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The Patriotic Front

Can they get it together?

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ALSO INSIDE

★ Debating socialist strategy

★ Civics: Local government from below

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EDITORIAL

Is the dream of a united liberation movement, in the form of a Patriotic Front, finally coming true? There are devious attempts by the ruling class to out-manoeuvre the current major player amongst the oppressed, the ANC, and reduce it to a limp negotiating partner with enough strength to legitimate a new constitutional order which entrenches the essence of white (capitalist) power. Only a united liberation movement, from the smaller players on the far left to the larger players at the left of centre, can effectively counter De Klerk's moves.

A Patriotic Front based on a constituent assembly consensus should have enough flexibility and political foresight to draw in a range of organisations (including bantustan governments) which may still be lukewarm towards the constituent assembly demand. It would then have the potential to dramatically heighten the pressure on the De Klerk regime to give in to the basic democratic principle of an elected body, which has the mandate of the majority, being empowered to draw up a new constitution.

A Patriotic Front, if it is to succeed, has to start from the premise that the deep differences between the various organisations will not just disappear. But if attention is focussed on what unites organisations, rather than on what divides them, then there is every reason to feel confident that such a front will work. But that presupposes a willingness to compromise on all sides.

The civic movement which is rapidly gaining momentum throughout the country seems to have embraced this principle. Despite hiccups along the way - the most serious being the debacle over the Wits Metropolitan Chamber - civics seem determined to be truly democratic grassroots organisations which embrace all political tendencies. This is seen as an essential precondition to creating a vibrant civil society, where social movements, through their relative autonomy, are able to contribute in a challenging way to the creation of a new democratic order at all levels.

These sentiments underlay the contributions in this edition which challenge dogmatic commitments to abstract theory, and which point to the pitfalls of an easy embracing of 'insurrectionist' positions without seriously weighing the costs of following such a path under present conditions. Using the terrain of negotiations in combination with various forms of non-violent mass action (including defence against orchestrated violence) can bring about a radical transformation of society without sacrificing the principles of political tolerance and openness which are slowly gaining ground.

• SARS/WIP staff and advisory board extend a warm welcome to Glenda Daniels, who joins WIP as a writer from the beginning of May. Glenda, a political studies honours graduate, worked for the Weekly Mail before joining WIP. Her special interests, which she developed as a student and community activist, include labour and gender issues.

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Debating socialist strategies

Three contributions to the ongoing debate on socialist strategy — a response from Jeremy Cronin to Dave Kitson's article in *WIP 73*; an argument against marxism-leninism by student Jonny Steinberg; and Graeme Bloch on insurrection — *Pages 25 to 35*



The road ahead

Devan Pillay takes a critical look at moves to develop a Patriotic Front; Jo-Anne Collinge and Dominic Mdluli debate the role of civics; and Zola Skweyiya outlines the ANC's vision of future local and regional governments — *Pages 4 to 16*

All whites are oppressors

Dear Editor
Revolutionary greetings to you and the readers. I would like to respond to Sakhumzi Bongco's request for more information on Comrade Barney Desai, and on the issue of settlers in my organisation, the PAC of Azania.

Comrade Barney Desai, barrister and veteran freedom fighter, was the president of the South African Coloured Peoples' Congress, a member of the Congress Alliance. In 1964 the organisation dissolved to join the PAC in exile.

On the question of whether there are any whites in the PAC, the PAC believes that all whites are oppressors as they are shareholders of South African Oppressors (Pty) Ltd. — *Xolani Makwedini, Grahamstown*

Who is really a comrade?

Dear sir
Many people have varying conceptions about the question: 'Who is a comrade?'. We have seen the security branch meeting with the Lebowa bantustan cabinet, where it was resolved that 'a comrade is someone who is not schooling, nor schooled, unemployed and frustrated'. We have seen people calling De Klerk a comrade.

Are members of Azapo and PAC comrades of those in the ANC and SACP? Who is really a comrade, and what does this mean in practice? How can we identify comrades from non-comrades?

A comrade is someone who is part of our liberation movement, who is exemplary to the people, and who is always part of them and



• Barney Desai



LETTERS

Write to: The Editor
Work In Progress
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their struggles. The leadership of the comrades is fully accountable, works on a mandate and owes allegiance to the people alone.

A comrade is someone who discards tribalist, racist, neo-fascist, imperialist, neo-colonialist and regionalist ideas. He/she is someone who struggles for a democratic, non-racial, unitary, participatory and non-sexist South Africa.

A comrade is anyone who engages the enemy in all its manifestations. He/she is always knee-deep in the trenches of battle against the apartheid regime, helping to build rudimentary organs of people's power.

A comrade is first and foremost a revolutionary — an example to his/her people in all his/her actions and activities. He/she is engaged in a revolutionary process of

transforming the society as a whole from what it is into what it is not.

A comrade must be a reflection of the good that is coming with the new society, although as comrade Albie Sachs says: 'Not everything which is old is bad and not everything which is new is good'.

We as comrades must develop an understanding of what all this means in practical, day-to-day terms. — *Rudolph Phala, Mangangeng Village, Sekhukhuni-land*

Gulf War - Shameless hypocrisy

Dear Editor
It is a lie and naked, shameless hypocrisy for the USA and its friends (including De Klerk) to claim that the so-called 'Operation Desert Storm' was a mission for peace and democracy.

The US intervention in the Middle East was nothing but one country putting its interests above those of humanity in general, leaving death and destruction behind. Former US president Jimmy Carter revealed the USA's real intentions back in 1980, when he warned: 'Any attempt by any force to

gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the USA, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force'.

It is also of interest to note the 1981 statement of then US president Ronald Reagan, which stated that the USA would not stand by and watch Saudi Arabia be taken over by anyone that would shut off vital oil supplies to the west.

Those countries claiming to be for peace and democracy kept quiet when the SADF invaded Angola, as Angola does not have vital oil supplies to be exploited by the west.

What the US-led forces did in the Gulf was not war, unless we want to accept that war and terrorism are synonyms.

At the beginning of March CNN news announced: 'The Iraqi government shows willingness to comply with United Nations resolutions'. If this is to be supported, then we should expect the Israeli terrorists to also obey UN resolutions, and hand over land captured from the Palestinians since 1967.

I appeal to all heads of state, as 'missionaries for peace and democracy', to pressurise (even through force of arms) the USA to:

- stop arming the terrorist state of Israel and Phillipines;
- stop its terrorism against Angola and Cuba;
- withdraw from Panama and Grenada;
- release deposed Panamanian president (and former CIA agent) Antonio Noriega, because if he is a criminal, then President Bush, who employed Noriega when he (Bush) was the director of the CIA, is an even greater criminal! — *Samuel Motlohi, Botshabelo*

Winnie Mandela defeated in Women's League elections

After strong speculation that Winnie Mandela was going to be elected president of the ANC Women's League at its April national launch, delegates confounded pundits by voting in Gertrude Shope. Press reports reveal that Mandela received less than 20% of the votes cast.

The conference was to have taken place last October but was postponed because of the slow process of establishing structures in the country. Although it was intended to focus mainly on the rebuilding of the organisation, its structure, its relation to other organisations, and raising the profile of gender issues, it seems that the conference was dominated by the leadership tussle between Winnie Mandela and Shope.

Press reports before the election said there were basically two positions: the first wanted the League to be a 'mothers' body which would basically offer support to the (male-dominated) ANC - these were said to be mainly older women who did not feel that Winnie Mandela's militant image was suitable. The second position was said to be a more assertive 'feminist' position, coming mainly from younger women (especially those from exile) who saw in Winnie a potential champion of gender rights on the ANC executive.

But this portrayal was simplistic and misleading. Many feminists in the ANC have been appalled by the controversy surrounding Winnie, while on the other hand some of her staunchest supporters during her trial have been precisely those 'mothers' - correctly said not



• **Mandela: Lost**

to be 'independent thinkers' - who are supposed to be alienated from Winnie.

The election result seems to affirm the view that Winnie's star is beginning to wane - in any case, since her denouncement by the MDM in 1989 the extent of her popularity was always in doubt (she after all only just managed to get onto the executive of the ANC PWV region - with the help of Nelson Mandela - and won the PWV Women's League presidency earlier this year by only 3 votes). — *Special Correspondent*

Sactwu criticises ANC's lack of consultation

Last month the South African Clothing and Textile Worker's Union (Sactwu) - a Cosatu affiliate - publicly criticised the ANC for its lack of consultation.

This occurred after ANC PWV regional executive member, Abie Nkomo, speaking at a Sharpeville Day rally in Mamelodi, announced a consumer boycott which was to run from April 8 to April 13. The boycott was to be part of the campaign for a constituent assembly, according to reports.

Sactwu placed advertisements in the media countrywide, objecting to the an-

nouncement on the grounds that community organisations and unions like Sactwu, which has about 200 000 members, were not consulted on such a major aspect of the campaign.

The union's Natal regional media officer, Paul Hartley, told *WIP* that the decision to publish the advertisements was taken by the Sactwu National Co-ordinating Committee (NCC). When asked if the move was supported by the full Sactwu membership, he said it was 'based on the principles derived from the constitution' and would not have been done if the NCC thought that it would not receive support.

He said the advertisements were placed nationally because the announcement of a national consumer boycott necessitated a national response.

Hartley dismissed claims that Sactwu had problems with the Cosatu/ANC alliance, saying that by virtue of their affiliation to Cosatu they are also aligned to the ANC in some way. But he stressed that 'we (Sactwu) do not wish workers' support to be taken for granted by anyone.'

Sactwu subsequently received clarification from the ANC that the boycott would not occur if community organisations and unions were not consulted.

Premature

Abie Nkomo said he thought that the Sactwu response was premature. He explained that the statement should have been seen in the context of the campaign around the issues of indemnity, release of all political prisoners, aids and the constituent assembly.

'It was done in the process of announcing a package of campaigns and should not have been seen in isolation.' It was a recom-

mendation only, he said, which was in the process of being discussed by ANC regional committees, the unions and the SACP.

He said that the campaign had been discussed at the consultative conference in November by the Campaigns Committee and was part of a suggested programme of action which was unfolding, and which still had to be taken back to the regional committees and other fraternal organisations like the unions and the SACP.

Nkomo said he would like to believe he spoke on behalf of the ANC's PWV region at the Sharpeville rally. He found it 'strange' that Sactwu, and not Cosatu, placed the advertisements, but felt that, instead of looking back, he would like to see the progressive movement organise, build and prepare for the following campaigns.

This is not the first instance of a lack of consultation between the ANC and its alliance partners. This year the ANC failed to properly consult either Cosatu or the SACP on two major tactical shifts - the January 8 call for an all-party conference and the recent ultimatum to the government.

Towards the end of January the alliance met and the problem was 'resolved', only to emerge again in April. This time Cosatu and the SACP agreed with the shift, but nevertheless felt that they were not properly consulted.

The public chastising of the ANC by Sactwu has revealed that unions are no longer willing to kow-tow to any political organisation or party. Within Cosatu there are certain unions, or significant sections of unions, which have voiced their reservations about political alliances in the past. — *Charmeela Bhagowat*

The Patriotic Front: Can it prevent a Constituent Assembly compromise?

DEVAN PILLAY assesses the implications of the move towards forming a Patriotic Front of all liberation forces by August in the context of the debate around the All-Party Conference, Interim Government and Constituent Assembly, and the ANC's ultimatum to the government on the recent upsurge in violence

The recent highly successful meeting between the ANC and PAC in Harare has paved the way for a Patriotic Front of all liberation organisations. This is a highly significant development, given the real differences that exist between the ANC and PAC on a range of issues. There seems to be a renewed determination among liberation organisations to concentrate on what unites them - their common interest in a democratic government - in the face of the white minority's attempts to entrench divisions among the oppressed, and ensure increased legitimacy for president FW De Klerk.

The regime's agenda

The ruling elite's agenda is simple and, by now, clear: Use the instability and ill-discipline in the townships (which is caused primarily by the deprivations of apartheid) to sow discord and enmity amongst the oppressed, in order to show that the black community, and their political representatives, are deeply divided; and pander to the deep-rooted racism of the white minority (and the ignorance of many black, in particular coloured and indian, people), by portraying african people as violent 'tribalists', who can only be saved by the intervention of a 'neutral' white government. It hopes to convince enough people that its presence - as a 'civilising' force - is necessary in any future political arrangement.

This strategy was recently summed up by an ex-Cabinet Minister: What De Klerk is doing to the ANC is similar to forcing a person's head under-water, but pulling out it just in time to prevent drowning.

The ANC needs to be severely destabilised and disoriented so that it loses much of its appeal and effectiveness. But the ruling class needs the ANC to give any future political settlement legitimacy - it therefore should retain enough credibility and strength to be of use to the ruling class, but not enough to be the dominant actor.

De Klerk wants to emerge out of the chaos his party has created as a moderate peace-maker constantly in search of solutions, while Mandela and the ANC are painted as inconsistent purveyors of problems, at best unable to control the ever-present 'hawks' in their midst, and at worst having a secret agenda to foment instability and 'revolution'.

Besides winning increased legitimacy, which they hope will translate into majority support for an NP-led alliance in any future election, the De Klerk regime also wants to win acceptance (through the portrayal of endemic 'tribal' warfare) for a camouflaged ethnicity-based constitution, which will guarantee the essence of white (capitalist) power.

Unity of the oppressed?

The response of the representatives of black aspirations is also simple and straight-forward - oppressed people have to close ranks against a common (predominantly white) racist enemy. Not to do so spells certain death for a democratic solution to the apartheid crisis. De Klerk will continue to take the initiative, which will ensure the continuation of white domination (albeit with a 'multi-racial' facade).

