palace, we drew former members of the Sandinista army and former Contras. It was precisely to demand the legalisation of this place (Reconciliation). On that day, we used the slogan "United in action for peace and reconciliation".**

Suttner: Are there still problems between yourselves and the Sandinistas?
Contra: **There is still scepticism. We respect them and they respect us, and that might make it sound easy to go into a process of reconciliation. But to sit down and talk to one another is very difficult. I think the Sandinistas feel the same.**

Suttner: What sort of role has the government played in all this?
Contra: **Reconciliation has emerged from the grassroots. The government hasn't supported our efforts — if it had, we would have made more progress. The government believes in reconciliation at top level, among the elites, but the one we practice is grassroots reconciliation.**

Suttner: I would have expected the government to be sympathetic to Contras...
Contra: **This government protects the elite, even though it should really show us eternal gratitude — because we are the ones who got them in power.**

Never saying sorry

Looking for Trouble, by Suzanne Moore.
Published by Serpent's Tail, London, 1993 (310 pages). Reviewed by **HEIN MARAIS**

THE SUB-TITLE OF SUZANNE Moore's trim compilation of movie reviews, columns and essays announces *Looking for Trouble*'s themes as "Shopping, Gender and the Cinema" — suggesting another one of those earnest bric-a-brac efforts that roam far but discover little. The teaser, thankfully, misleads.

A young, knowing British freelancer, Moore has collected pieces that first riled or thrilled readers of *Women's Review*, *New Statesman*, *Marxism Today* and Britain's quality dailies. Threaded together into three sections ("Feminism, Fantasy, Power"), these excursions into popular culture become a critical, supple affirmation of feminism, and a trenchant attempt to snip post-modernism down to size, without losing all respect for it.

Hers is an unblinking, worldly insistence that history has not "ended" and been replaced by a "a series of perpetual presents", that notions of "truth" and "reality" still retain meaning (as contested as these inevitably are), that the politics post-modernism provides for stands at a bit of an angle to the life experiences of the majority of humans on this planet.

But Moore's game-plan is not a quote-wielding, rearguard defense of Marxism's canons. The fact is that, as she admits and summarises in the closing essay, "every opposition that is central to Western thought has been blown apart — essence / appearance, truth / ideology, time / space, signifier / signified." When she does quote a Marxist critic of post-modernism, it's the superb Frederic Jameson, who explains this phenomenon as the cultural manifestation of late capitalism and the "schizophrenia, dislocation and depthlessness" generated by it.

We have a problem on our hands, she says. The central appeal of post-modernism for so many (ex?) lefties is its faculty to grapple more adventurously and explain more compellingly many of the dilemmas that confound us. Matters of identity and subjectivity, meaning and effect, image and reality. Let's face it, "the mantra of class / race / gender", as Moore puts it, fails to illuminate many aspects of our lives.

Part of the challenge she accepts is how to harness some of the profundities and provocations of post-modernism to the class analysis she retains.

Meanwhile, as a feminist, the central question for her is how to reconcile her (and other women's) life-experience with a pervasive culture (and, in post-modernism, a hip and hyped body

■ **FLAG HER DOWN: Is it Madonna's naked body that makes society uncomfortable or her naked amibition?**

of theory) that denies that women have autonomous identities, that insists "woman is only appearance" (French maverick Jean Baudrillard's dread view), that imagine and analyse women in every respect and within every context except "their own social reality".

This is weighty stuff, too often the *pretext for endless huffing & puffing* ego-trips — as dabblers in cultural analysis learn the hard way.

Not when Moore's steering, though. Her style is clipped and ironic, saucy but sincere. And she delivers joy-rides that manage to enlist what first look like distractions into crisp, stand-alone insights and affirmations.

Her critique of post-modernist visions of women takes in cult French thinkers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari with one glance, quotes from 1970s disco act Sylvester or Lou Reed with another, skates through movies from *Something Wild* to *Blue Velvet*, then winds it all up to bop Baudrillard and his buddies on the chin.

"Problems with straightforward sexism in the latest blockbuster? Hey, try these amazing 3-D post-modern spectacles and you'll see things differently," Moore complains at one stage, sounding wounded and angry. "What you thought was sexism was actually an incredibly ironic and nuanced intertextual reference to a film which was itself a pastiche on commodity fetishism."

She'll measure the tingles of politically correct erotica and complain that

Flesh, blood and power are the new dirty words – the issues post-modern man cannot face

it is "devoid of vulgarity, aggression, messiness or any of the things that actually make sex sexy", then launch into an eye-opening swoon over Prince's gender-bending, then head-butt director David Lynch for his portrayal of women. And somehow she compresses most of these forays into 1500 words or less — without making her prose read like morse code.

If you're anticipating dour pedantry you're better off with the Andrea Dworkins of our world. Moore is too sussed and too sassy not to let fly at the strains of feminism that end up "collapsing all women, regardless of race or class, into the category of Woman", where women are exalted as inherently peace-loving and close to nature.

She has even less time for genteel environmentalism ("Harping on about harmony, balance and responsibility isn't exactly going to bring down the walls of capitalism"), especially when it holds hands with fundamentalist feminism. "Where green politics and feminism do coincide," she decides, "is in their woolliness about the mechanisms of change."

(Oh, in case you're wondering, the difference between Moore and Julie Burchill, that other gifted and bitchy — oops — British essayist, is simple. Moore has politics to defend, not a reputation to flaunt; she chooses to subject her dilemmas to analysis, rather than smother them with flippancies.)

What really thrills is the discovery that this is not just a wordy display of one-up(wo)manship. Whether reflecting on the ways we look at each other, unbuttoning Madonna's appeal, nailing Spike Lee for his stereotypes of women and Jews, or mulling over the eerie magnetism of Margaret Thatcher, Moore resists going for the sucker punch. There's more at stake than a pumped-up ego, more to be achieved than blurting out the obvious.

She confesses her hate of Thatcher, only to announce that "Maggie was enough of a woman for misogyny disguised as political analysis to rule the day".

A matter seemingly as clear-cut as the price on Salman Rushdie's head gets taken a step further. "OK," she signals, "there is nothing more fundamental than freedom of speech, but I can't help wondering what would have happened if [pulp romance novelist] Barbara Cartland had written *The Satanic Verses*."

She'll sidestep the lofty praises and the lowly revulsions that greet Madonna wherever she goes, and declare simply: "[Madonna's] naked ambition makes us even more uncomfortable than her naked body. Women may know what they want, but they are still not supposed to show what they want."

"I have longed never to write another word about women again," Moore admits in her introduction. But she can't duck the fact that the five movies she sits through every week spring from and slot back into a reality she too has to step out into every day.

Neither will she accept that our politics is now "a collage of bits of the past", that all "the big stories we told ourselves about progress, science, truth, socialism" have been made implausible.

What it boils down to is that "post-modernism means never saying 'sorry'," she decides. "Flesh, blood and power — these have become the real dirty words" — the issues the post-modern man still cannot face.

Profound enough to be savoured, compact enough to fit on a bumper sticker (well, almost), loud enough to scare off a few dogmas, impassioned enough to fry even the most chilled out complacencies.

Whatever else Moore's discovered besides trouble, she's definitely found a fan. ■

Winning letter

Civics must shape working class identity

I would like to elaborate on a number of points raised in my article "Civics at the Crossroads" which appeared in *Reconstruct* 13 *(WIP* 92, September 1993).

This arises both out of the editing of the original version and out of more recent developments resulting in a number of issues not being adequately covered.

The first point relates to our understanding of "transition politics", for without situating the debate about the civics' future in the concrete reality, analysis is barren of real meaning. The "transition" we are living through is characterised by three main features:

- A massive economic recession, which has resulted in unprecedented unemployment and the lowering of living standards;
- An upsurge of violence and terror which is taking the lives of thousands of mainly working-class black people and paralysing mass organisation;
- A political negotiation leading to "power sharing" between the elites of the existing apartheid power structures and the main liberation movements — a process which has excluded mass democratic participation on the grounds that the contradictions in our society can only be bridged by such a "deal" between elites.

■ **MEET THE PEOPLE: Civics have a major role to play in articulating people's needs**

This being the background, what are the current programmes for "reconstruction and development"? And what are the chances of them being implemented in ways which really uplift the majority, who are jobless or earning subsistence wages, without decent housing and without access to power or resources?