But the unity-of-the-oppressed re-



sponse is not without its own tensions and strains. The ANC-Cosatu-SACP alliance stresses non-racial unity, while the PAC insists on 'african' unity (the definition of which seems to be quite fluid). Both, however, are focussed on achieving national liberation as the first step towards some sort of socialist, or social democratic, transformation. The two much smaller players, Azapo and Wosa, advocate a 'direct' route to socialism, with Azapo emphasising black unity and Wosa non-racialism.

A Patriotic Front is intended to also include a range of community, women's, youth and student organisations allied to one or other political position. The crucial binding factor is the desire of all of these political formations to see a constituent assembly decide the constitutional future of the country (if Inkatha, the other significant player amongst the oppressed, is included in a Patriotic Front, as has been suggested by some, then this basis for unity falls away).

But again, crucial differences exist, amongst and within these organisations, over how to pressure the apartheid state to give in to the demand, and what the exact nature of the constituent assembly should be.

There are broadly speaking two extremes: On the far left, the principled non-collaborationist 'maximalists', and the (unprincipled?) pragmatists on the right



Mass action: The only way to force the regime to concede to the demand for a Constituent Assembly

forces are too weak to put socialism on the agenda', will not be the democratic assembly that will empower the powerless.

Azapo and Wosa, then, while supporting the demand for a constituent assembly, are actually very close to the insurrectionist position of sections of the PAC youth. If engaging on the terrain of negotiations is out, then the alternative has to be the seizure of power by force (or at the very least forcing the regime to the point of collapse, when it will agree to all the demands of the revolutionary forces).

But is this all-or-nothing approach realistic? Do conditions allow for an insurrectionist strategy, or is such an approach at best romantic and at worst dangerous and counter-productive (see Bloch on page 32).

PAC and ANC move closer

The PAC shares much of the concerns of Azapo and Wosa, although there are strong moves within the PAC to adopt a less uncompromising position on negotiations with the regime. At the very least, however, the PAC's position remains one of rejecting negotiations with the regime, within an all-party framework or otherwise, until all the conditions of the Harare declaration - the removal of all obstacles to negotiations, such as the freeing of political prisoners, return of exiles, repeal of security legislation, etc - are met (after the historic ANC-PAC Harare meeting, and the ANC's ultimatum to the government, the ANC has reaffirmed its commitment to this position).

There therefore seems to be movement on both sides. However, there is still a measure of ambiguity as to whether the ANC is prepared to enter all-party talks in the hope that it will be able to convince the other parties of the wisdom of holding elections for a constituent assembly.

In addition, the ANC and its allies are demanding that an interim government be put into place once obstacles to negotiations have been removed, and serious negotiations begin. In other words, the present government should resign, and an 'interim government' (consisting of the major players across the spectrum), which would rule by decree, should take its place.

The PAC, along with Azapo and Wosa, reject this idea, because it does not want

wing of the liberation movement. In between these are varying shades of opinion which, to some extent, cut across all the organisations.

Just beyond the two extremes on either side are political positions among the oppressed which fall outside the constituent assembly consensus.

On the 'ultra-left' edge is the Western Cape-based New Unity Movement (who reject the constituent assembly demand 'at this stage') and completely off the ledge are sections of the PAC youth, who see the constituent assembly demand as a 'sell-out' demand.

On the 'ultra-pragmatist' right is Inkatha, which at best adopts a defeatist position (the regime won't give in, so we have to compromise), and at worst is part of the De Klerk game plan (it mimics De Klerk virtually word for word).

Both positions, however, feed into the perspectives of the far-left and the pragmatists at either end of the constituent assembly consensus.

All or nothing

The 'maximalist' position starts from the premise that the struggle is for everything, or nothing. Anything short of the total defeat of the apartheid capitalist ruling class, and the total victory of the 'socialist revolution', is a 'sell-out'. Azapo's Dr Aubrey Mokoape expressed this view in a recent talk hosted by *Trib-*

ute magazine: 'You are either free or unfree - there is nothing in between'.

This perspective feeds a non-collaborationist position, which the New Unity Movement takes to the extreme. Anything that is remotely related to the apartheid government has to be boycotted - including negotiations with the regime and any of its satellites. Azapo's politics goes very far down this road although, says Mokoape, 'we do not reject negotiations out of hand'. The struggle - including armed struggle, mass action and sanctions - needs to be intensified to the point of near collapse of the apartheid state, including the economy. Only then, says Mokoape, 'will the regime talk sense'.

Azapo believes in the idea of a constituent assembly deciding on a future South African constitution - indeed, it claims to be the first organisation to have made this call in the early eighties, when the ANC was still wedded to the idea of a 'national convention' (a type of all-party conference, which some in the UDF were calling for then).

Azapo shares with Wosa (and to an extent the New Unity Movement) the view that only a constituent assembly that has been won 'through struggle' will express the interests of the masses. An assembly that has been negotiated with the regime under current conditions, when, as Wosa's Carl Brecher told a Johannesburg meeting recently, the 'revolutionary

to be responsible for 'administering apartheid'. An outside body - like the OAU or Non-Aligned Movement - is preferred. There is nothing to indicate, however, that they are not open to compromise on this issue, once the ANC has worked out a clearer proposal itself, and can show that an 'interim government' can avoid the dangers many (including the SACP) feel uneasy about.

ANC secretary general Alfred Nzo expressed an optimistic view: the basis has now been laid for the organisations to work through their differences 'on important strategic questions and search for common ground through mutual compromise' (*New Nation* 19-25/4/90). This is particularly so once these organisations unite in struggle.

Emphasising mass action

The radical Marxist Workers' Tendency within the ANC, which is close to Wosa in its 'trotskyist' world-view, does not oppose the idea of the ANC entering all-party talks, providing it goes into them with the sole purpose of presenting the demand for a constituent assembly - and withdrawing if this is refused (*Congress Militant* No 6, February 1991). Its position, therefore, seems very close to the PAC's.

The SACP, while it shares concerns about the ANC conceding too much to the regime, has not committed itself to the extent that the MWT has. Along with Cosatu, the party has since 1989 consistently called for a democratic constituent assembly, but it has yet to insist, in unequivocal terms, that this demand be a precondition for negotiations with the regime. The way is still open for all-party talks where the constituent assembly demand is tabled amongst other demands.

However, the party has stressed the need for **mass action** - including setting up disciplined defence units both to defend communities against attack, and to prepare for a future people's army, given the white minority's control of the repressive apparatus - to continue even while negotiations take place, so as to apply maximum pressure on the regime to ensure that it eventually gives in to the demand.

In other words the party does not have illusions that skillful ANC negotiators will, through the power of the tongue alone, convince De Klerk and his allies of the wisdom of conceding the constituent assembly demand. The ruling class, as always, has to feel the 'hot breath' of the working class before it gives in.

Cosatu shares this perspective, and with the party has decided to embark on a series of mass actions, starting with 39 May Day rallies in 9 regions, to popularise the constituent assembly demand, amongst others.

The ultimatum

Ever since talks with the regime began, many in Cosatu and the SACP have felt uncomfortable about the way their alliance partner has often failed to properly consult them on crucial decisions (see Briefings), and the way they seemed to be allowing De Klerk to take the tactical initiative, by forcing concessions from the ANC without fulfilling their side of the bargain. This uneasiness came across strongly at the ANC's December conference, where April 30 was set as the deadline for agreements to be honoured, in particular the release of all political prisoners.

After the clearly orchestrated violence erupted again this year, the ANC finally took the initiative and delivered an ultimatum to the government: control your security forces, and fulfill your commitments by 30 April and 9 May, or we will pull out of negotiations.

While yet again Cosatu and the SACP were not properly consulted before this highly significant tactical shift was made, the two alliance partners were so pleased with the decision that they have made only mild protests to the ANC (although they nevertheless see such lack of proper consultation as in principle an unhealthy habit of the ANC leadership).

ANC pragmatists

Large sections of the ANC (perhaps the majority of members) share the perspectives of the SACP and Cosatu. But there are other voices within the ANC. These are the 'pragmatists', who start from the premise that the regime will never concede to the demand for an elected constituent assembly, and therefore, while we ought to nevertheless formally present the demand to an all-party conference, we should expect to compromise.

ANC pragmatists are not necessarily 'agents of monopoly capitalism', or 'faint-hearted liberals' trying to please everyone. Some may have these tendencies, but there are others who feel that a democratic socialist position is best served by not 'fetishising' the constituent assembly demand.

A constituent assembly, according to this position, will not empower the people in the way that supporters envisage, be-

cause it is highly unlikely that, given the objective situation (including the relatively centralised character of the ANC), anything more than a Namibian-type constituent assembly will come into being (see later).

This view starts from the premise that De Klerk is ready to concede what a (limited) constituent assembly will anyway decide: a fully non-racial constitution which incorporates democratic rights along basic liberal lines. This is because there are only two real actors that have to come to an agreement, the regime and the ANC - whether the negotiating forum is the all-party conference or a (limited) constituent assembly. The regime realises that it will have to compromise with the ANC, and, given its desire to please western governments and win over liberal support, the regime is unlikely to hold out for long against a basic non-racial, democratic constitution. All the ANC has to do is insist on this.

For this position, the **key issue** is not how the constitution is drawn up, but what the future economy is going to look like, and how society as a whole is going to be democratised on the ground.

But this view is surely too optimistic about what De Klerk is likely to concede, and too pessimistic about the short- to medium-term prospects of developing a more democratic political culture, both within the ANC and in society as a whole.

Beyond the Namibian model

Cosatu and others within the alliance have put forward what they consider to be a more democratic and accountable constituent assembly concept than the Namibian model.

In Namibia, once the assembly was elected, delegates lost all contact with their constituency, and sat behind closed doors to work out a constitution. The only difference between this model and the all-party conference idea is that, in the former, national elections decided the composition of the negotiating table. But once that was achieved, the constituent assembly operated much like the all-party conference De Klerk and others are advocating.

There was no public discussion on the various clauses of the constitution, and none of the delegates reported back to their constituencies. The most significant constituency, the National Union of Namibian Workers, complained at the time that its worker demands were being ignored - they had no access to the debates within the assembly, except very

indirectly through Swapo, their ally. It was clear that this extremely limited access was highly insufficient to allow their voice to be heard.

While in South Africa it is unlikely that the much more powerful and better-organised Cosatu will be similarly ignored if they found themselves in such a situation, Cosatu is not taking any chances. Which is why their Workers' Charter conference last November proposed a constituent assembly which stipulates that:

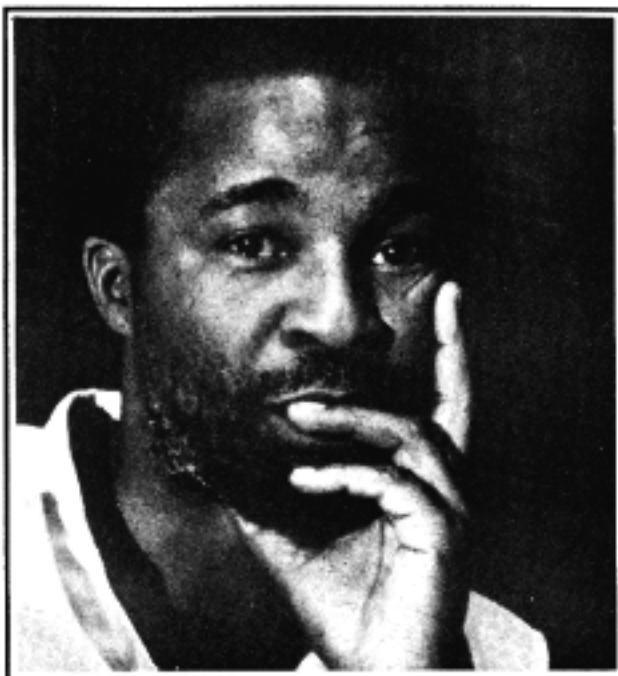
- all delegates should be directly accountable to their respective constituencies;
- the proceedings must be such that delegates seek mandates from their constituencies at regular intervals, to facilitate accountability;
- all discussions should be held publicly - presumably so that the electorate can monitor whether their mandates are being carried out, and through the mass media (which as a precondition would by then be accessible to all) the wider public would be able participate in the constitutional debate as it proceeds.

These positions were endorsed by a Cosatu CEC last March, and are likely to be entrenched as Cosatu policy at its July conference.

Compromise through referendum?

But this idea is too radical for a De Klerk regime that is hesitant to even consider the much more limited Namibian model. ANC Foreign Affairs spokesperson Thabo Mbeki, at an ANC meeting in Mayfair, Johannesburg recently, seemed to think so too. After expressing admiration for the Namibian model, when questioned he showed no enthusiasm for Cosatu's idea. Instead, his thinking went along the opposite direction: he seemed resigned to the virtual certainty that there is going to be a compromise with the regime on the whole idea of a constituent assembly itself.

He posed the following scenario: At the all-party conference, we will have on the one side (hopefully) the Patriotic Front, calling for a constituent assembly. On the other side we will have a range of forces, including the DP, Inkatha, Labour Party and the NP, amongst others, insisting that the (unelected) all-party conference be the forum to discuss a new constitution. If they do not budge, we will have a stalemate. We will then have to 'refer to the people', and get a fresh mandate. This can happen through a referendum, where the question will be: should negotiations for a new constitution proceed through a



Thabo Mbeki: Seems resigned to the virtual certainty of a compromise with the regime on the whole idea of a constituent assembly

constituent assembly, or through the all-party conference. If the result is the latter, then we will have to accept that we made a mistake, and that the people prefer an all-party conference to a constituent assembly.

Is there any significance to the fact that Mbeki only considered one type of result - a rejection of the constituent assembly? (Was it a 'Freudian slip'?) Recent remarks that 'I see no particular reason why we should not have a new constitution by the end of this year' strengthens the view that Mbeki's position represents a variant of the 'pragmatist' approach outlined above.

If a constitution is going to be drawn up by the end of this year, then clearly there is not going to be a constituent assembly. At the earliest a constitution drawn up by an elected constituent assembly will only see the light of day towards the end of next year (it would, most likely, take the rest of this year to win the constituent assembly demand, another 4-6 months to prepare for and have elections, and then possibly a further 6 months to a year for the assembly to debate a new constitution).

And what if the electorate decides, via a referendum, that a constituent assembly is what we want after all? Given the 'De Klerk will never concede to a constituent assembly demand' premise of the 'pragmatist' approach, why will the regime now accept the demand? After all, one of the regime's main objections to a con-

stituent assembly is that it presupposes the acceptance of one-person-one vote elections. If they reject that, then it follows that they will reject a non-racial referendum - unless Mbeki envisages, as part of the compromise, a racial referendum...?

Finally, what about the control of and access to the mass media? The struggle for an elected constituent assembly encompasses the struggle to free the media from state and monopoly capital domination (as well as the neutralisation of the repressive forces). A 'free and fair' election (or referendum) is impossible otherwise. A short time frame surely does not allow conditions for a 'free and fair' vote to be created.

Patriotic Front or compromise

It is clear that a Patriotic Front based on a constituent assembly consensus will severely limit the space for compromise on the constituent assembly demand. Already the ANC has moved from the January 8 position, where it seemed to consider the possibility of transforming an all-party conference into a constituent assembly, to the position after the Harare meeting with the PAC, that, according to ANC communications director Pallo Jordan, 'the all-party conference will limit its agenda to the modalities of the constituent assembly' (*New Nation* 19-25/4/91).

The implications of such a position are that maximum pressure ought to be exerted on the regime, to force it to give in to the constituent assembly demand. This includes mass action (which Cosatu and the SACP are taking a lead in), economic sanctions and, for the PAC, Azapo and Wosa, armed struggle (to the point of near-insurrection, or insurrection itself - although, it must be noted, this remains largely an idea, rather than a practice).

Given the real differences which exist between the organisations, there will have to be a willingness to compromise on all sides. This will only happen if, in the context of clear attempts by the ruling class to sow divisions and broaden its own support base, attention is concentrated on what unites the organisations of the oppressed.

At this juncture what unites virtually the entire liberation movement is the desire for a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic government, and an elected constituent assembly as the only democratic means of getting there. And the best way to actually achieve unity is through joint struggle. •

Civics: Local government from below

Challenges, challenges. From the reformist National Party government, pressing its plans for all-race local government and urban land control. From the violence raging between supporters of political parties, especially Inkatha and the African National Congress. From the water and electricity cuts effected by (usually white) town councils as service bills remain unpaid and often unpayable.

This is the context in which some 600 to 700 civic associations, represented by regional federal structures, will come together mid-year to form a national civic organisation. The formal launch is to be preceded by a national consultative conference to be held in Bloemfontein on May 10-11.

The pressures of transition have underscored the urgency of co-ordinating the civic movement and defining a unifying strategy. Perhaps nothing has illustrated the necessity to clarify means and ends more pointedly than the advent of the Witwatersrand Metropolitan Chamber. Half of the Johannesburg civic associations opted to participate in this multi-racial council-based forum, while the other half very publicly stayed out, protesting from the sidelines. Both groupings of civics maintained they were remaining true to the core principles of their movement. Both were convinced that the strategy they had selected best served these principles.

An autonomous civic movement

Along with the challenges of the political transition, the pressures to negotiate on service provision to entire communities and to confront bitterly divisive violence have shaped thinking on the long-term nature of civics. At present the balance seems irrevocably tipped in favour of founding a national civic movement which avoids party-political affiliation.

Coordinator of the National Interim

JO-ANNE COLLINGE looks at moves to form a national civic organisations, amidst pressures on civics, during this period of transition, to become part of new local government structures

Civics Committee Pat Lephunya says that a number of long-term options were considered in the light of the United Democratic Front-linked past of civic associations. They included the options of the civic organisations simply being replaced by African National Congress branches or becoming ANC residents' organisations. The notion of civic associations preparing themselves to take over the administration of towns and cities was also weighed.

In this process, however, 'the strongest position is that the civic movement must remain autonomous, a broad mass-based structure, which will not attempt to take over local government'.

Individual civic bodies have formally adopted this position in a number of cases, as have some regional structures - for instance, in the Eastern and Southern Transvaal and Southern Free State.

Lephunya says a number of factors have pointed the civic movement in this direction. 'Firstly, the African experience of liberation movements that present themselves as true democrats but when they take over power things change.'

Then, he adds, the warning from Eastern Europe about the abuses that are perpetrated when 'people's organs become conveyor belts of the ruling party'.

And thirdly, the notion that bureaucracy is in itself a counterproductive social factor that has to be challenged. 'We have to have organs that are not hamstrung by bureaucracy.'

Gugile Nkwinti, Eastern Cape ANC secretary with a longstanding involvement in the civic movement, also looks to Eastern Europe in considering the kind of

role that the civics could play. His focus, however, is on the power of social movements once they ceased to be the 'conveyor belt' of the party, on the swiftness with which radical change was effected because of the power of the people.

'The success lay in the fact that whatever was done was done through civil society,' comments Nkwinti. He argues that there is a need for grassroots democratic organisation in all societies, that social movements - because they relate directly to social issues that shape people's lives, and are not mediated by the necessity of holding or attaining power - are best place to answer this need.

'The basic role of the civics is not changed in my view. This role is building people's power and it is something that must play itself out in civil society,' asserts Nkwinti.

But shuffling off the past is not so simple, he acknowledges. Although the civics, within the UDF, were dominated mainly by the concerns of civil society the front's overall role was largely political. Pulling the civic movement clear of the political net is not easy - and overlaps of personnel make that very clear.

Civics and parties

But it is imperative that civics 'come clean vis a vis the political parties,' says Nkwinti. The need for this may not be immediately clear, since at present 'there shouldn't be a contradiction between a social movement and the liberation movement'. All that changes, however, when liberation movements accede to power.

Nkwinti also says that although the civics seem like the most appropriate shoulders for the mantle of a social movement, this needs to be looked at critically. They are only fit for the task if they are truly grassroots organisations - and this might differ from region to region.

Sekgopi Malebo, interim chairper-

son of the Southern Free State Civics Congress (Sofrecco), points out that it is an oversimplification to interpret the civics as invariably in opposition to the ruling party simply because they've elected to stay outside of party politics.

'In Sofrecco we have actually put it very clear. Although we would like to remain autonomous from any political party, we would have the right to decide at any moment with whom we align ourselves politically. We don't necessarily see ourselves as an opposition to the ruling structure.'

It is this freedom to endorse political programmes and the candidates representing appropriate policies that answers how the national civic movement might participate in forthcoming national constitutional negotiations.

In line with its non-party political role, the civic movement is unlikely to seek direct representation at the negotiating table. But it will attempt to have its positions put by parties whose views on local government approximate to the civic movement's own positions. It would actively seek a consultative role on local government in relation to such parties.

Wits Metropolitan Chamber debate

If views on the long-term nature of the civic movement tend to converge and grow more solid, the same cannot be said of the responses of civic associations to the challenges of the political transition. Faced with the question of how to carry forward their demand for 'one non-racial city with a single tax base' - even while the government itself is tinkering away at municipal structures - the civics have come up with widely divergent answers in the process of local-level negotiations.

The developments in relation to the Witwatersrand Metropolitan Chamber brought matters to a head simply because civics which had concluded different local level pacts were being asked to agree on a move at metropolitan level - and they could not.

But the Johannesburg situation is not unique or especially pathological. Significant differences exist among many civics in the way they relate to existing local government structures; how they define acceptable participation in interim local government; and the methods they see as most likely to deliver the goods - electricity, water, other services and a better housing deal - to the communities they represent.

What was striking about the Metropolitan Chamber debate was that the

participating civics and the boycotting group declared that they were pursuing the same medium- to long-term goals.

Both Cyril Ramaphosa of the participating Soweto People's Delegation (SPD) and Moses Mayekiso of the boycotting Alexandra Civic Organisation (ACO) and Civic Association of the Southern Transvaal (Cast) insisted their civics were committed to: the destruction of existing race-based municipalities and the campaign for the resignation of township councillors; the future of local government being formally negotiated at a central level along with other constitutional issues; resisting participation in any 'neo-apartheid' municipal formulations devised by the National Party; immediate moves to improve the housing situation in the townships, to secure better services and infrastructure and to spread the wealth of the cities into the townships.

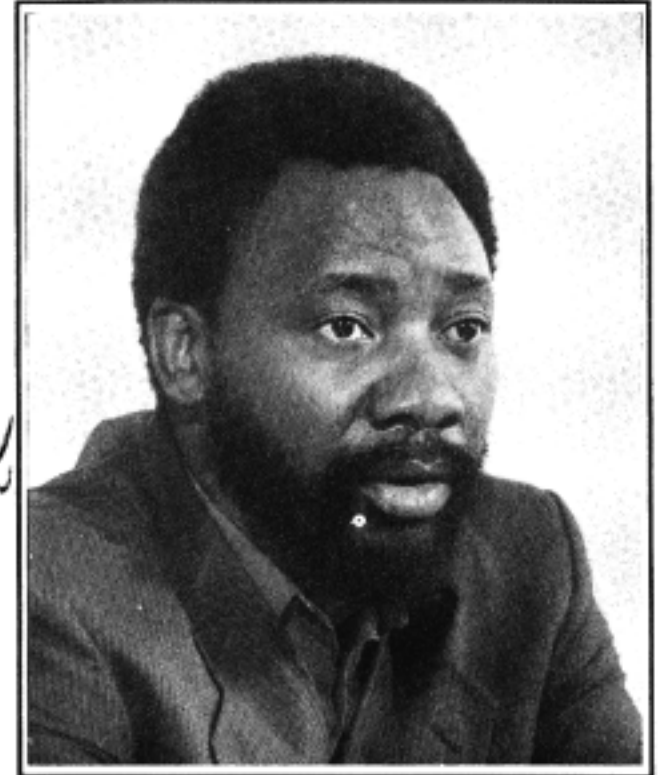
Endorsing neo-apartheid structures?

Cast accused the civics who were participating in the Chamber of inconsistency in sharing a structure with the very councillors whose demise they sought. They said that the Chamber was inherently racial, constructed like a mini-tricameral parliament from the existing racial councils. They argued that participation in such a structure could easily be interpreted as practical endorsement for precisely the 'neo-apartheid' structures which the civic movement abhorred. And that because of this and the fact that the Chamber described itself as a 'negotiating forum' on future local government, participation in the Chamber ran a grave risk of undermining national negotiations for non-racial, representative local government.

Ramaphosa on behalf of the SPD and the Soweto Civic countered that in a racial society it was virtually impossible to start crossing old barriers except by engaging racial structures. He accused his opponents in ACO of doing precisely the same thing on a local basis.

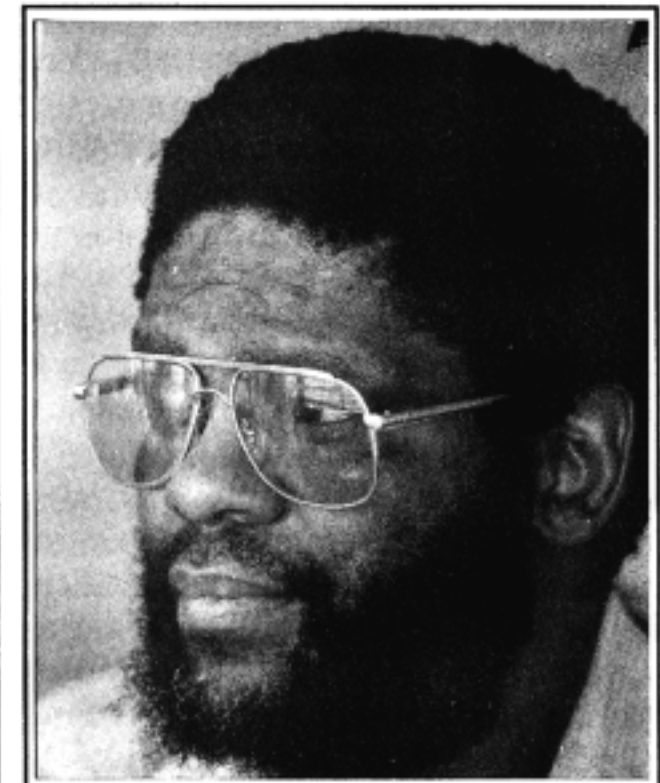
With regard to township councillors, he maintained that their resignation could be pursued through the Chamber - as the work of the Chamber progressed, these councillors would become evermore marginalised and powerless. Again he accused his critics in Cast of employing double standards because some of them had negotiated and concluded agreements with councillors.