The ANC, to my knowledge, has not yet put forward any programme dealing with these issues (the Freedom Charter has, to all intents and purposes, been buried even as a general statement of principles. Has it been stitched into the lining of Slovo's Kempton Park suits?)

The PAC and Azapo still seem to mouth rhetoric rather than attempting to address the crucial issues that make a difference to people's lives.

And Cosatu agreed at it's recent special congress not to bind the ANC to it's Reconstruction Programme (the accord which has been debated for over two years by Cosatu affiliates and structures) in exchange for Cosatu endorsement of the ANC/SACP election drive. This means the ANC will be able to choose which Cosatu positions it likes and which it does not without jeopardising official Cosatu support.

Sanco and other civic structures have not even begun to develop a civic position other than to support in general terms the Cosatu programme.

This means that the Cosatu Reconstruction Programme is really the only programme that the working class has — and, as we have noted, Cosatu itself is not prepared to make acceptance by political parties of this programme a condition for Cosatu support. (The Cosatu programme is also general rather than specific, except for the education and training section and some details regarding public works programmes).

No component of the alliance or the broad liberation movement has yet put forward a clear development programme (how housing will be delivered, how the civil service will be restructured, how the economic "mix" will work, how education will be revamped etc). Where does this leave us?

In the absence of a clear development programme, surely the civics have a crucial role to play in articulating ways to meet the basic needs of the masses of people — both in urban and rural areas? This is especially urgent now that Cosatu seems to have given up the initiative in shaping a programme which places working-class needs at the centre of political struggle.

With confirmation of a minimum five years of power-sharing and a constituent assembly which, it seems, will basically endorse the constitution now being finalised, how will the alliance persuade its conservative partners in those forums that bold and radical change is necessary to transform our apartheid society?

Or are we agreeing that minor structural reforms and deracialisation are the key elements of the New South Africa?

It seems that the need for the civic movement to shape it's unique identity as an independent working class formation has become even more urgent. But what do civic leaders think? Perhaps Reconstruct could follow up with activists in different regions and provide us with an overall assessment.

– Allan Horwitz, Johannesburg

Write to Work In Progress. We pay R75 for the best letter, and R30 for every other letter published. Send your letters to: *Work In Progress, PO Box 32716, Braamfontein 2017*

FLYING SQUAD

They couldn't stop neo-nazi merrymakers from peeing against the walls of the Kempton Park negotiating chambers. When they cast a massive "anti-crime" dragnet over Phola Park, they bagged seven *zol* smokers. But when a truck flips over and sends its cargo of dinner-destined chickens scurrrying across the N1 near Verwoerdburg, the SAP comes into its own.

A platoon of constables was despatched to halt these 15 000 chickens' bewildered dash for liberty in early November. And they did good, capturing most of the fleeing fowl. What's more, according to *The Citizen*, a police spokesperson "said the young policemen had enjoyed their most peculiar task".

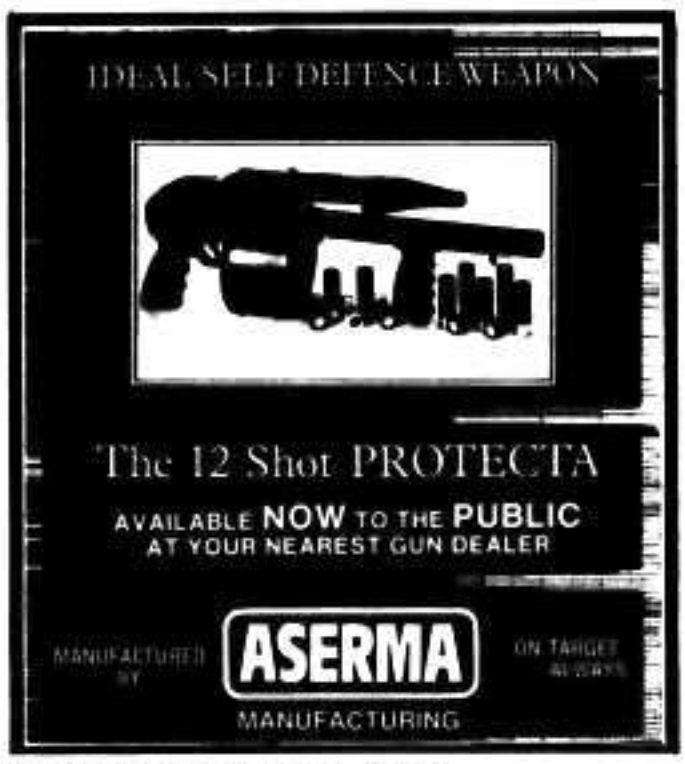
Now, if only a truck load of train killers will tip over in front of John Vorster Square ...

DUCK

Animated by his vacation, Ken Owen last month was rounding off another uplifting *Sunday Times* editorial, rattling on about the horrors that await us under an ANC government:

"Human nature is unchanging," he tapped away, "and soon the ANC will be as arrogant and as impervious to advice as the Nats in their heyday. We are changing masters, our fate remains the same ..."

A few column inches south-west, this ad was propping up the page:



Trying to say something, Ken?

STILL MORE SCENES YOU'LL NEVER SEE ON *AGENDA*

The host tests the knot of his tie, ceremoniously switches off his laptop, and turns to face his visitor. He's surprised she decided to come.

Outside, as staff trade puzzled looks, the clatter of word processors sounds like political mileage clicking on an odometer ...

Nowadays, Television News Production (TNP) second-in-command (and reputed power-behind-throne), Christe "Mielie" Kritzinger, claims he did not dangle a coveted current affairs producer's job before his guest and, matter of fact, that the meeting never even happened.

So how come at least one staff member saw Zinzi Mandela step out of his office that day, looking not a bit bemused?

CONSTITUTIONAL PSYCHOPATHIC INFERIORITY

Form 4

REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

IMMIGRATION ACT

(Cap. 25:02)

MEDICAL REPORT

(section 4 (7) (*e*) and regulation 4)

Note 1: The disabilities referred to in paragraph (1) are:
- (*a*) being an idiot;
- (*b*) being an imbecile;
- (*c*) being a feeble-minded person;
- (*d*) being an epileptic;
- (*e*) having had a previous attack of insanity;
- (*f*) suffering from constitutional psychopathic inferiority;
- (*g*) suffering from chronic alcoholism.

Note 2: Any physical defects should be stated with an indication of their nature and extent

Guess Botswana's one place our cabinet ministers will not be retiring to after April 27 ...

TURKEYS

Years ago, during Reagan's reign, and at the height of Washington's campaign against Nicaragua, some US pollsters asked Americans to point out Central America on a map.

Most of their respondents decided it lay somewhere between Denver and Kansas City.

Now hold your chuckles. A lot of South Africans seem to think the world ends at the Limpopo. Unless, of course, the national cricket or soccer squad is playing away.

Motorists who spotted the 67 colourful flags draped from overhead lights along the M1 the other day were soon jamming the switchboards of the Johannesburg City Council.

They wanted to know where they could enter the competition to pick SA's new national flag and, naturally, what prizes could be won.

Only snag is the flags belonged to the 67 countries attending that week's SA International Trade Exhibition in Joeys. Us? Hermetic?

HAPPY

If you're readying yourself for that forced march of capitalism otherwise known as "Christmas": Have a good one. And a happy New Year to all. ■

Reconstruct

A Work in Progress supplement | Issue no. 15

DECEMBER 1993

NGOs battle to meet new demands

PIC: GISELE WULFSOHN (SOUTHLIGHT)

■ TOO WHITE; TOO MIDDLE CLASS?
NGOs battle to find their feet in the new terrain

HARDLY A WEEK GOES BY WITHOUT one hearing that yet another progressive non-governmental organisation (NGO) is in trouble.

And their problems often sound similar: lack of direction; high staff turnover; no more funds; corruption.

In the past, NGOs (or service organisations, as they were then known) did not question their role. They were firefighters, available to respond to crises when called upon to do so by community-based organisations (CBOs).

But today, CBOs are no longer on the fringes. Many have been drawn into decision-making forums and need sophisticated, specialised support.

As one civic leader explains: "In the past we could simply protest against poor conditions. Today, we must present alternatives."

A number of service organisations *lack the skills to live up to these new* expectations. Some NGOs that do have the necessary skills have been criticised for failing to pass these skills on to CBOs, making them dependent on NGOs rather than self-reliant.