And, as for the Chamber being the instrument of constitutional negotiations, whatever its constitution said, this would

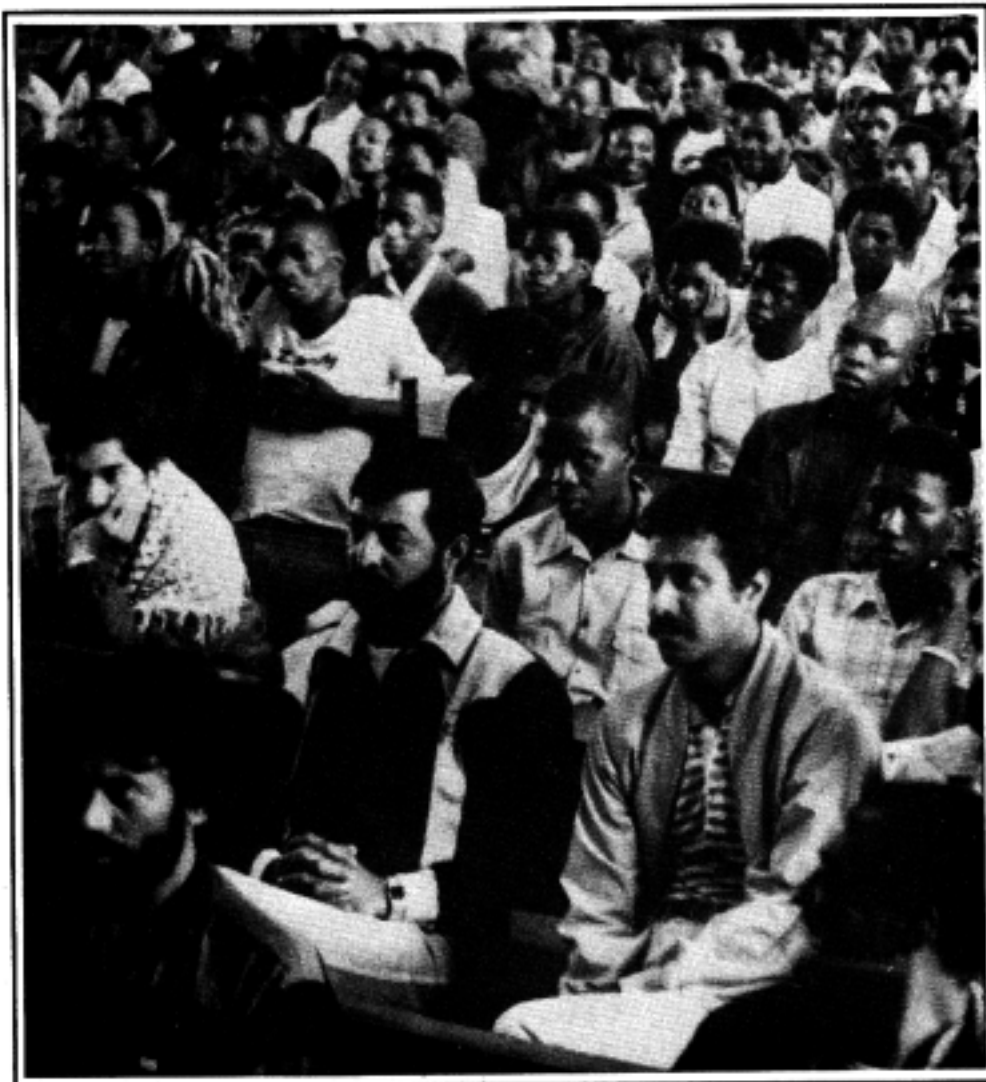


• Cyril Ramaphosa

There can be little time for luxuriating in visions of life after the end of apartheid. Ensuring that the transformation of local government is managed from below is surely a priority.



• Moses Mayekiso



Civics, as autonomous organisations, can play a major role in developing true 'people's power'

not be the case. 'The Chamber has its own limitations and shortcomings. Our view is that it cannot be seen as a negotiating body.'

In the meanwhile, Ramaphosa believed the Chamber was the vehicle by which to achieve certain objectives of the Soweto Accord concluded by the SPD/SCA with the authorities last year - objectives such as the transfer of houses to the people and the improvement of services and infrastructure.

Mayekiso in turn argued that there were significant differences between ACO's handling of the Sandton council and Alexandra councillors and the SPD's treatment of councils in the Chamber. He pointed out that the Alexandra Accord bound all signatories (including the councillors themselves) to addressing the aim of getting the township councillors to resign. Also, that in seeking a one-to-one relationship with Sandton, ACO aimed at deracialisation at a much more local level than the National Party with its neo-apartheid metropolitan models would like.

Important tactical debate

Underneath the accusations and counter-accusations, ran an important tactical debate. Some regarded its public airing as unfortunate - ANC deputy president Nelson Mandela was apparently among these and called the sparring parties together to urge that they begin to settle their differences in a more private and

controlled manner. For others, however, the dispute served as an alert to debates to which they had been largely oblivious.

Bloemfontein-based Malebo highlights one of the factors underlying the Chamber debacle: individual civics have very particular histories that are partly shaped by local state strategies. The same range of strategic options simply does not exist for all civics.

He makes this point by stressing that although, after a month-long consumer boycott, the Mangaung Civic Association was able to gain major service concessions from the Bloemfontein Council and the province - and effectively by-pass the remnants of the Mangaung Town Council - this did not mean that major gains had been made toward non-racial government or a single municipality. 'The gains we have seen came purely as a result of the consumer boycott,' Malebo observes. The white authorities were reluctant negotiators. Official and businessmen alike 'showed clearly where they were siding'.

As a result of this experience of negotiations - obviously different from what the SPD found in relation to Johannesburg - the MCA would be very reluctant to 'join any interim structure that has been decided by the apartheid regime alone'. There is also the strong perception that local agreements are open to manipulation and 'could be landmines on the road to national agreements on local

government'.

State strategy

From the government quarter there is evidence of a more centralised and co-ordinated intervention than the civics are currently able to muster. The provincial administrations are active participants in virtually all civic-municipal negotiations and are widely seen as the saviours and promoters of township councillors - or at least the 50 percent-or-so who remain in office. In the Transvaal talks have repeatedly broken down as officials and civic representatives have deadlocked over the right of councillors to take part in negotiations. Civic leaders on the Reef say that the province is attempting to foist the Soweto-style settlement on them. And service cuts are frequently an added form of pressure in this scenario.

A political analyst who has observed local level talks at close quarters discerns a number of threads in the state's policy on local government. One aspect is its determination to force the pace of negotiations - taking advantage of certain inevitable organisational shortcomings in structures that are short on funds and reliant on part-time volunteers.

Another is a replica of the NP's national policy: an insistence on including as many players in the negotiations game as possible in order to dilute the voice of its main opponent - in this case the local civic organisation. It is not quite clear whether this ploy to fragment township opinion finds expression in the growing association between Inkatha and township councillors and attempts by Inkatha in places as remote as Schweizer Rencke to reverse rent boycotts.

What does stand out clearly is that, in this transitional phase, the civic movement's non-partisan role needs to be actively asserted; it is established through consultation with all parties, rather than avoidance of party contact. This strategy was firmly grasped by the Vosloorus Civic Association which foiled an attempt by the authorities to bring independent parties into the talks by coordinating a delegation of the civic, Inkatha, Nactu and the Ministers' Fraternal. Other parties - such as the ANC, Azapo and the PAC - are understood to have been approached but to have declined because they saw no need to supplement the civic's efforts or usurp its role as a residents' body.

Lephunya says civics are actively seeking contact with political parties to persuade them of a greater commitment to non-partisanship.

Uniting civics across the Eastern Transvaal

'Development' is another word that drops readily into conversation on the future role of the civics. 'We are looking at development in the very broadest sense,' says Lephunya. Education in organisational skills is central to this. 'We want to empower people to deal with the everyday problems that confront them.'

In essence, the civics aim to replace authoritarian, top-down planning with a process of consultation in which the will of ordinary people prevails as far as is practicable.

Some civics actually see themselves as development agents, setting up community-accountable structures to carry out projects in areas such as housing, transportation and health.

Lephunya says that they are not unaware that the challenge of the civics is partly to deliver the goods to the people, to ensure that there are real improvements in their harsh living conditions.

This is one factor in maintaining a popular base, he acknowledges, drawing lessons from the electoral overthrow of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. 'You may have very good revolutionary theories, but without delivering material returns to the people you will never remain in power.'

In the area of development the civic movement has a long way to go. It is a road scarcely embarked on and very partially understood. The inability of civic organisations to challenge the government's recent White Paper on land reform, in as far as it affects the urban homeless, is just one indication of this.

Local government from below

In moving towards the launch of a national structure, the civic movement has a touch of the 'born again' spirit.

There is a sense of vision and renewal. Undoubtedly this is fuelled by the unprecedented acknowledgement of the influence of civics by local and regional governments.

But the launch takes place under great pressure. There can be little time for luxuriating in visions of life after the end of apartheid.

Ensuring that the transformation of local government is managed from below is surely a priority.

This will require a careful examination of goals and strategies; of the relative need for unity among civics and tactical flexibility dictated by local conditions; and of the role of interim local government in the overall thrust toward democratic rule. •

By **DOMINIC MDLULI**

I am lucky to be part of one of the most important wings of South Africa's democratic struggle — the 'civic' movement. There are hundreds of civic associations and other community organisations trying to solve the bread-and-butter problems faced by our people, mainly in the townships.

From union to civic

My own background symbolises why this movement has become so strong. I was once an organiser of the Post Office and Telecommunications Workers Association (Potwa). But because we were successful in advancing workers' interests, the Post Office victimised me greatly, charged me with misconduct, and fired me at the end of 1988.

After I was fired, I thought I'd continue with the unions, but then I was influenced by comrade Kgabisi Mosunkutu, who is now president of Potwa, an executive of the Soweto Civic Association, and vice-president of Civic Associations of the Southern Transvaal (Cast).

Cde Kgabs taught me how to organise civics, including the the formation of street committees, block committees, and zone committees. Although some unionists were unhappy about his dual role, he made it clear that we cannot divorce the community from union activities.

Struggles in Witbank

When I was staying in Witbank - 'Malahleni' (coal city) - the state of emergency forced the Malahleni Civic Association underground. But when we saw a newspaper article that councillors were raising rents in 1987, we took a decision to oppose the councillors, went to court in Pretoria, and won on a technicality.

Some of the civic leaders didn't have the interest of the people at heart. They opposed the rent increases, but when the municipal elections were held in 1988, they grabbed the opportunity to jump into the apartheid structures, and one was elected mayor of Kwaguqu (the black

township of Witbank). The Malahleni Civic then faded away.

Late in 1989, a new civic, the Witbank Civic Association, was formed. Even though it wasn't really ready to lead the community yet, a rent boycott was called. This came about because a municipal workers' union and a councillor exposed misappropriation of funds by other councillors which led to a R13 million deficit.

Even without a strong civic in place, the people said we must not pay our rent. With the state's concessions in February 1990, there was much self-confidence. At that time there was a national call to bring down the black local authorities. So it was easy for the people to support our boycott.

Ready for negotiations?

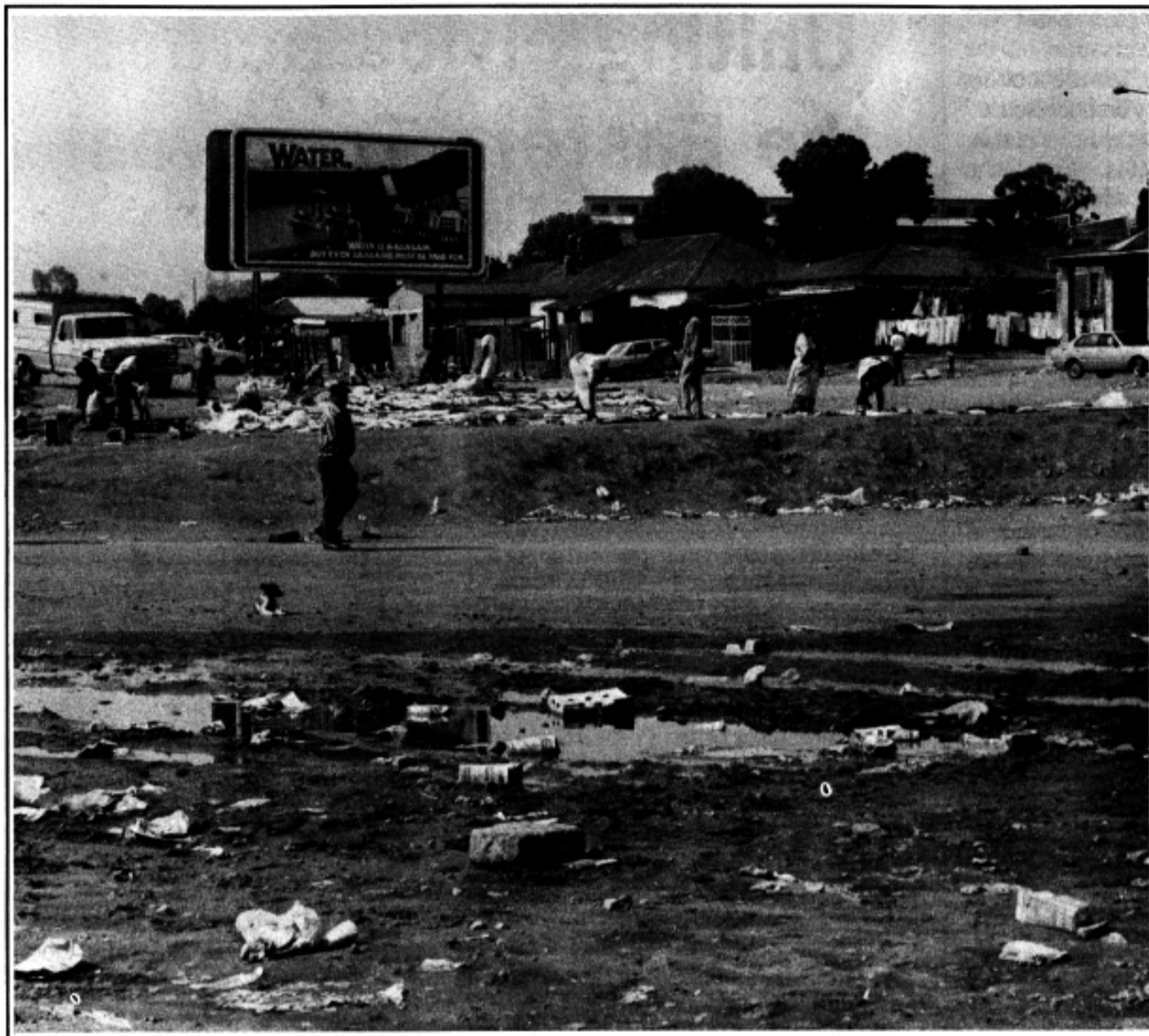
In April 1990 we began negotiations with the authorities over the areas affected by the rent boycott. We even negotiated with the councillors, but when we went back to the community the people were furious, and said that if we talked to the councillors again the civic would be fired.

By now the rent boycott had reached 17 towns in the Eastern Transvaal, and in June the ANC called for a consumer boycott for the entire region. The aim was to pressure the Transvaal Provincial Administration (TPA) to engage in regional negotiations to solve our problems.

The TPA called us to a large meeting, and made enough concessions for us to agree to end the rent boycott from 1 September 1990. Again, we took this deal back to the communities all over the Eastern Transvaal, and again the communities said that their grievances had not been satisfied. The housing problems were not solved, arrears were not written off, upgrading and community development were not addressed, and one-city, one-municipality was not even on the agenda. Therefore, the people told us, the enemy must still be opposed through rent boycotts.

In search of regional unity

The civics weren't coordinated regionally at that time. The ANC just called



Township neglect: Civics can play a major role in improving conditions

them to a meeting, which some of us couldn't understand. The civics met at Waterval-Boven, only to find that we weren't ready yet to launch a regional structure. We didn't have proper mandates, nor a proper understanding of what regional unity actually meant.

Then 10 civics from the Highveld met in Breyton in late November last year and decided there must be a working group to negotiate with the TPA. Earlier, the ANC had led a working group which included a few civics, but it wasn't reporting back or getting a mandate. Worse, the TPA used this to push bad negotiated agreements which the civics could not enforce.

An accountable interim coordinating committee was needed, and it was decided that a regional civic structure like Cast should be the ultimate goal. But we are in a bigger geographic area than Cast, so we decided at the beginning that organising should occur in four sub-regions. The politics of apartheid has divided the Eastern Transvaal into three homelands (Gazankulu, Lebowa, Kangwane), Conservative Party (CP)-controlled areas, and Nationalist Party (NP)-controlled areas.

We didn't have the resources, so we approached the UDF for help. We didn't want to repeat the mistakes of the Waterval-Boven committee, which had insufficient resources. Then we wrote a discussion paper, and through the advice of service organisations we raised funds and prepared for the launch of the Civic Associations of the Eastern Transvaal. I stayed in Johannesburg for a whole month, consulting with experts on the formation of the region.

There were four sub-regional workshops. The executive committee asked me to become full-time organiser for the region, so I had to visit more than 50 different civics within a month.

The four workshops endorsed our work in February, and the Cast launch was held in early March.

Lessons for the civic movement

First, the ANC played a major role in getting us to identify civics across the region. That led us to develop our own regional structure, which is autonomous from political parties like the ANC.

Today, the ANC doesn't even come to negotiations with the TPA, because the TPA broke so many agreements. But we in the civics have a mandate to keep discussions going.

We are not reaching settlements with the TPA at this stage, because before we do that we must go to a regional congress to get a full mandate. The questions we will raise at a Cast congress include which parties should be involved in joint negotiating forums, what is the financial outlook, and how best to attack the cutoffs of services in townships.

There are barriers ahead. The CP opposes negotiations and any change in our country. The civics must help get rid of these CP local authorities. If we can do this, and also move beyond protest politics into development politics, this will empower us. We must learn how to run organisations better and, I hope, to run local government. But civics must always remain independent, and act like unions for the communities. •

** Dominic Mdluli is currently in India studying local government administration.*

Local and regional government beyond apartheid

From race to class power?

Very little has been said in National Party (NP) circles about regional government. The emphasis on local government is probably understandable because most resistance to apartheid, especially between 1984 and 1987, was concentrated at local level. And it was from grassroots level that apartheid and its organs were challenged. By rejecting apartheid local government structures, the democratic movement challenged not only the legitimacy of the apartheid state but deliberately focused its attention on political questions. In this way it challenged the unequal division of resources, scrutinised inadequate services to black people by local authorities and fundamentally questioned the issue of the apartheid state, its political organs and administrative structures. At the same time the need to strengthen the unity of class and national forces both at local and national level was emphasised.

Unity created new possibilities for an intensified and sustained political offensive. NP concentration at local government level can only be interpreted as a last ditch stand to ensure that the privileges whites are to lose at central government level are shifted and entrenched at local government level.

National Party constitutional proposals

Vague statements have been heard from the NP heralding the end of the apartheid and the drawing up of a new constitution. President De Klerk and Constitutional Minister Gerrit Viljoen maintain that the NP wants constitutional arrangements which will provide for:

- devolution of authority;
- decentralisation of power to regional and local levels;
- possibly a bicameral parliament;
- a Bill of Rights;
- an independent judiciary.

The ANC's ZOLA

SKWEYIYA argues the case for flexible decentralised forms of government which go beyond the De Klerk/Viljoen proposals, which are designed to preserve the essentials of white privilege within the context of a shift from race to class power.

Their proposal for a parliament provides for one house based upon a non-racial, one person, one vote franchise. They also propose a second chamber in which group interests would be represented. According to this proposal, every law passed by both houses could be vetoed by 'minority groups' and all decisions would have to be taken by consensus or loaded majority.

Devolution of authority and decentralisation imply original powers to regional and local authorities. This would strip a central government of effective powers. A combination of this proposed parliamentary structure with the proposed devolution of authority and decentralisation of power, would not only make parliament weak and toothless, but would also completely rob it of any power to carry out its developmental programmes at regional and local levels.

The Bill of Rights proposed by the NP is designed to protect minority interests, and existing privileges and rights. This is further buttressed by Judge Pierre Olivier's Bill of Rights which not only provides for freedom of association, but also freedom of disassociation for all individuals and 'groups'. The De Klerk/Viljoen proposals envisage a strong judiciary which will act to protect the Bill of Rights. But this judiciary will remain under white domination for decades to come, despite steps that might be taken by

a post-apartheid government to remove all racial restrictions on joining the judiciary.

Most disquieting of all is the fact that these proposals are being made in the midst of a concerted effort to privatise the economy, especially housing. It is in this context that the establishment of the Steyn Fund should be considered. With privatisation already taking place in the education and health sectors, it is quite feasible that a Bill of Rights which provides for the right of disassociation, could give 'groups' who control property, facilities and amenities, the right to exclude others.

The De Klerk/Viljoen proposals effectively offer:

- A weak parliament unable to effect transformation of any kind.
- The entrenchment of powerful economic privileges and other interests, and the maintenance of current white privileges.
- A constitution which institutionalises privatised apartheid and maintains existing inequalities.
- A judiciary to defend this arrangement.

Political implications

In plain political terms the De Klerk/Viljoen proposals are an attempt to secure and entrench white privileges while appearing to concede some power to the black communities.

This they hope to achieve by ensuring a future South Africa with a capitalist state in which class balances race in a system of checks and balances.

NP thinking has three distinct trends: local, economic and national. The local one is the most immediate for the party leadership because the concerns of whites about changes is most intensely focused on the very human question of what will happen to their schools, neighbourhoods and property values.

These concerns are reflected in the present government proposals for small, strong local government units, control-

ling their own schools, police and other municipal services. Whites would not simply run their own local affairs, but they would also command resources, from a wealthier tax base, that would enable them to maintain a separate and privileged way of life.

From race to class power

The fact that some members of other races might join whites in their privileged suburbs would not weaken the white position. Indeed the key to the NP's ideas, is that it wants to make the transition from racial to class power, or rather to produce a hybrid of the two. It is in this light that the opening up of the NP to all races should be judged along with its preference for the Swiss canton system as a constitutional model for a post-apartheid South Africa.

The Urban Foundation's scheme for improving slums and squatter camps in african areas seems to bolster this approach. The main aim is to encourage africans to accept their present lot and be satisfied with remaining in their present residential areas. One cannot help but suspect that this perpetuate the present unacceptable conditions for black people even beyond apartheid.

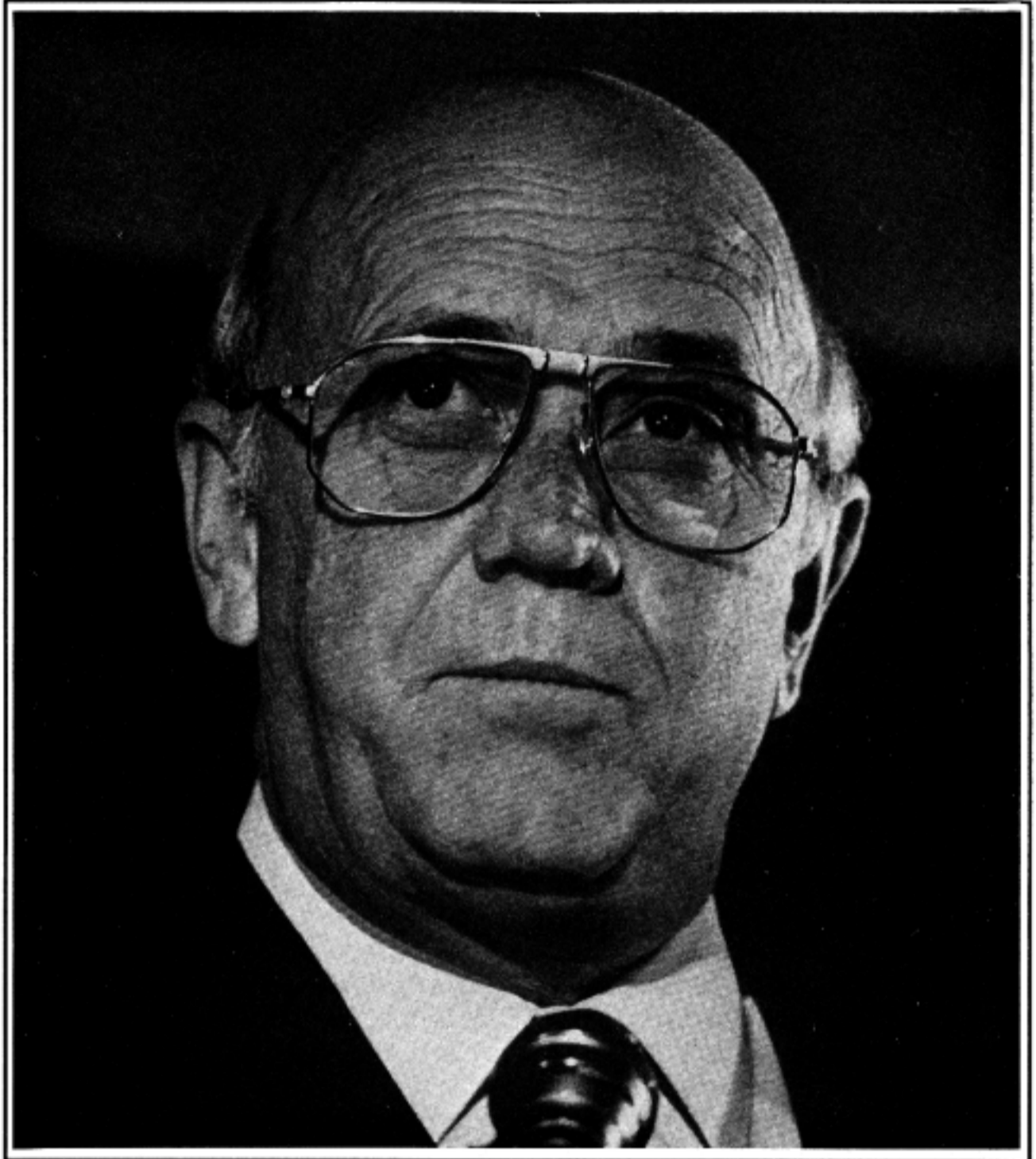
This approach, coupled with the defence of white economic power, seems to offer to black people, especially africans who live under the most appalling conditions, a raw deal. These principles also appear to be central in the local government options and models offered by the government. All these proposals are a sophisticated attempt to maintain white privileges in all but name. They fail completely to address the fundamental issues of the redistribution of wealth and resources.

The NP concept of regional government

So far the NP has not been forthcoming on its plans for regional government (usually the main level of government between central and local government, which may also act as a support for local government, particularly in rural areas).

In an address to the Administrators's Conference in Pietermaritzburg late last year, De Klerk called for a smaller, simpler, more streamlined and effective system of regional government.

Unfortunately, his address raised far more questions than answers. There were no concrete suggestions as to how a future regional government should be constituted in a unitary, non-racial and



FW DE KLERK: The De Klerk/Viljoen proposals effectively offer a weak parliament unable to effect transformation of any kind, and the entrenchment of powerful economic privileges and other interests

democratic South Africa.

Overall the NP regional government proposals placed a lot of emphasis on contrasting as a dilemma, a South African union versus a federation. But this is surely not the question we should be asking. Rather it should be what, in the context of a unitary democratic South Africa, are the issues that regional governments should be responding to.

De Klerk, rather abstractly, supported decentralisation. However, the issue is complicated. For instance, how do we deal with the unevenness of resources between areas, how do we distribute at the centre in order to deal with apartheid-created inequalities?

De Klerk's neither addressed the question of the capacity of regional government to effectively redistribute resources, nor did he indicate how the present civil service will be restructured.

Apartheid models of regional government, whether provincial or bantustan,

have always been fundamentally flawed and have always been based on very narrow definition of democracy and people's rights. De Klerk statement has been very silent on this.

Overall the NP has not said anything of substance about regional or national government. And we are still waiting for concrete proposals on local government. I think it is time we all begin to get away from platitudes and began to involve ourselves in a serious consultative democratic process leading to a unitary, non-sexist democratic South Africa.

The ANC's vision

The ANC proposes a unitary South Africa based on popular participation at all levels. In terms of this conception, there can be no original powers for regions and local authorities on major issues such as political power, land, economy, health education, housing policy etc. On all major issues powers exercised by regional and

local authorities would be derived powers. In its 1988 Constitutional guidelines the ANC emphasised the need vest sovereignty in the people 'as a whole', to be exercised through one central legislature, executive and administration.