Racial conflict has also flared up in many NGOs. The main cause appears to be the failure of NGOs to upgrade the skills and status of black staff, usually employed as "trainees".

Financial problems have also beset the sector. Donors are more tight-fisted with funds, and want to see concrete results. Hundreds of smaller NGOs — particularly advice offices, media and human rights projects — have closed since 1990.

And earlier this year, the Rural Advice Centre — which employed 71 people and had an annual budget of over R5-million — was forced to close due to lack of funds.

This has led to insecurity within *NGOs, with many staff leaving NGOs* for more secure positions in business, political organisations and state departments.

This insecurity has also unleashed a wave of corruption within NGOs. Thousands of rands have disappeared into the pockets of unscrupulous employees who are afraid that their gravy train will soon run out of steam.

NGOs attempting to solve these problems have generally improved their operations considerably, through better management practices, such as strategic planning and clearer employment procedures.

Many NGOs have also realised that, if they want to impact on reconstruction and policy formulation, they have to cooperate with like-minded NGOs and share resources.

Cooperation is now evident in the fields of urban and rural development, literacy, education and training.

Only once effective networks been established will progressive NGOs have the power to contest the terrain that, until now, has been dominated by political parties and major establishment NGOs, like the Urban Foundation and the Independent Development Trust (IDT). ■

FOCUS: NGO'S IN TRANSITION

CONTRIBUTIONS

***Reconstruct* was initiated by the Urban Sector Network to raise issues related to urban development. Contributions should be sent to:**
Kerry Cullinan
PO Box 32716
Braamfontein 2017

Settlement unlikely to favour urban poor

Charting the urban terrain is no easy task in the turbulent transition. **STEVEN FRIEDMAN** looks at some prospects for the urban poor

URBAN DEVELOPMENTS WILL depend largely on national political trends. However, charting likely developments is made difficult by the nature of our transition.

The parties at Kempton Park are not negotiating a transformation from minority to majority rule; they are bargaining a compromise in which minority interests will retain significant formal and informal power.

A power-sharing government makes projections on likely development and economic policy formation risky, since developments will depend on how coalition parties relate to each other.

Economic and development policy

Power-sharing will complicate economic and development policy processes. The ANC predicts that the new government will be able to avoid the waste, corruption, skewed priorities and inadequate responsiveness to beneficiaries of the old.

But this is questionable. First, the new civil service is likely to be a combination of the old bureacracy and new, inexperienced bureaucrats. It will probably lack cohesion and development expertise.

Secondly, the new government will be under great pressure from organised lobbies on general economic policy and the allocation of development resources. These lobbies will come both from 'establishment' and popular interests, both of which will have allies within government.

Thus, the National Party may continue to respond to its traditional set of interests, while the ANC may be open to appeals from Nafcoc, Fabcos, civics and perhaps Cosatu.

Tensions may arise as the parties try to deliver to their constituencies, while trying to prevent their partners from doing the same.

However, there is a common fallacy that national unity governments are checks against corruption because parties watch over each other.

All evidence indicates that the more natural trend is for them to agree not to prevent the other from delivering to its special interests as long as no questions are asked about their right to do the same.

The new government will also lack development expertise. It is therefore certain that a continued, prominent, non-governmental role in development will be as essential after a political settlement as it is now.

The key question is whether the new government will recognise this. Competition between coalition partners and the need for the new government to build legitimacy could create pressure to monopolise development. The consequences for the urban poor may be baleful.

It is possible, however, that conflict within the government over who claims credit for development may create a stand-off, in which significant funding and development responsibility is transferred to NGOs.

Currently, an influential lobby led by Wiseman Nkhulu of the IDT and DBSA and Eric Molobi of Kagiso Trust (KT) is arguing for a continued, and possibly enhanced, NGO role in implementing development programmes.

However, Nkhulu and Molobi's

■ **BARGAINED COMPROMISE:** Power-sharing complicates policy making

definition of NGOs seems synonymous with large development agencies and funders. What is not clear is whether smaller NGOs are seen as significant recipients of funds. It is also unclear how NGOs and the state will relate, although Nkhulu seems to assume a mutually supportive relationship.

Future of forums

One test of the new state's development intentions may be the way in which the future of forums is resolved. Neither the NP nor the ANC are unequivocally enthusiastic about them. But neither have suggested they disappear, and there is talk of granting them statutory status, perhaps as a social and economic council.

Another possibility is to transform forums into new government policy and implementation vehicles.

These arrangements would broaden the circle of decision-makers. The key question is whether it will give more "marginal" groups increased access to decision-making. However, it is difficult to imagine a fragile power-sharing government – which has to contend with powerful lobbies on both sides of the divide – launching a concerted attempt to include "marginal" interests.

National Peace Accord

Forums and development agencies are not the only players bidding for a development role. Another contender is the Socio-Economic Reconstruction and Development (SERD) component of the National Peace Accord (NPA).

The NPA was intended from the outset to include a development component, but very little has happened. Of late, however, the NPA secretariat has been looking at development with renewed urgency. Gencor has offered logistical back-up and tenders have been advertised for SERD consultants.

However, this is unlikely to make a substantial contribution to development, and its impact on already severely stretched peace-keeping processes may be devastating.

Perils of proportional representation

It seems a foregone conclusion that a list system of proportional representation will be used. While some analysts overestimate the effect of electoral systems on social dynamics, it seems likely that this system will work against "marginal" interests. At least, under a constituency system, there is some incentive for representatives to be seen to be delivering to "marginal" voters in their constituencies.

"Marginal" groups may find their most effective access to the state will be through local government. However, the shape of future local government arrangements is far less clear than the national equivalent.

Local difficulties

Local trends are uneven, but there has been an appreciable trend towards joint administration, with "white" local authorities taking greater responsibility for townships.

ANC alliance negotiators in the Local Government Negotiating Forum (LGNF) acknowledge that the current bureaucracies of white municipalities will form the "core" of united city administrations.

There is little doubt that united municipal administrations using current "white" local structures will deliver more efficient services to poorer areas. But the political context in which these administrations work will have important implications for weaker interests.

Thus far, LGNF negotiations have not progressed beyond "pre-interim" issues (ie the form of local government before national local government elections, expected after national 27 April elections).

The LGNF has resolved that black and white local authorities are to be dissolved and replaced by appointed structures made up of half statutory and half non-statutory parties.

The NP has offered to push the LGNF plan through if the ANC accepts power-sharing after the first local elections. Elements of this include weighted votes in favour of affluent neighbourhoods.

Nevertheless, power-sharing at this level may be very different to that in national government. In large metropoles, organised white interests' reaction to change is pragmatic.

However, municipal amalgamation may not be without problems in townships. For example, property rates will have to be introduced in townships and perhaps shack settlements. The quality of councillors representing the traditionally disenfranchised may be low, since talent is likely to gravitate to the national parliament and bureacracy.

This suggests that established interests may enjoy far greater local influence than is warranted by the num-

PIC: HENNER FRANKENFELD (SOUTHLIGHT)

Trends in urban organisation

On the surface, civic influence seems to be growing. Civics:

- **are represented on key forums;**
- **have significant influence in local development processes;**
- **have played a key role in the LGNF;**
- **have won a seat on the electricity council;**
- **are striking deals with businesses and business groupings.**

But much of this apparently growing influence is **based on the assumption that civics can deliver stability in key areas — ends to rent and bond boycotts in particular. And there is little evidence that they can.**

Key parties in the Central Witwatersrand Metropolitan Chamber have, for example, concluded that the Soweto Civic Association (SCA) cannot settle the Soweto boycott and are trying to broker a deal with political organisations.

There are also signs that the ANC, not civics, is the most influential factor in local government negotiations.

Both established interests and the ANC may see little benefit in guaranteeing influence to civics unless they mobilise real power and can offer stability.

Their future influence may, therefore, depend on their ability to develop real membership bases, instead of claiming to represent entire "communities".

The Civic Associations of Johannesburg (CAJ) and Kagiso Trust have proposed that community-based organisations (CBOs) should be defined as structures that have a paying membership base and an elected, accountable leadership.