At the same time the ANC recognises the importance of relating government powers and decision-making closer to the people. As such it proposes to delegate the powers of central authority to subordinate administrative units for more efficient administration and democratic participation.

The central government would have broad policy-making powers on all major issues like education, health, agriculture etc. but the execution of these would be vested in or shared with the regional administration. The central government would retain a supervisory role in monitoring the implementation of policy decisions by these 'subordinate' authorities. This would ensure uniformity of approach in the allocation of resources to taxation arrangements and to the overall management of the economy.

This would also facilitate the government's adoption of policies that will enhance national coordination and would help in developing industrial policies aimed at transforming imbalances between black and white people, between urban and rural areas and between regions (ANC/COSATU, *The Economy Beyond Apartheid*).

Despite this a very lively debate is raging within the ANC on the need for decentralisation. The need for relating governmental powers and decision-making closer to the people is recognised. There is a general feeling that central government must control issues of national policy and must ensure national standards. However, regional and local authorities must be given some leverage on issues of competing priority.

The following points have been raised in favour of setting up regional government:

- Political gains could be made through the efficient allocation and management of local government resources, knowledge and accountability.
- Power can be shared between levels of government as a means of maintaining popular consent to government.
- Regional government can be a way of ensuring that development problems are taken up.
- Regionalisation is a way of encouraging divergent paths towards industrialisation and modernisation, given the differ-



'A lively debate is raging within the ANC on the need for decentralisation. There is a general feeling that central government must control issues of national policy and ensure national standards. However, regional and local authorities must be given some leverage on issues of competing priority'

ent mixes of natural resources, worker skills, and market opportunities of different regions.

- Regional government could be given considerable more autonomy in shaping economic growth and modernisation.
- Regional government might be more responsive and sensitive to local needs and conditions.

Decentralisation

In the debate for and against decentralisation it has become clear that decentralisation can mean different things to different people. We suspect that in the NP's case for decentralisation, the aim is to weaken the central state and strengthen the logic of privatisation and the free market.

There is a need for some decentralisation, but it is not a simple solution. It is hoped that some form of decentralisation would encourage accountability to the people and sensitivity to local needs. Decentralisation is potentially more effi-

cient, and less bureaucratic. It offers local control and has the potential to be democratic.

At the same time decentralisation is open to exploitation by local elites who may act against the interests of the poor. Sectors of business may be more organised than popular organisations at the regional level - thrusting these organisations into a weaker position than they might be at national level. The way decentralisation works, and in whose interest, will depend partly on what decentralisation means in practice and on the strength of various groups at local level.

In opting for regions the following should be observed:

- An important criteria must be the existence of a community of interests within each region.
- Some economic equality between regions is desirable. In its absence some arrangements for the equalisation of poorer regions, preferably with a constitutional base and a philosophy to underpin those arrangements.
- Each level of government should have a revenue-raising capacity roughly comparable to its expenditure responsibilities - any redistribution arrangements must at least have constitutional recognition.

The present debate underlines the fact that stronger regional governments and larger local authorities would be able to conduct their affairs more efficiently. They would be better able to amass and manage local resources and provide better services than the central government, and thus be better able to fulfil an important objective of national policy. As such they would easily act as development agencies in the regions with an integrated structural and social plan.

There is a general consensus that the 'bantustans' should be discarded in favour of regional governments. If that should be the case there is a danger that any continued reliance on traditional white local authorities would subvert the central role of local democracy. For this reason the recently released ANC/Cosatu policy document *The Economy Beyond Apartheid* emphasises that 'state policies would include integration of towns and cities into metropolitan management structures and an end to separate black local authority "structures"'.

Minority rights

Local and regional government will operate under the general political arrangement of a written constitution with a Bill

of Rights which would entrench traditional civil rights. In addition cultural rights such as the right to language and education (including private education) can be invoked by individuals. This approach is based on the idea that no-one may be discriminated against on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender or social status.

In addition, there must be recognition that the cultural, social and economic diversity of South Africa requires the adoption of an electoral system at all levels (central, regional and local) which will enable sectoral groups and political tendencies to be adequately represented in decision-making.

A recent ANC workshop on electoral systems held in Stellenbosch recommended the study and possible adoption of proportional representation at all levels, as the best way to ensure adequate representation of all interests and political tendencies. It is also necessary to emphasise that there are different forms of devolution where central government powers are delegated without relinquishing sovereignty. Which one of these forms gets adopted will depend on the current political arrangements, as long as it is understood that the central government authority is maintained.

At this stage the debate on regional and local government has just begun. There is a need for a more extensive discussion on these issues. Technical questions of efficiency should be considered no less important than political questions. In order to entrench democracy into the future, the restructuring of regional and local government should be undertaken with a clear understanding of the social forces in existence.

Need for flexibility

The ANC consultative conference on local government held in Johannesburg last October, stressed the need for flexibility in future policy formulation. It suggested that there may be merit in setting up temporary regional and local structures for areas which are and will be undergoing major changes, to address the specific problems which arise in the transitional period. This should apply to the boundary districts of the bantustans after the Land Acts and the Group Areas Acts are scrapped, and to rapidly urbanising metropolitan areas.

The goals of this would be:

- To create the basis for the reunification of South Africa by incorporating the bantustans;
- to promote national reconciliation, es-



'The ANC's broad principles ... should be framed in a style which make them a useful instrument of socio-economic development and a lethal political weapon for the defence of the rights of the people'

establish the basis for a more just and equitable allocation of resources and rectify the legacy of apartheid;

- to foster economic growth, democratise government and empower communities;
- to develop efficient and effective structures for planning and catering for rapid urban growth, service delivery and support for smaller local authorities and rural areas.

The October conference stressed the need for regional government to facilitate and coordinate the process of restructuring local authorities. It also emphasised the need to set in motion a process to establish new forms of regional and local governments. It warned that such a process should not take place in abstract but should have a clear political direction aimed at empowering the people.

Need for regional government

In summary the ANC sees a definite need for some form of intermediate government between national and local government, but that such regional government should not detract from the creation of a unitary, democratic, non-racial South Africa. While we reject federalism and

decentralisation as a strategy to retain privilege, we see the need to create new forms of regional government which recognise and address the problems of apartheid settlement patterns and the current uneven development across the country.

The ANC believes that its constitutional vision for a post-apartheid South Africa should lay down broad principles of government and its structures and organs, and the fundamental rights and liberties of the people. It should be framed in a broad and flexible style which would make it a useful instrument of socio-economic development and a lethal political weapon for the defence of the rights of the people.

It should not only spell out the rights of the people and the responsibilities of the individual, but should also keep pace with the development of society and reflect the general demands and expectations of the citizenry, because constitutions should be regarded as living documents dealing with the real problems of our contemporary generation.

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Bophuthatswana: At the edge of time

FRANCINE DE CLERCQ
*assesses the political economy of
South Africa's most prosperous
independent bantustan, and
argues that the neglect of this
area by progressive
organisations is short-sighted.*

Since 2 February 1990, homeland politics has been anything but easy to follow. The majority of the homeland population and its leaders have shown themselves to be in favour of reincorporation into South Africa. Yet there remains a lot of uncertainty about the role that homeland leaders will play in the negotiation process, and the way in which fledging homeland institutions and administrations will be absorbed into a greater South Africa.

Rather than speculate on the fluid and transient nature of homeland politics, it seems more productive to gather an understanding of the political economy of homeland areas, and highlight the issues that will have to be taken into account in the reincorporation process.

This article looks at Bophuthatswana, the 'model' homeland which remains the only homeland to reject any form of reincorporation. What makes its president, Lucas Mangope, say repeatedly that 'Bophuthatswana will be an independent state one hundred years from now'? What are the political and economic forces at play? Why is the ANC and Cosatu virtually prevented from organising? What are the political prospects for the future?

Economic prosperity and corruption

The major strength of Mangope is the economic prosperity and apparent political stability of Bophuthatswana. Endowed with rich platinum resources and a financially successful tourist industry, the so-called Bop economy hasn't done badly since 1986, when the price of platinum went up. Its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew from R1 423m in 1986 to R2 400m in 1989. Thanks to platinum, Bop's internal financial situation also shows a healthy improvement. Since 1987 its revenue budget has grown at a steady pace to balance expenditure. Its 1989 budgeted revenue stands at R2 200m and its expenditure at R2 300m.

The fact that the government budget

nearly equals the GDP is rather abnormal by international standards, but must be seen as a reflection of how the government sector dominates the political and economic life of Bophuthatswana. However, Bop's dependence on South African financial assistance is still rather large (over half of the total expenditure). But if one regards customs and excise, and the transfer of income taxes from South Africa, as internal forms of revenue, the proportion of internally generated revenue rises to 70%.

This economic wealth hasn't, of course, benefitted people equally. With such a big concentration of economic and political power vested in the government, it is not surprising that most of this wealth has fallen into the laps of high ranking government officials and their advisers. In addition, mismanagement of funds and



• Lucas Mangope ... has adopted a more sophisticated stance.

financial corruption is known to have reached epic proportions among government officials. This not only worries Pretoria, but also constituted one of the main grievances of the 1988 coup rebels.

Several foreign advisers (like Shabtai Kalmanowitch) have fled Bop with millions of rands in their pockets; others have been dismissed from their jobs or tried in court for embezzling funds, while the rest still run scott free. Local government administrations have also been accused of enriching themselves by imposing imaginary taxes on residents.

Uneven trickle-down effect

Despite this appropriation of wealth by a few, a notable trickle-down has also reached other socio-economic groups who have, to a different extent, a vested interest in the status quo. In particular, generous profits have accrued to South African big businesses like Impala Platinum, Rustenburg Platinum and Sun International. Other smaller South African businesses and suppliers who invested in the few decentralized industrial growth areas (such as Babalegi, GaRankuwa, Mogwasi and Mmabatho) have taken handsome advantage of the favourable financial and labour conditions offered by the government.

The emerging black (african and indian) commercial class (especially those from the Mafikeng/ Mmabatho area) as well as the civil servants and bureaucrats of urbanised areas, have also grown thankful to the government for the more rewarding business and work opportunities. Bophuthatswana impresses residents and foreign visitors alike with its luxurious administrative infrastructure, which has become a source of envy for many African governments. Finally, there has been other substantial physical and social infrastructural developments in water, housing, health and education in some (but not all) areas of Bop.

Despite their uneven distribution, these material benefits go a long way in ex-

plaining the relatively quiet political situation that has prevailed in Bop since independence, in particular in the strategic administrative nerve centre of the capital region.

Of course, resentment and political grievances have also accumulated over the past 14 years. The bias of development policies in favour of a few urban areas; the conditions of worsening poverty and unemployment in the rural areas; the rather authoritarian and personal form of rule adopted by Mangope; the corruption of government officials and the harsh repressive controls of the population by local and regional authorities: all these constituted an ideal breeding ground for anti-government feelings and actions which the authorities never managed to defuse completely.

The employment situation is not comforting, partly because of the legacy of separate development, but also because Bop's economic growth is based on platinum revenue which is reinvested in unproductive white elephant-type activities, and not in an expansion of its productive capacity. As a result, unemployment is growing and probably running at well over a third of the economically active population.

Bop relies heavily on South Africa for migrant and commuter employment opportunities (about 65% of its labour force) and can only offer about 180 000 local employment opportunities: in the mines (more than 55 000), in the booming

construction, retail/catering and tourist industries, as well as in the fast growing public sector (50 000 employees including the parastatals). The latter is another indication of the dominance of the public sector and the unproductive character of the economy.

Repressive political climate

Despite the existence (in law rather than in practice) of a Bill of Rights, the political situation remains overtly and covertly repressive. Freedom of political expression and activity hardly exists, and the ruling Bophuthatswana Democratic Party enjoys complete hegemony in parliament. There have been various attempts at establishing alternative parties and associations, but they never managed to gain momentum because of the repressive security measures, and because activists have been unable to channel their opposition into permanent organisations.

The first serious challenge to Mangope's rule came with the short-lived 1988 coup, which left a festering wound on the side of the Bop government. It has still not managed to recoup its previous apparent strength. Since then, outbursts of opposition have occurred in the eastern regions of Odi/Moretele and Bafokeng/Mankwe where workers, youth and

community activists took to the streets and demanded Mangope's resignation and Bop reincorporation.

Resistance also spread to the rural areas in the southern regions, as well as in Lehurutse (where Braklaagte has been reincorporated). People in Braklaagte have fought against forced reincorporation and the imposition of unpopular chiefs. The capital area has remained rather calm (except for yearly university protests) because of its privileged position and its isolation from the more militant regions.

The government reacted rather nervously to this groundswell of opposition. It used its familiar weapons of detentions, harassment and victimization, and imposed a State of Emergency on 7 March 1990. Resistance continued but remained uncoordinated and rarely gave rise to permanent grassroots organisation.

Indeed, like many other homeland areas, Bop suffers from a lack of a tradition of democratic grassroots organisation. This is due to the repressive, top down authority structures in rural areas, as well as the fact that the South African extra-parliamentary movement (whether the ANC, Cosatu or civics) continuously shied away from mobilizing and organising South Africa's peripheral regions.

• Soldiers are arrested by the SADF after the abortive coup attempt in Bop in 1988



ANC and Cosatu organise...

In June/July 1990, the situation started to change with the setting up of several civic and youth organisations in the Odi Moretele area. In addition, the Anti-Bop Coordinating Committee coordinated the formation of 15 Bop ANC branches. Cosatu embarked on a campaign of disruptive action against the Bop government for prohibiting Bop workers from joining South Africa-based unions. In struggling for the standardisation of labour relations and laws, Cosatu wanted the abolition of the Bop State of Emergency and its Labour Relations Act.

The ANC, which is now the main opposition in Bop, continues to campaign to force the Bop government to conform to the spirit of the Groote Schuur and Pretoria minutes by lifting the State of Emergency and allowing complete freedom of political activity and association.

Bop started to feel under increasing pressure from its militant and more organised resident population, as well as from various South African political quarters (including Pik Botha) because it refused to be part of the South Africa political reform process. As a result, the Bop government has had to change its

tactics slightly. At the local level, Mangope continues to use the iron fist. He went as far as trumping up charges of an ANC plot to overthrow his government and assassinate him, to justify detaining more than 50 local ANC activists and obstructing the ANC's organisational drive in the region.

Mangope also embarked on a propaganda campaign against the ANC, which he describes as a 'Xhosa-dominated' organisation which is committed to the violent overthrow of his 'constitutional government'. He further warned that his 'peace-loving' Bophuthatswana citizens won't be intimidated nor distracted by foreign-based agitators and organisations (meaning the South African democratic movement) who indulge in 'illegal' activities in Bop.

...and Mangope polishes his image

However, at national level, Mangope has adopted a slightly more sophisticated stance. He uses the rhetoric of a reasonable national leader committed to negotiation and democracy. Since October, his government has held relatively inconclusive political talks with the South Africa government, the ANC and Inkatha. It has reasserted its political sovereignty and independence.

In March this year, under pressure, Mangope decided to polish his politically tolerant image and abolished the one-year old State of Emergency, and promised to amend its Internal Security Act (which, *inter alia*, obliges any group to apply for permission to hold public meetings). At face value, his announcement appear as a step towards liberalising political activities. However, a closer examination reveals that, as Mangope himself said, 'the Bophuthatswana government wants to remain the master of its own destiny'.

Political activities will be more tightly circumscribed than before: any political party or group will have to register under the Electoral Act, political participation will be confined to Bop citizens only and political changes in Bop will have to go through the Bop ballot box. The ANC-Bop branches have condemned this intensification 'of Verwoed-type political repression disguised in the sheep's clothing of Mangope's so-called Democratic Party', as it effectively bans from the political arena the many residents which do not recognise Bop citizenship.

Regional manoeuvres

The Bop government remains intran-

sigient about the negotiation talks. As an 'independent state', it wants to await the outcome of the negotiated constitutional arrangements in South Africa before considering future economic cooperation with a new non-racial government.

In the meanwhile, Mangope is investigating forms of regional socio-economic cooperation between Bop and the Western and Northern Transvaal, the Northern Cape and the South-Western Orange Free State, in order 'to join the constitutional debate with greater bargaining power'.

Mangope has also commissioned various studies to look into the implications of reincorporation along regional/federal lines which would protect and preserve his present administration. Many white parties from the CP to the DP support the idea of regional/federal government as a means to protect their 'minority interests', and prevent the development of a strong black-dominated centralised government. This is to be distinguished from the idea of a decentralised unitary state coming from within the liberation movement. (see previous article, p 14).

Apart from challenging Bop's sovereignty, the idea of reincorporation poses problems for many Bop interest groups.

For example, on the issue of regional development, Bop strongly disagreed with the recommendations of a panel of experts of the evaluation of the 1982 Regional Industrial Development Programme (RIDP). It rejects the restructuring of the industrial incentive package along more market-related lines, as it (rightly) fears that this will result in the deproclamation of a few Bop industrial growth centres that are judged economically unviable by the report.

Bop has also complained that the report ignores the existing political problems of regional cooperation, and undermines its political sovereignty by not treating Bop as an equal political partner.

Other economic groups worried about the prospects of a new regional political and economic dispensation, include the overinflated bureaucracy and the many South African, Taiwanese and Israeli companies, which depend for their survival on the generous incentives and the favourable political and labour conditions of Bop.

The more productive and profitable companies don't feel as threatened as they know they can survive a post-Bop era. These companies have already shown that when caught between the demands of a rigid Bop government and a Cosatu

threat of industrial instability, they decided to disregard the Bop government and respect the Cosatu stayaway. Other major companies operating in Bop (like Impala and Rustenburg Platinum, Sun International, AECI) are also busy repositioning themselves more favourably towards the new South Africa by talking to the ANC and the South Africa government about political changes.

The South African government remains ambivalent about Bop. While the Bop government has been useful in keeping the opposition movement at bay and in maintaining an appearance of political and economic stability, it has also become a thorn in Pretoria's flesh by being involved in large-scale financial mismanagement and by adopting an inflexible attitude towards the constitutional talks.

ANC on the defensive

The ANC appears to have gone on the defensive in Bop: not only is it slowing down its campaign against 'hostile' homeland leaders and their structures, but it is also neglecting the popular mobilisation of the people in these areas (even though it has recently said that it was the people of these areas, and not the homeland leaders that matter in deciding the future of homeland areas).

The ANC seems to feel that these homeland areas don't offer a politically important constituency, or that the ANC is organisationally and politically overstretched that homeland issues will be resolved at the negotiation table.

But isn't this a shortsighted tactic? Won't the ANC's poor organisational presence in homeland areas weigh heavily when the struggle enters the stage of electoral politics?

Given this balance of forces, one can only wonder how much longer Mangope is going to last before South Africa puts the final squeeze to get him or a successor to admit the inevitability of reincorporation. The pressures to retain some form of regional government are there and should not be overlooked. But one thing is certain: no future regional or local authority will have as much power and autonomy as these apartheid structures, and Mangope in particular, did.

It remains to be seen to what extent the negotiations process will cater for the needs of this rather unorganised and badly neglected homeland population.

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Open Schools: Reform or Transformation



NAZIR CARRIM and YUSUF SAYED of the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) critically examine the 'opening' of white schools to all school students and argue that, while the government proposals are highly inadequate, the space opened up by the proposals can be used creatively in the struggle for a single non-racial education system

Since the announcement by the Minister of Education, Piet Clase, in August 1990 of the 'opening' of white schools to all South Africans, the issue of 'open schools' has attracted intense public concern and debate in the media, school staffrooms and parent-school meetings. For some the 'opening' of white schools has created a meaningful space, while others view it as a non-issue. Schools that adopt an 'open' admissions policy offer better facilities and better qualified teachers to black parents whose children are being taught under appalling conditions.

For these parents the 'opening' of white schools is a way out of years of oppressive schooling for their children. For others, there is no way out. It is also the first opportunity for many white teachers and students to encounter black people as equal counterparts. In the wake of this 'open' schools issue, there has been very

little debate within the progressive educational movement about whether black parents should be sending their children to 'open' schools, or how to understand the issue.

Clase's proposals should be rejected

If the progressive education movement is to formulate a response to Clase's proposals, the issue of 'open' schools needs to be placed in the context of the crisis in education and the crisis throughout South African society.

Prior to the Clase proposals, 'open' schools referred to those schools that had an 'open' admissions policy and which were private and/or independent of the state. This status they were able to enjoy through years of struggle against the state (see Christie, P, 1989 and 1991). However, these 'open' schools were peripheralised from the mainstream of South African education, both black and white,

since they catered for a minority of students. The issue of 'open' schools was then clearly not an issue of public debate, and neither was it general educational policy.

The Clase proposals are significant because Clase's three-model proposal to white schools created the space for the issue of 'open' schools to be publicly debated (There has, incidentally, also been an almost silent 'opening' of schools in 'indian' and 'coloured' schools since 1985, which has been boosted by the Clase proposals).

However, the proposals fail to go far enough both at the level of public debate and of policy. Because Clase's proposals reflect the reluctant reformism of the apartheid state and fail to seriously address, let alone resolve, the current educational crisis, they should be rejected.

Nevertheless, they do afford the progressive educational movement the space to meaningfully intervene in the white schooling process, and provides the opportunity to further the struggle for a single, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic education department. The 'open' schools issue calls for critique, protest and transformation, in keeping with the current overall political climate of the nation.

The Education Crisis

There is no doubt that the crisis in South African education is a direct result of the apartheid system. The historical inequalities black South Africans have suffered because of apartheid have seriously affected their education. There is no need to recount here the specific details of the damages and inequalities caused by apartheid education, save to say that black education is marked by high teacher-pupil ratios, low teacher qualifications, overcrowded conditions, inadequate facilities, shortage of textbooks, high failure and drop-out rates and insufficient schools.

Of course, this is in the context of those black South Africans who have had some schooling. The reality for many black South Africans has been a protracted disruption of normal schooling, to the point of no schooling at all. White education, on the other hand, has been historically characterised by better facilities, better provisions and better teacher qualifications.

Recently, however, white education has also increasingly become characterised by a considerable decline in pupil numbers, wastage of facilities and build-

ings, and the closure of white schools.

Clase's proposals emerge out of this context. Clase responds not to the chronic and massive education crisis but primarily to the dwindling numbers at white schools and the threat of their closure. Clase reasons that in order to save this situation, one has to somehow allow these white schools to enroll an 'x' amount of black pupils. This would save the school from closing down by providing it with the requisite number of pupils to keep it going. Furthermore, Clase hoped that the proposals would be interpreted as a positive step towards removing racial discrimination in education and be seen as being in keeping with the spirit of De Klerk's reforms.

Pandering to white racists

Pandering to white racists, Clase also reasoned that enrolling black pupils into white schools needed to be done under certain conditions; conditions that placate white fears of being 'swamped' and ensure that they do not lose their privileges and position of domination. As such, Clase has been able to make provision within the existing apartheid constitution, without enacting any changes in laws controlling education. At the same time he has managed to keep white education, in the main, still separate from black education.

Clase's proposals are more telling in their silences than their utterances. At best they are an attempt at reform, at worst they are administrative changes aimed at excluding the possibility of a single education department being established and ensuring that most of apartheid education remains unchanged.

Clase's proposals do not:

- challenge the foundations of apartheid education;
- address the black education crisis at all;
- respond to the demand for a single education department;
- respond to the demand for a 'people's education';
- respond to the backlogs caused by apartheid education even for those white schools that do go open;
- problematise the nature of white education itself.

Clase's proposals offer white parents the opportunity to decide whether the schools should go 'open'. Thus the future of the white school is left to the white community only. The voting procedures that Clase set out in his provisions in the event of a particular school opting to go 'open' are absurd. An 80% poll, and a

72% majority, is required. By only allowing whites to vote, Clase further disenfranchises the already disenfranchised.

White parents have the right to vote for one of three models offered by Clase. **Model A** allows the school to close down as a state school and to reopen as a private school. **Model B** allows the school to remain as a state school but with an 'open' admissions policy. **Model C** allows the school to be a state-aided semi-private school.

All of these models are subject to the same conditions:

- all schools must maintain a 51% white majority in its population;
- the christian, national cultural ethos of the school should be kept intact;
- the management of the school is to determine the selection procedures;
- no school is necessarily bound to consider curriculum changes;
- the 'opening' of schools does not necessarily mean the employment of black teachers on the staff of those schools which do 'open';
- the financing of black pupils at these white 'open' schools is the responsibility of the black parent and pupil.

The Wider South African Crisis

Since February 2, 1990 the political scenario of South Africa dramatically changed, enacting a necessary shift from the politics of protest to the politics of transformation. Whilst this is the shift that takes place from the side of the people, the state shifts from outright repression to reformism. The difference in shifts is crucial, since it embodies the difference between transformation and reformism.

Reformism refers to the strategy of the apartheid state to incorporate the black population into government without fundamentally restructuring the system as a whole. It also is an overt acknowledgement that the state can no longer continue to stifle the demands of the black population through force and brutality.

Transformation, refers to a position that argues for a restructuring of the apartheid system itself, particularly with regard to the legacies of oppression, racism, sexism and exploitation. It regards an accommodation within the apartheid system as fundamentally inadequate primarily because historical inequalities are not effectively redressed.

Among the responses of the state in this context, has been the drive to place provision of social services on the doorsteps of local communities. This is verified with regard to recreational facilities,



health services and now also education. Another response has been to allow for privatisation. This is evident in sectors of the economy, health services, housing, recreational facilities and now also education. In putting the responsibility of white education at the doorsteps of the white community itself, along with privatisation, Clase's proposals are in keeping with these processes.

Privileged education

The Clase proposals simply amount to this: if you want education, and a non-racial education at that, you have to pay for it. Black parents, already seriously disadvantaged, are now burdened with the responsibility of financing their children at 'open' schools. This severely limits

• A protest against the opening of schools in Vereeniging last year

the number of black people able to attend these 'open' schools.

More fundamentally, Clase projects education as a privilege and not as a right. As a result only the privileged benefit. This is typically symptomatic of privatisation.

Strangely enough, this would be the case for all of the Clase models. Thus even if a school votes for Model B, the effect on a black pupil that is admitted to a Model B school would still be the same as if that pupil had gone to a private school anyway. (There is already an emerging pattern of black private school

pupils moving into these 'open' white state schools. For the black pupils these white state schools are cheaper options. For the white state schools, these black pupils from private schools tend to meet the 'standards' requirements of selection criteria and suit the schools perfectly).

The Clase proposals set in place the move towards privatisation in education, thus widening the already existing divisions in South African society.

In keeping with the state trends of deregulation and decentralisation, the Clase proposals' insistence on the school communities taking on the responsibility of the future of their schools, denationalises education and rids the state of most of their responsibility - as they have done in the economy, housing, on regional and local council levels, and in health services.

However, the community's involvement in the affairs of the school is also a feature of 'people's education'. Is this possibly one of the progressive elements of Clase's proposals? Before exploring this question, and the possibilities for progressive action that Clase's proposals open up, we need to consider the following:

- The schools that have voted to open have very few vacancies. Furthermore the number of vacancies in white schools, which the state estimates at 300 000, are too few to accommodate the number of black students who have no access to schooling, further highlighting the reformist nature of the proposals. At present, it is estimated that there are about three million black students who have no access to schooling.
- White communities are caught in a Catch 22 situation. If white schools do not vote to 'open', they will be forced to close down because of the lack of requisite pupil numbers. If they vote to 'open', they will have to substantially increase black student enrolment to justify their continued existence. Yet, they are unable to do this because they have to maintain a 51% white majority in their schools.
- White schools in the rural areas have not as yet voted. Rural areas in particular are the areas where the most marginalised and vulnerable sectors of the population are.