This is an important shift. The stress on demonstrated membership could provide both an incentive for more accountable and representative leadership and an opportunity for weaker, unorganised interests ***to exert far greater influence than they have enjoyed*** **until now.**

But this shift is restricted to parts of the civic movement. Sanco national and most of its structures remain wedded to the idea that civics represent entire "communities".

Nor are membership bases and formal procedures a guarantee of accountability. The SCA claims over 100 000 members, but insiders complain that a small group of members exerts 95% of the influence.

However, civics could also become a vehicle to mobilise against a compromise settlement. Winnie Mandela's new position of influence in Sanco appears part of a strategy to build a "militant" alliance which could challenge an ANC government.

Secondly, people with no national aspirations may seek to build social movements to champion the interests of those left out of a national settlement.

But a post-settlement government may enjoy enough legitimacy to reduce a "Winnie-type alliance" to the periphery. And civics have never been interest-

● ***From page 3***

bers of those they represent.

A further potential weakening of local government powers is raised by proposals championed mainly by Eskom that electricity supply is controlled by regional electricity supply boards. This would weaken municipalities' funding base.

While post-settlement local government will not guarantee grassroots power, the municipal level may offer far more opportunities for influence by well-organised weaker interests. And pockets of efficiency and innovation within some municipal administrations may make them more effective development players than national or regional structures. Some municipalities have substantially more development capacity than any equivalent state department, while large local authorities may be a source of development competence not found elsewhere in the state.

Regions

Reshaping apartheid administrations into non-racial, regional bureaucracies will be far more difficult than negotiators imagine. "Homeland" administrations may continue to operate in the same way as they do now well after elections.

Regional government will not automatically be more responsive to the developmental needs of weaker interests than national government. Some regions could even entrench patronage networks.

Socio-economic context

There are signs of rising income in important pockets of black society. But there are winners and losers.

This trend to greater segmentation seems certain to continue as education levels increase, managers win promotions, professionals obtain degrees and posts and business people find more opportunities.

We can also expect significant development projects which will create new winners and losers.

However, it is possible to devise a development programme which would bring modest but widespread improvements, rather than a high standard of delivery to few.

But organised influence will lie with groups other than weaker urban interests, so delivery to the stronger among the weaker may be inevitable. One likely consequence is still more "logical" stratification among urban blacks.

Thus socio-economic and devel-

based social movements, so those seeking to press marginal groups' interests may find shack-dweller or labour tenant groups more appropriate organisational forms.

Shack organisation

If some current thinking in civics holds the prospect of greater representativeness, trends in shack settlements are less encouraging.

Indeed, prospects of accountable organisation in shack settlements may be receding as they become a political battlefield ahead of an election.

In the Western Cape, the current controversy around "shacklord" Jeffrey Nongwe and the Western Cape United Squatters Association (Wecusa) holds prospects of conflict on a national scale. Since Nongwe's suspension as ANC Crossroads chair, Wecusa has reportedly been talking to the Ciskei authorities, East Rand IFP and, if its critics are to be believed, the National Intelligence Service.

The ANC insists that Wecusa already enjoys the support of conservative interests who see shack settlements as fertile ground for mobilising anti-ANC vote banks.

Wecusa faces a formidable rival in Winnie Mandela, who is organising through Sanco Southern Transvaal and her Combined Anti-Poverty Programme.

But to see her as a democratic counterweight to Wecusa seems implausible. Her emphasis is on "delivering to" rather than organising shack dwellers. She has a patron-client, not representative-constituent, relationship with shack-dwellers.

PIC: STEVE HILTON-BARBER

■ **WINNIE MANDELA:** Building a 'militant' alliance?

opment improvements are likely to be unevenly spread, favouring "insiders" with access to education and organisation — and therefore to forums and other development decision-making processes.

Boom or bust?

Demands for higher standards of development could be reconciled with funding restraints by getting funds from abroad. However, grants are likely to be limited and loans inevitably carry significant cost.

Loans raise the possibility of a conventional "boom and bust", where large amounts are borrowed and spent highly visibly and inefficiently, running up a debt burden that precludes effective development for years.

But there is substantial resistance to excessive foreign borrowing. The DBSA, merchant banks and establishment analysts insist that there is no shortage of local development funds. The Life Offices Association is beginning to free funds locked up in pension, provident and insurance funds for development.

This means foreign development borrowing is likely to be limited, at least in the first few years after a settlement.

Conclusion

It is very hazardous to make deductions from present trends, as we do not know whether a political settlement will alter them.

However, the outcome of a settlement is unlikely to be as favourable to the urban poor, especially weaker interests among them, than some expect — nor as unfavourable as some predict.

This has two implications. Firstly, since neither a new state nor the current array of civics, unions and CBOs, will deliver to all — or perhaps most — of the urban poor, there will be a continued role for those who seek to direct their attention to the needs of weaker, more marginal interests.

Secondly, although prospects for these groups, and those who work with them, may not improve dramatically, neither will space for pressing their interests disappear.

While organisation by more marginal interests and activity by those who seek to highlight their needs, is unlikely to be easy, it will not be impossible. ■

• Friedman is director of the Centre of Policy Studies. This is a summary of a longer discussion paper, "The urban terrain and prospects for weaker interests".

■ CIT employees Busi Bembe and Simon Maphalla prepare to assist civics

PIC: KERRY CULLINAN

Making civics financially viable

A new project in the Southern Transvaal has set itself the daunting task of making civics in the region financially sustainable. KERRY CULLINAN reports

THERE HAS BEEN MUCH TALK about the need for strong civil society, but little attention paid to how key pillars of civil society — such as civic associations — are to sustain themselves financially.

A new project has recently been set up in the Southern Transvaal to help build the capacity of civics so that they have a long-term future.

Called the CIT Civic Development Project, it was initiated by civic associations in the region in partnership with a UK-based training organisation, CIT.

The project is unique in that it draws both civics and NGOs into one structure. Its steering committee consists of two members of Sanco Southern Transvaal's regional executive committee, one member of the Civic Associations of Johannesburg (CAJ), and one representative each from Planact, Khanya College training unit and the Community Education Computer Society.

The formation of the project was motivated by three main factors, says project manager and CIT volunteer Ben Cashdan. These are:

- The need for external resources to be controlled by community based organisations (CBOs), but the problem that CBOs lacked the capacity to make full use of such resources.
- The fact that international funders wanted to fund projects rather than organisations' core costs — but organisations needed to be trained to run such projects.
- The need for civics to develop their institutional strength — such as systems, policies and procedures. This would enable them to attract and keep staff as well as become strong as organisations, rather than dependent on a few strong leaders. If, for example, an induction process for new civic executive members is written down, the organisation would not be dependent on individuals from the past executive for direction.

"We see training, organisational development and resources as interrelated," says Cashdan. "Too often, people see organisational development as an afterthought to training, rather than as part of an integrated process."

Measures the project will adopt to build civics into financially viable structures include facilitating strategic planning, organisational development (including training in management, administration, finances and fundraising) and technical training.

The project is already assisting civics to explore a number of fundraising options. One possibility is securing discounts from local businesses for civic association members. This would provide an incentive for residents to join civics and pay membership fees, as well as getting local businesses to support civics in a way that also benefits them.

Three staff members, two drawn from civics in the region, have already been employed to run the project. Initially, they will concentrate on:

- building the regional office;
- assisting one rural sub-region — either Bophuthatswana, Moutse or KwaNdebele — to establish itself;
- strengthening three local civics in the region, focusing on fundraising, financial management, organising and setting up development projects.

With over 200 functioning civics in the Southern Transvaal, it will be very difficult to single out only three civics for attention. However, the long-term aim of the project is to establish a permanent regional capacity-building unit to service local civics. Cashdan estimates it will take about two years to set up such a unit. This would then be able to attend more broadly to the needs of civics in the region. ■

• For further information, contact Ben Cashdan on (011) 833 6249.

PIC: KERRY CULLINAN

■ **PEOPLE DRIVEN:** Sanco's programme aims to ensure better conditions for all South Africans

Sanco's plan for reconstruction

Sanco's draft Reconstruction and Development Programme concentrates on issues confronted by civics every day, reports **Kerry Cullinan**

THE CORNERSTONE OF SANCO'S reconstruction programme is that development must be people-driven, with organs of civil society, the state and big business all playing a part in improving people's lives.

The programme, currently being discussed by Sanco's structures, prioritises five areas: housing, democratic community finance, rural development, grassroots economic development and economic restructuring.

Sanco has identified two priorities in terms of housing: ensuring that "housing rights are established as a basic tenet of state policy", and the development of "a progressive housing policy".

Sanco aims to campaign for housing rights to be "guaranteed explicitly in the final constitution or bill of rights".

The clauses Sanco wants incorporated are:

- "All South Africans have the right to a secure place to live in peace and dignity;
- "The state has a responsibility to create the appropriate policy framework and legislative support to make this possible."

The organisation also wants the new democratic government to sign and implement the International Covenant on Economic and Social Rights, and rapidly introduce laws to address issues such as tenant and squatters' rights and community participation in planning and development.

Sanco will also campaign against land speculation and land monopolies, as well as cartels, price agreements and market share agreements in the construction and building materials industries.

It also calls for hostels to be "transformed, upgraded and integrated within a policy framework that recognises the numerous interest groups within hostels" and provides both family and single sex accommodation.

It also demands affordable housing finance, unemployment bond insurance packages and fixed, low interest rates.

In the democratic community finance field, Sanco aims to lobby for an "anti-discrimination in finance act" to stop financial institutions from discriminating against people on the basis of factors such as age, race, gender, marital status and income.

Sanco also wants new, community-based financial institutions, which could facilitate affordable housing finance through access to state subsidies and pension funds.

Rural development

A fair portion of the draft programme is devoted to rural development. Rural development requires land reform based on "a political strategy which will involve bottom-up mobilisation and organisation of rural people", says Sanco.

It is essential that rural people are organised to articulate their needs nationally, in order to pose alternatives to the market-based approach to rural development being proposed by bodies like the World Bank, says Sanco.

Sanco poses three options for land reform: land occupation, restoration and redistribution, either through a market-based process involving grants and loans, or through state expropriation.

The organisation also calls for the urban-rural divide to be bridged, "especially around the production, distribution and consumption of food".

In terms of economic development and restructuring, Sanco expresses its support for "a much more decentralised, community-oriented economy". It also calls for barriers to economic development to be removed.

Aside from the programme, Sanco has also drawn up a "people's economic development charter". This sets out Sanco's basic principles, such as the need for:

- "vastly increased" housing and service subsidies for impoverished areas;
- community organisations to be consulted about "all public matters, including major decisions of large conglomerates which affect communities";
- people-driven development.

Sanco is also in the process of drawing up an election manifesto, which will guide the organisation on how to support "political parties dedicated to fully fledged liberation and transformation".. ■

• Sanco has called for comments on the draft programme. These can be faxed to Sanco's finance and economic development desk at (011) 333-1407.

New principles guide funder-NGO relations

JACQUI BOULLE reports on a recent study conducted by Kagiso Trust (KT) and the CEC, aimed at strengthening NGOs and improving their relations with funders

PIC: PAUL WEINBERG (SOUTHLIGHT)

■ KT director Eric Molobi

THE KT-CEC STUDY, "AN APPROpriate funding framework for NGOs", arose out of the funders' desire to develop a more sustainable framework for the NGO movement and to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of projects that it funds.

It is the first phase of a process aimed at developing new funding mechanisms to address the problems experienced and assist funders and NGOs to increase their effectiveness.

These goals were not clearly communicated at the start of the study. As the team conducting the study travelled from region to region holding workshops with NGOs, their clients and KT staff, we were met with suspicion and hesitancy. A number of NGOs initially feared the study was an attempt to pull the funding plug on the sector.

However, once these fears were allayed, NGOs and their clients talked freely of their problems and dilemmas in this turbulent environment. A similar openness around problems with NGOs and other clients, as well as around their own organisational constraints, was found in discussions with the funders.

Questions around accountability, sustainability, effectiveness and efficiency plagued all stakeholders equally. While some groups had managed to explore creative solutions to these issues, most were locked into debates searching for the answers.

They welcomed the opportunity to discuss the issues with others. Defining relationships with the private sector, the host of community based institutions and the emerging new state is no easy task. Doing this within the context of the political and funding uncertainties is even more difficult.

The key problems facing NGOs can be categorised in four main areas:

- planning, monitoring and evaluation;
- accountability, transparency and control;
- communication and collaboration;
- the role of the funder in this process.

Planning

With regard to planning, monitoring and evaluation, it seems that several NGOs experienced difficulty focusing. As one NGO participant commented: "In the past, our priorities were set by the telephone ringing. This is no longer the case. Adapting to the new context is difficult for us."

Several NGOs lacked clearly defined organisational and project objectives. These are an essential basis for accountability to the client and funder. Objectives also need to be tied to a client constituency and a development process with the client. This, and the lack of a clear understanding of the different stages of each project, were weaknesses within the planning processes of most NGOs. They were often explained away as "things we just don't have time for".

Linking objectives to resource plans, both financial and human, appears to be another major weakness in NGOs' planning processes.

This limits an NGO's ability to develop disaggregated project plans. Another detrimental result is that human resource development and affirmative action goals are often abandoned.

Long term financial sustainability

— a need recognised by both funders and NGOs — demands effective planning. However, those NGOs that have developed practical plans for generating income are hampered by funders' reluctance to assist the organisation to build a capital base, save on budget lines and work on a five-year horizon. KT itself is hampered by similar constraints. This has led it to develop a strategy to address its own sustainability.

Any planning process has limited use if clear indicators for monitoring activities and the achievement of objectives are not built into the process at the start. Most NGOs interviewed were only starting to set and use indicators. Their absence is a major constraint to NGO learning.

While evaluation, the final component of the planning process, was high on the agenda of NGOs, funders and their clients, there seemed to be a lack of integration between evaluation and future planning.

Accountability and communication

A lack of accountability to and involvement of the client are two key criticisms being levelled against NGOs. These criticisms frequently centre on control of resources. This is a small component of the larger problem, namely the lack of client involvement in the full planning process discussed above. This is aggravated by the client's limited capacity to work with, evaluate and direct the work of outside agents.

Several CBO clients complained: "We aren't told what resources are available or what we can expect." Building clients' capacity is thus a prerequisite for effective accountability and control.

The lack of accountability of funders to NGOs is also problematic, and arises from their unwillingness to define and communicate policies, priorities and standards of services to NGOs.

In general, the level of collaboration between NGOs and their clients is low. Similarly, NGO-funder dialogue is poor. This affects both the effectiveness and accountability of the different stakeholders.

Funders' role

Finally, when looking at the role of the funder, it seems that the current design of grants and the application process does not support engagement around the planning or work of NGOs. In addition, the poor quality of support and administration exacerbates communication difficulties. This is, in part, a reflection of the funders' own capacity constraints.

Unless these problems are addressed, it will be difficult for NGOs to meet the challenges of the future and continue to play a meaningful role. Their resolution is also key to the funders being able to meet their own objectives of empowering marginalised communities and redistributing resources to them.

Based on the analysis of these problems, a set of 12 principles has been developed to guide the funding relationship (see box). These are offered as a first attempt and need to be tested and adapted to meet the needs of the sector.

Once adapted, it has been suggested that the stakeholders develop the principles into a development charter that could guide the funding relationship and the interaction between NGOs and between NGOs and their clients.

These principles and the proposed charter pose an exciting challenge to the NGO sector, which has talked for some time about the need for a code of conduct or charter to guide the work of the sector.

It also offers a basis for evaluating the commitment of the parties to declared principles and processes at the centre of CBO and other clients' criticism of the NGO sector.

Similarly, the principles pose a challenge to the broader funding community whose practices will also be affected by the development and implementation of a charter.

Other suggestions in the report include developing a learning environment in which effective resources can be generated and the capacity of NGOs, clients and funders can be increased.

In addition, the establishment of an organisational development fund to address NGO, CBO and other client groupings' capacity is suggested. This links to other initiatives that KT is exploring around CBO support.

Finally, the development of a strategy to improve funders' administrative effectiveness is suggested. ■

• *Boulle is coordinator of the Development Action Group.*

The Principles

1. Service as an exchange
Relationships between funders and NGOs and their clients are an exchange, in which each party has rights and obligations.

2. Accountability to the client
Client needs and objectives should inform the design and delivery of accountable services to clients.

3. Planning, monitoring and evaluation in NGOs
NGOs need to develop effective processes for planning, monitoring and evaluation.

4. Planning resource requirements
Clients, NGOs and funders need to develop realistic plans and budgets for resources required to achieve their objectives.

5. Planning for affirmative action and human resource requirements
Human resource development policies must include affirmative action policies to benefit and strengthen disadvantaged groups. These policies should be backed by clear activities and resources.

6. Flexibility in grant formats
Funders need to adapt their grant formats to NGOs' needs and objectives.

7. Flexibility in funding routes to NGOs and their clients
Methods of routing funds and resources to NGOs and their clients should be matched to the development of the client and the NGO.

8. Funding for sustainability
Funding practice should be matched to the sustainability goals of clients.

9. Planning for continuity and termination of funding
The effectiveness of time-limited grants requires provision for managing cessation of funding and preventing interruption of funding.

10. Distinguishing roles and responsibilities
The CEC, Kagiso Trust and NGOs need to distinguish their roles and responsibilities in order to support the effectiveness of the funding process *as a whole*.

11. Transparency
Funders, NGOs and their clients need to demonstrate a commitment to transparency about their objectives, activities and resources.

12. Building organisational capacity for development
The effective implementation of the above principles depends on the capacity of funders, NGOs and their clients to engage with and effect them. Providing resources to build this capacity is therefore essential.

Balancing product and process

Organisational Development is not just a new NGO gimmick, but an important tool to ensure physical development is successful, argues **RUBY MARKS**

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (OD) is a fairly new concept for non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Most NGOs have tended to see the development of their clients' organisational base as less important than providing concrete services, such as taps, plans and buildings.

But the long-term success of a technical project is inseparable from the development of an effective, efficient organisational base to manage such a project. If the organisational infrastructure is weak, service delivery will be less effective.

The aim of OD is to build effective, sustainable organisations able to adapt to a changing environment. It offers service organisations the opportunity to build their client's organisational capacity.

But tensions exist between process and product; between delivering "development products" (such as physical upgrading), and "developmental processes" (or the process through which such products are delivered).

Donors often exacerbate this tension, as they generally prefer to see NGOs as project implementers, rather than process consultants. Official aid agencies also prefer to put their money into tangible products.

NGOs themselves are also to blame for neglecting process. Many NGOs fail to assess whether the services they deliver actually empower their clients and build organisation.

NGOs also often do not pay enough attention to ensuring that their mission statements — committing themselves to community empowerment, capacity building, etc — are actually practised by their staff.

This poses a challenge to our organisations: to what extent can our intellectual and organisational framework be internalised and reflected in our work practises? Is the intellectual framework of development in communities enough if we do not know how to live it?

PIC: OLIVER SAMSON-ARCAMD

■ **SLOW BUT REWARDING:** NGOs need to build the organisational capacity of their clients

Recommendations

The following recommendations were drawn up, based on the case study (See page 11):

- Every project's formulation should include an assessment of the organisation's base and its "readiness" to manage the project. A complementary OD process could then be designed to support the service or product provided.
- Lessons learnt from managing particular development products — such as a standpipe — must be broad enough to be applied to other aspects of organisational management. In other words, lessons learnt from small practical exercises must form part of an overall approach to organisational development.
- Clear criteria must be developed to assess the "readiness" of clients to take on a developmental projects. This includes assessing an organisation's strength and standing in a community.

NGOs will ultimately be more effective in serving the marginalised poor if they help develop strong, effective, self-managing organisations.

If NGOs close their eyes to the organisational realities of their clients, their service or product will suffer. By developing a holistic approach to service delivery, NGOs will deliver a more effective service without creating the dependence that so often goes with insufficient organisational support. ■

Case Study: Lower Thornwood Residents' Association

Lower Thornwood is an informal settlement in Southern Pinetown, Natal. It consists of some 600 families, most of whom moved there to escape the violence in their own areas. Many families are headed by single mothers whose husbands were killed during violence. There is high unemployment, and many people survive on grants or pensions.

The land belongs to more than 30 landowners who are interested in collecting rent not upgrading the area. There are no basic services, like sanitation and taps.

The Lower Thornwood Residents' Association (LTRA) was formed in 1990, mainly to oppose high rents and to fight for improved conditions. The association recently approached an NGO for help to upgrade its area. However, instead of diving straight into the upgrade, the NGO concentrated on building the committee's organisational capacity to implement the upgrade itself.

LTRA's problems

The LTRA's executive committee originally had 14 members, but three committee members were suspended for failing to carry out their duties. However, it was clear that these members did not properly understand their roles and duties.

In addition, while the committee had recruited members *at its launch and held monthly community meetings since, it* was not actively working in the community.

As a result, the committee had become removed from the community. The community, in turn, had become impatient with the committee, which had promised to spearhead upgrading, but failed to deliver any services.

In addition, the committee did not know how to devise a strategy aimed at winning land tenure — mainly as there are many different landowners.

The committee's response to criticism was to try to hand the task over to the NGO with the plea: "Can you get the land back for us?"

Thus the committee felt unable to help its community, and saw the NGO as a structure that could wage struggles on its behalf.

Methodology

The NGO identified four main areas that had to be addressed before the upgrade was tackled:

- The committee's roles and function and community involvement had to be defined.
- The committee had to understand the community and residents' expectations.
- The role of leadership had to be clarified.
- An organisational plan had to be drawn up and implemented.

These issues were addressed by three workshops over a two-month period, supplemented with several evaluation meetings.

Practical, participatory exercises were used at the workshops to help the committee to solve the issues themselves, using everyday examples.

For example, the recipe and method for making utywala (homebrew beer) was used to illustrate how to build the organisation. The committee was asked to list the ingredients and method used to make the beer. This was then compared to what is necessary to build a successful organisation, with the malt for the beer representing life, energy and strength; the water, the people and the maize meal unity, bonding and working together.

PIC: KERRY CULLINAN

■ **GOING DEEPER:** There's more to development than digging

This exercise helped to build a clear picture of what is needed to build a strong community organisation.

Another exercise focused on who the community consisted of, and what community members wanted from the committee. *This required the committee to list the stake*holders in the area, and to say what they thought their expectations were of the committee.

During the workshops, various decisions were taken on how the committee had to be restructured in order to address their problems. These decisions were incorporated into an organisational plan, along with a timetable and allocation of responsibilities.

Elements of the plan included reworking the constitution so that it clarified the role and function of every committee member, the rezoning of the area into street committees and a more active recruitment drive.

The NGO decided to help the committee to apply for the installation of a standpipe that could be managed by the committee as part of an immediate activity. A workshop was then held with the committee to outline how the standpipe would be managed.

The NGO, together with the committee, will monitor the management of the standpipe. This will enable the NGO to assess the readiness of the committee to take on larger technical processes.

Conclusion

After two months, the committee felt more confident to deal with issues, energised because it had a clearer vision of where it wanted to go and how to get there, and more capable of dealing with the challenges that development brings.

The committee also felt that, although the workshops had not won the land for them, committee members had learnt how to build a strong organisation and to strategise effectively to get the land back.

The NGO will continue to monitor the progress of the organisational plan with the committee, and assist them where necessary. But most importantly, people in the committee have been developed so that they can work on their own, without depending on the NGO. ■

PIC: PAUL WEINBERG (SOUTHLIGHT)

■ **ENERGY BURDEN:** Rural women must be freed from spending long hours collecting wood for fuel

Reaching rural residents

Rural areas have been kept in the dark for decades. **KERRY CULLINAN** reports on some Energy for Development Research Centre (EDRC) proposals to bring power to rural areas

THE MAJORITY OF RURAL HOUSEholds are poverty-stricken, and without access to electricity. And as EDRC researcher Cecile Thom points out, "it is highly unlikely that electricity will become the dominant household energy source in rural areas within the next 15-20 years".

However, the EDRC believes that electrifying all rural community facilities — such as schools, clinics and community halls — is "an achievable objective" within this time frame.

In addition, researcher Ilne-Mari Hofmeyr points out that three quarters of the total farmworker population live on farms serviced by grid electricity. There is thus considerable potential for increasing their access to electricity (only a third have limited access to electricity at present).

But it is clear that poor rural communities are unable to bear the burden of the electrification scheme.

The EDRC has thus proposed a number of financing proposals, which would make substantial rural electrification achievable. Proposals include:

- An electrification levy on all electricity consumers. If the levy was 4% of the bulk supply cost, R500-million a year could be raised.
- The establishment of a national electrification fund to raise money from donors and the private sector for electrification.

"Through a combination of these measures, it will be possible to keep the Electricity Supply Industry's peak borrowing requirements associated with the electrification programme to below R10-billion," says the EDRC. "In other words, the electrification programme ... is realistically achievable and affordable."

Wood is primary source

However, for the next few years the EDRC believes that wood is likely to remain the primary source of rural energy, as it is "generally available at little or no cash cost". At present, says the EDRC, "almost the entire rural population, comprising of about three million households, depends mainly on firewood for their cooking and heating needs".

The EDRC has thus developed a number of measures — which it calls a biomass strategy — aimed at ensuring that wood remains a cheap and sustainable form of energy. The strategy involves three main aspects:

- improved management of natural woodlands;
- social forestry programmes;
- the distribution of surpluses from commercial farms and forest to rural households.

The aim of the social forestry programme would be to encourage individuals to grow trees, which would not only supply fuel but also timber, fruit, nuts, food products and fodder.

The EDRC estimates that it would

cost R250-million to set up an extensive network of nurseries to provide backup to individuals growing trees.

The programme would be supplemented by woodlots and plantations which would produce wood on a commercial basis.

However, the EDRC also points out three major disadvantages of using wood as fuel:

- Rural people — particularly women — spend long hours collecting wood. The EDRC estimates that those collecting firewood have to make two to three weekly trips, each lasting two to three hours.
- The air pollution caused by wood smoke makes households using wood for fuel five times more likely to develop respiratory illnesses than urban, electrified homes.
- The great demand for firewood strains environmental resources and contributes to deforestation. (The foresty department predicts South Africa will be treeless by 2030 if the current rate of fuel wood use is maintained.)

Proposals made by EDRC researchers Raymond Auerbach and Mark Gandar perhaps capture the essence of what the centre believes should be possible for rural areas in the next 27 years.

The researchers argue that a rural energy strategy must be integrated into a rural development strategy, which should ensure that every village has the following by 2020:

- a tractor-driven or electric maize mill;
- at least one bulk diesel outlet;
- a woodfuel or fruit tree nursery;
- electrified schools and clinics;
- sites with water and energy (either electricity or diesel generator) available for entrepreneurs.

In addition, they say every home should have an electric light and ready boards with at least 60amp supplies. ■

Rural people left powerless

Dear Reconstruct

It seems that the National Electrification Forum (NELF) is leaving out the rural people altogether. In Reconstruct 11 (WIP 90), NELF's aim is outlined as to develop and implement "a strategy that will lead to general access to affordable electricity for the population as rapidly as possible". ANC delegate Billy Cobbett, seemed pleased that "all the major players are involved". Where, we ask, are rural people?

NELF plenary chairperson Johan Kruger apparently said "rural communities and women had to be drawn into NELF". But all the organisations represented on the NELF, from the unions to civics and NGOs, are urban-based, or dominated by their urban constituencies.

This omission of rural people is even more serious in the light of a recent decision taken by Eskom to suspend the electrification of rural areas for up to seven years. According to Eskom officials at the Klerksdorp branch, rural electrification is "uneconomic", and cannot be contemplated by the cash-strapped institution.

Less than 10% of rural households are currently electrified. But Eskom argues that there are not enough users in a small enough area to make electricity supply viable.

This would lock the rural areas even further into a spiral of underdevelopment — large scale industry cannot develop because there is no easy source of power, and no power is supplied because there are no major users of electricity.

Somewhere, this vicious cycle needs to be broken. One way to break it would be for a new government to commit itself to supporting rural electrification a part of an overall strategy of rural development.

Braklaagte

The Braklaagte community in the far Western Transvaal has felt this reversal of policy directly. It is severely disappointed that Eskom says it cannot help unless R420 000 can be raised as a capital subsidy.

In an initial meeting with Eskom's Klerksdorp branch, Marius Smit said the community would have to wait two to three years for electricity. He then indicated that the community might be able to get farm lines to "key points" (schools, clinics, shops etc). This is the same system that white farmers use, which is more costly than urban connections to the grid. The community agreed to try to identify a number of users who would be willing to pay for such a system.

At a follow-up meeting, the time to wait had suddenly escalated to five to seven years. Community members were also told a capital subsidy of almost half a million rand was needed.

Alternatives such as solar power (Remote Areas Power Supply) and buying old generators were mooted, but these are for limited use only. There is also concern whether these can be upgraded. It would be foolish to invest in a costly energy system which would only be a short term, inferior option.

If NELF is serious about meeting its aim, solutions to the problem of rural electrification must be looked into urgently, in consultation with rural people.

– Harald Winkler and Janet Small, Transvaal Rural Action Committee fieldworkers

New energy centre set up

The Energy for Development Research Centre (EDRC) has presented its policy proposals to over 100 audiences since the proposals were first unveiled in Cape Town in September (See Reconstruct 14).

Project manager Paul Theron says the responses have generally been "very positive". Among the groups to see policy presentations are Eskom departments, government departments, local authorities, trade unions and oil and coal companies.

One spin-off from the project is the formation of the Minerals and Energy Policies Centre, which will come into operation in January next year.

"The centre will work mainly with the ANC and trade unions, and will look at issues wider than energy, such as the petrol price," says Theron.

A number of EDRC staff members will be employed by the new centre, which will also look at the future of "white elephants" such as Mossgas, Sasol and Koeberg.

Taking note of 'informal' dynamics

Developmental players must pay more attention to informal power relations — like warlords, kinship associations and criminal syndicates — as these can both speed up and hinder development. So argue **ABDOU MALIQALIM SIMONE** and **EDGAR PIETERSE**

■ **INFORMAL ALLIANCES:** Development players must take note of dynamics like kinship ties

TO MAKE SENSE OF DEVELOPMENT in transition — which brings new rules, forums, policies and delivery agents — a broad approach is needed.

However, emerging development discourse and practise does not adequately address the millions who, by being unorganised or outside large, visible community-based organisations (CBOs), remain outside the formal processes.

This article aims to draw attention to the power and relevance of marginal constituencies. It makes a case for acknowledging what unconventional delivery systems produce, circulate and sustain. Many of these systems damage democratic processes, but also manage to meet certain subsistence needs.

Too often it is assumed that a regular, formal environment is more beneficial than erratic and changing informality.

But according to Gustavo Esteva, who runs a network of grassroots initiatives in Mexico, development based on "economic value" and "rationalisation" undermines all other kinds of existence and contributes to a psychological sense of being on the periphery. It thus "cannot be created except with violence and in the face of continuous resistance".

This ambivalence can also be found in peasant movements in Uganda, according to Ugandan scholar Mahmood Mamdani. There is both the demand for the creation of civil society — with differentiated power, institutions and procedures — as well as a demand for no differentiation and suspicion of formality and legality.

Phola Park, an informal settlement in the PWV, demonstrates how such ambivalence can evolve into a clash of interests. The community was united in protecting their access to the city and in defending the community against outside attack. However, when resources for the development of the settlement were introduced, this sense of common interest became blurred, eventually undermining the development process itself.

Promises

For many Phola Park residents, the prospect of better houses, roads, electricity and water promised better futures. But development also meant that residents would have to be identified in order to qualify for benefits. Such a prospect was foreboding for an amalgamation of foreign African immigrants, criminal gangs and syndicates - which depended on informality for survival. Their opposition effectively blocked development.

The Phola Park case shows that any development initiative can be can consolidate different groups threatened by the initiative into a disruptive force. In other words, development can provide the space for new (or previously subversive) interests to ascend.

The international economy generates disparities in price structures, domestic price controls, balance of payment capacities, labour markets and access to resources.

To survive these disparities, most large African urban communities depend on the movement of people and goods across national borders, currency zones and regions. Communities survive by manipulating the different economies, policies, bureaucracies, communities, etc.

But development, while it does assist communities in many ways, also regulates people's movement by identifying them and specifying their roles.

CBOs which are inclusive, transparent and accountable — as many civics aspire to be — have demonstrated that they can be more productive and resourceful. But at the same time, they may reduce the community's resilience to the larger global economic and political forces. For once there is a committee, development forum and strategy, the community has to follow the straight and narrow of that strategy to attain its goals. In the uncertainty and volatility of global and regional development dynamics, it is not always

PIC: THE STAR

appropriate to be too defined or "on course", because what may be in vogue today may be ignored tomorrow.

In most Third World urban slums, informal, syndicate-like networks flourish. These sustain and circulate resources vital to the existence of those communities.

The activities of these social networks are often more inclusive than community based organisations, claiming community support on the basis of kinship and religious and social affiliations.

These informal — and often undemocratic — networks may be most capable of interacting with other communities and providing opportunities for adjustment constantly required by the fluid relations of international capital. This is especially the case, given that up to 80% of urban dwellers are excluded from the formal economy.

This is not a call for mafias, warlords, syndicates and gangs to be seen as legitimate. However, we must evaluate their functions.

Development often masks dependencies on large industrial powers in the name of community independence. These powers seldom show their cards, while economies of the South risk further penetration through their commitment to transparency.

Informal organisations then become a counter-strategy, maintaining a community's ability to engage the outside world in ways that violate the rules, remain hidden and undemocratic.

This implies that community survival perhaps entails divergent and often contradictory agendas that need ongoing conflict management.

In impoverished communities worldwide, corruption and criminality both speed up and retard development; facilitate and impede the distribution of resources.

More to the point, most flexible specialists in post-modern capitalist production operate almost as clandestine syndicates capable of engaging a diverse network of players which they could not do in transparent organisations.

Marginality can be a powerful tactic to achieve institutional objectives through extra-institutional means, or to get around institutional procedures altogether. Individuals who are marginalised from formal institutional life often depend on turning that marginality into a power tactic to survive.

Marginal power

This can be seen throughout Africa, where institutional life, policies and politics have been kept in check by the"weapons" of the marginalised, ranging from witchcraft to criminality.

The power of marginality depends on:

- uncertainty about who the real players are;
- an ability to interact with different sectors and networks and to exert tight control over the roles of specific players;
- territorial dislocation, where the activity is not located in any one particular sector, community or group;
- invisibility.

It would be wise for larger CBOs and NGOs to take note of the importance of marginality in development without undermining its efficiency.

Ironically, conservative government institutions have often been able to appreciate and exploit these dynamics. For example, the Cape Provincial Administration (CPA) has for years recognised the centrality of informal power relations in informal settlements in the Western Cape.

The CPA has identified and engaged powerful individuals who dominate these areas. These interactions have benefitted both parties, as the individuals have been able to dispense CPA resources and the CPA has been given access to the community.

In contrast, when the ANC tried to address power relations within these informal settlements it showed a lack of understanding.

The ANC's present regional executive committee (REC) in the Western Cape assumed that conventional "organisational democracy" would be enough to erode traditional power bases. At the same time, the REC turned a blind eye to the undemocratic practices of these informal and traditional leaders, as they believed they could benefit from the access to a membership base, without being tainted by the exploitative practices of these individuals.

But the ANC's approach proved to be shortsighted and inadequate, and failed to appreciate the myriad of forces operating in informal and traditional spheres of influence. In addition, the ANC's credibility was damaged by its association with the warlords.

These examples point to the critical need for the centrality and gravity of hidden modes of organising and controlling resources, influences, powers etc to be appreciated.

All stakeholders in the development process have to grapple with these lessons and begin to establish a more realistic approach to developmental politics.

As long as NGOs and CBOs see marginal and impoverished communities as targets of development intervention, without first coming to terms with the culture of these areas, progressive development action is bound to be frustrated. ■

Democratic local government finally in sight

PIC: THE STAR

■ **VOTES FOR ALL!**
Democratic local government elections are in sight

By Kerry Cullinan

THE ANC AND GOVERNMENT HAVE agreed that elections for transitional local government should take place by the end of 1994.

Transitional councils will be the equivalent of interim government at a local level. They will remain in office until a new constitution is drawn up, which determines the powers and functions of each level of government. Thereafter elections for local councils will take place.

Delimitation

However there are still sticking points. At the time of going to press, the two parties were deadlocked over the delimitation of wards and the powers of ward councils.

The government favours wards being delimited on the basis of property values or service consumption. It also favours ward councils being empowered to determine ward "standards" and impose levies on residents. The ANC and civics have rejected these proposals as they favour wealthy white property owners.

Chapter 10 of the interim constitution outlines the kind of local government envisaged by negotiating parties. Local government is described as an autonomous level of government. However, local councils will be accountable to regional government with respect to finance and administration. Each local authority will have a uniform tax and tariff structures

The main function of local government will be to ensure service delivery to residents.

According to Chapter 10, people contributing to the finances of a local authority by paying rates or services will be able to vote in that authority's local elections, even if they do not live in that area.

This means if a person lives in Johannesburg but rents or owns a property in Pretoria, that person will be able to vote for local councils in both Johannesburg and Pretoria. However, each person will only have one vote per local authority.

Measures for transforming local government are contained in the Local Government Transition Act. Administrators are key to the implementation of the act. Initially, these will be the present provincial administrators. After the April 1994 elections, newly elected regional administrators will take over.

Transitional councils

The act makes provision for the Transitional Executive Council (TEC) to establish six-person, multi-party local government committees in each region. *These committees will work with the* administrator to implement provisions of the act, such as appointing transitional local councils.

This is, in effect, a form of local power-sharing, as it ensures multi-party influence — whatever the outcome of elections for regions. However, power-sharing is limited, as the act lays down that the administrator has the final say in matters such as the establishment of transitional local and metropolitan councils.

Existing local negotiating forums will also have a say in appointing transitional local councils, provided these forums meet certain criteria, including being broadly representative.

This makes the establishment of broad-based local forums in areas where they do not exist important. ■

Development conference

The Trust for Christian Outreach and Education is hosting a major conference from 9-12 December on "Development through People's Participation". The aims of the conference are twofold: to begin to define an empowering, participatory alternative development strategy and vision and to encourage NGOs and CBOs committed to such a strategy to work together.

A number of international development experts are expected to attend the conference, which takes place at the University of the Western Cape.

■ ***Interested organisations and individuals should contact the trust at (021) 696-6300/1 for further information.***

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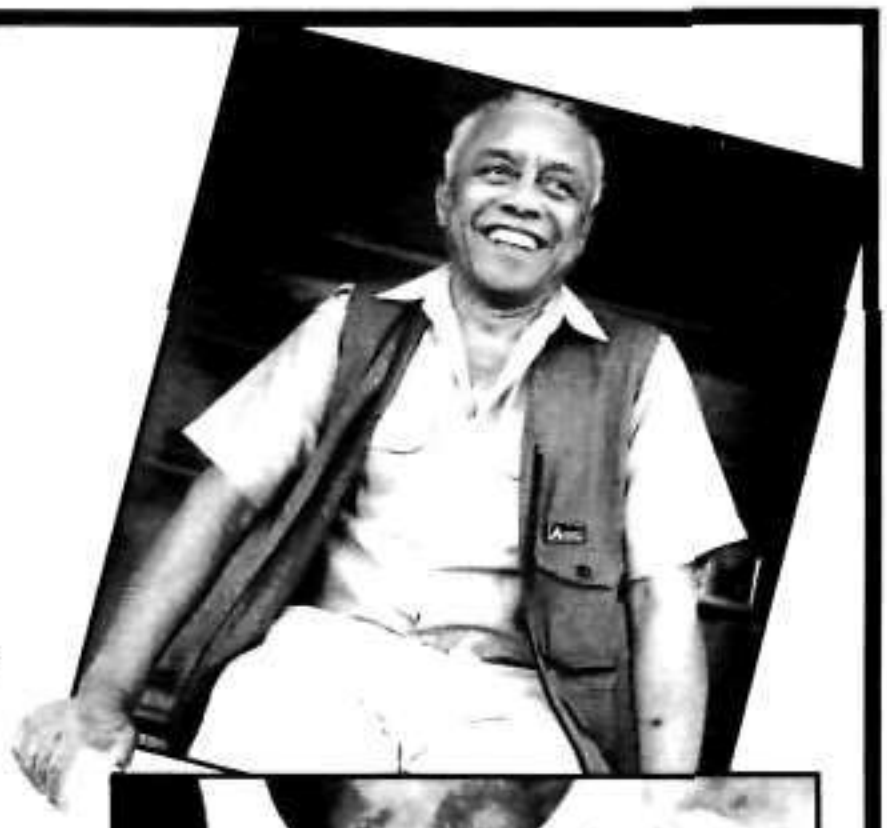

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