Possibilities offered by the Clase proposals

For the first time in South African educational history white state schools are going to experience the presence of black pupils. White state schools will also have to

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consider black South Africans as part of their constituency.

In opting to 'open', white schools are having to face the educational effects of apartheid on South African education. This is manifest in white schools' anxiety around the issues of 'standards', English as a second language, different cultural backgrounds of pupils, age in pupils, lack of exposure to the conceptual schemes of a particular subject discipline and the nature of teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil relations.

This affords the progressive education movement the opportunity to intervene in this experience and share with these schools the lessons they have learnt (there already is a growing demand from teachers for teacher workshops that will look at such issues). Such contact has tremendous political and other potential, and if co-ordinated well enough, can aid in involving these schools in the demand for a single education department.

In 'opening', white pupils will have the opportunity to make contact with black student movements and to benefit from the lessons they have learnt. This opens the way for conscientising white pupils as to the nature of the South African reality.

On a general level, white schools can now be pressured to become part of na-

tional campaigns to demand a single school calendar, a single education department, etc. Schools that have gone 'open' may also be pressured to reject the conditions of the Clase models. Black parents on school management committees can use this position to move school communities to changes not only in school affairs but also around national concerns.

Dangers

These possibilities must be seen in the context of the minimal numbers of black students who have been admitted to white schools. While no accurate figures are available, an estimated 5 000 students have been admitted to white schools nationally. The number of black pupils at most schools is, therefore, insignificant.

The danger exists that, instead of changing the school, black pupils will be changed by the school. Students and parents may be incorporated into the values and cultural ethos of the white schools, and become alienated from their own communities. This is more reason for the progressive education movement to intervene in this process.

The Clase proposals are also part of the continuing process of closing down white schools and/or selling facilities to the private sector. As part of a strategy around

the 'open' schools issue, the progressive education movement needs to seriously consider opposing these moves. It needs to demand that these facilities be made available for black schooling.

The 'open' schools issue demands that the progressive education movement formulates a coherent vision of what it considers 'open' schools to be. In this regard, it must move from the politics of protest to the politics of transformation, by beginning to define how the 'open' schools issues can contribute to the struggle for a single non-racial education system, without demobilising the mass-based educational organisations.

This struggle needs to be considered as part of the process of fundamentally restructuring the education system. The task is urgent if we are not to lose the space the Clase proposals have opened.

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• Nazir Carrim is a member of the Southern Transvaal region of the NECC and Yusuf Sayed is an executive member of the Western Cape region of the NECC. This article is a discussion document that emanated from and is endorsed by both regions. •

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Is the SACP travelling in the right direction?

A response to Kitson and Habib

The SACP's JEREMY CRONIN criticises 'dogmatic fundamentalism', and argues that the party's ditching of the concept of 'proletarian dictatorship' is not a rightward lurch into electoralist 'Eurocommunism', but a leftward move away from statist conceptions of workers' power, towards a perspective which seeks to empower the working class in all spheres of civil society

For the past three years, at least, the SACP has been grappling with the crisis and subsequent collapse of socialism in most of eastern Europe. What has gone wrong? What are the implications for us, a party with long historical ties to the Soviet Union? And what are the lessons for the struggle for socialism in our country?

This effort at theoretical assessment and self-criticism has provoked several critiques in the past weeks. They include 'Is the SACP really communist?' by Dave Kitson (*WIP* 73) and 'The SACP's restructuring of Communist theory; a shift to the right', by Adam Habib (*Transformation* 14, 1991)

I believe it is useful to look critically at both articles. Kitson's article provides us

with an excellent example of exactly how we should not face up to the present situation. Habib presents an altogether more coherent argument. In confronting his article one is challenged, I think usefully, to spell out more substantially the reason for the SACP's dropping of the concept of 'the dictatorship of the proletariat'.

Dogmatism

'Is the SACP really communist?', asks Dave Kitson, a former party member and political prisoner. Kitson begins by outlining a set of five basic marxist-leninist principles: 'that society ultimately has an economic basis. The history of society is the history of class struggles. The Communist Party should lead and serve the

working class in the capitalist epoch. The aim is socialism. Socialism is a period of transition between capitalism and communism.' (p27).

I have no basic problems whatsoever with this fundamental summary of core marxist principles. Unfortunately Kitson proves incapable of sustaining a coherent argument. Having outlined these principles, one expects him to assess whether the SACP stands by these, both in theory and practice, **in the concrete conditions of South Africa of the 1990s.**

Instead he hares off after a pet personal fixation, Joe Slovo. Kitson skim reads one pamphlet (Slovo's *Has Socialism Failed*), which expressly calls itself a **discussion paper** and which expressly underlines that it is not official SACP policy. And on the basis of a totally distorted reading of this one pamphlet Kitson comes to the 'scientific' conclusion that the SACP is no longer communist!

Nowhere does Kitson consider the actual practice and specific programme of action of the SACP and its allies in the present conjuncture here in South Africa. Nor does Kitson ever attempt even a basic analysis of this concrete South African situation. He simply considers one text and measures it up against another 'Text', 'The Classics', which he assumes to be some monolithic, more or less fixed entity.

For him marxism-leninism has merely to be **applied** more or less mechanically. And applications will either be orthodox or deviant. This conception of marxism is dogmatic, metaphysical, unscientific and, finally, anti-marxist. Kitson is thoroughly abstract. But the truth, Lenin (following Plekhanov following Hegel) was fond of saying, 'is always concrete'.

Kitson's quibbles

But what is it that Kitson finds un-communist about Joe Slovo's pamphlet? Kitson has six quibbles:

- Quibble 1: Slovo quotes Rosa Luxemburg;
- Quibble 2: The SACP's 1989 programme is entitled *The Path to Power*, and therefore omits the word 'freedom' from its title;
- Quibble 3: Slovo 'complains' that there is not enough in the classical marxist texts about the socialist transition period. (In fact, Slovo does not 'complain', he simply notes this as a fact and as one underlying reason why the classics cannot be elevated into a blue-print, as stalinism and other brands of dogmatism have on occasions attempted);

- Quibble 4: Slovo attacks the concept of 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' - I will come to this later;

- Quibble 5: Slovo says that Lenin believed capitalism was about to collapse in the immediate post-October 1917 period. (The quotations from Lenin that Kitson produces to the contrary are dated 1915, 1921 and 1922. They do not come from the crucial 1917-19 period.);

- Quibble 6: Slovo says Lenin did not address '...in any detail the nature of established socialist civil society'. (Correct. All Kitson can offer to the contrary is a brief quotation from *State and Revolution*, and what he imagines to be the oh-so-daring call to arm the workers. I will also come back to some of this in a moment.)

It is easy enough to reply in detail to each of these points, but I don't think it would serve much purpose. If we are to extract anything useful from Kitson's article, then I suggest we should use it as an example of how not to argue as a marxist. Let us look at his quibble number one (the sin of quoting Rosa Luxemburg).

Kitson actually spends more time arguing what a heresy it is to quote Luxemburg, than he does in examining the particular quotation in its own right, and in examining the context in which it is used in Slovo's *Has Socialism Failed?*.

This is dogmatism carried to its silliest limits. If one wanted to reply in kind, one could remark that, no sooner has Kitson attacked Slovo for quoting the **revolutionary martyr** Luxemburg, than he, Kitson, is quoting the right-wing historian, Lord Acton! That's okay, presumably because you won't find any negative references to Acton in Lenin's *Collected Works*! But all of this hardly lifts the argument out of the play-pen into which Kitson has taken it.

Luxemburg's concept of freedom

Let us look at the Luxemburg quotation as it stands in *Has Socialism Failed?* :

'Freedom only for the supporters of the government, only for the members of one party - however numerous they may be - is not freedom at all. Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently ... its effectiveness vanishes when "freedom" becomes a special privilege.'

Against this Kitson argues that 'it lacks a class attitude, implying that freedom to differ should be applied to everybody, including those who think differently because of their class'.

Maybe, but this is very far from prov-

ing that Slovo, let alone the SACP, have abandoned their class approach. In the first place, Kitson has not bothered to read what Slovo says immediately after quoting Luxemburg:

'These words may not have been appropriate as policy (which is what Luxemburg argued for) in the special conditions of the phase immediately after the seizure of state power in October 1917. **Without a limitation on democracy there was no way the revolution could have defended itself in the civil war and the direct intervention by the whole of the capitalist world.**' (*Has Socialism Failed?* p14 - JS's emphasis).

In other words, Slovo absolutely anchors the quotation in the context of class struggle. Slovo adds: 'But Luxemburg's concept of freedom is surely incontrovertible once a society [obviously a socialist society - JC] has achieved stability.'

Well, here I too would quibble with Slovo. I am not sure that Luxemburg's polemical remarks can remotely be described as a full blown and adequate concept of freedom. Luxemburg here seems to assume rather too much the valid but extremely limited, liberal idea of freedom as absence of restraint. I would prefer to see freedom understood much more as **empowerment** of the people. This is a point made in the SACP's programme, and it is a point that Slovo himself has made often enough.

Marxism is not monolithic

But I am wandering from my prime purpose, which is to illustrate what scientific socialism is **not**. Kitson is so excited to have discovered an 'heretical' quote, evidence of an anti-body (Luxemburg), in Slovo's pamphlet that he is quite incapable of understanding the point Slovo is making. This is dogmatism at its purest.

Marxism, like any science, is not a monolithic and closed dogma simply awaiting application. It is a body of theory, yes, but one which needs constantly to be tried out in practice, developed and revised. Of course, there are boundaries beyond which it would be meaningless to continue calling revisions and developments marxist or leninist. These broad boundaries are roughly the boundaries of the five basic principles outlined (but quickly forgotten) by Kitson himself.

Nor is marxism-leninism reducible to personalities. Propositions are not automatically true because Lenin (or false because Luxemburg) uttered them. Marxism-leninism is a body of scientific the-

ory. It is no more the sum of everything ever written by two or three historical individuals (Marx, Engels, Lenin), than the science of physics is everything ever written (and on any topic whatsoever) by Newton and Einstein.

This is not to say that Marx, Engels and Lenin did not make the most outstanding contribution to our understanding of history and class struggle. But not everything they said was complete, true, or necessarily in conformity with other things they said and wrote at other times.

Habib

Unfortunately, I do not have the space to deal in detail with many of the misunderstandings and false attributions made by Habib (a member of the Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action (Wosa)).

The essence of Habib's intervention is that, while the SACP has moved in the direction of greater democracy, tolerance of other left opinions and openness (all of which he welcomes), it has not decisively broken **strategically** with stalinism. Habib identifies our whole strategic approach (the national democratic revolution as the most direct road towards socialism in South Africa), as deeply stalinist in character.

The communist call for national democratic alliances in a whole range of countries (he mentions China in the 1920s, Spain in the 1930s, Cuba in the 1950s, and Nicaragua in the 1970s) was, in his view, a strategic perspective serving the narrow national interests of the Soviet Union. It was a strategic perspective forced upon various communist parties, so as not to rock the international boat, thereby safeguarding the building of socialism in one country.

Because the SACP has failed to break strategically from its 'stalinism', argues Habib, our present theoretical and strategic revisions represent a move rightwards, both politically (into 'Eurocommunism' - 'pursuing the parliamentary path to socialism'), and economically (we are supposed to be applying Gorbachev's somewhat *ad hoc* perestroika policies to South Africa!).

In all of this Habib is profoundly wrong.

Flawed international perspective

In the first place his international perspective is deeply flawed. Communist commitment to national democratic revolutions in many countries did not result simply in a series of betrayals of the socialist revolution, or in missings of the boat. What about Vietnam, an example



Throughout the two-year guerilla struggle in Cuba, Fidel Castro argued that the revolution should be neither communist nor capitalist

he chooses to ignore?

Or what about the Cuban Fidelista revolution of 1959? It certainly does not confirm the point he wants it to make.

'In 1959, when Fidel Castro led the Cuban Revolution, the official Communist Party, under the strict instructions of Moscow, opposed him', Habib tells us (note 9, p80). The implication is that the Cuban communists were so committed to the national democratic stage of struggle that they missed the real socialist revolution.

It is true that, in the course of the two year guerrilla struggle led by Castro's 26 July Movement, the Communist Party (the Partido Socialista Popular, as it was then called) was at best equivocal. But this partial failure by the PSP was a failure to recognise the real national democratic revolution going on in front of its nose. The 26 July Movement was a patriotic front embracing a diversity of forces - both ideologically and in its social composition. At the time, its leader Fidel Castro argued that the revolution should be 'neither communist nor capitalist'. In 1958 he said:

'Let me say for the record that we have no plans for the expropriation or nationalisation of foreign investments... I per-

sonally have come to feel that nationalisation is, at best, a cumbersome instrument..wholesale nationalisation would obviously hamper the principal point of our economic platform - industrialisation at the fastest possible rate.' (R Scheer and MZeitlin, *Cuba, an American tragedy*, p63).

Castro's perspectives at the time were patriotic, anti-neocolonialist. And the Cuban communists tended to criticise Castro's guerrilla struggle from an abstract left position.

What practical tasks?

Shifting closer to home, and directly related to his dismissal of the national democratic struggle, the crucial weakness in Habib's position is that he is unable to offer us any practical revolutionary tasks in the present.

Habib certainly recognises the long haul character of building socialism once there is a working class state. Socialism is 'a process characterised by revolutionary reforms that gradually lead to social control over the economy' (p75). That is, building socialism is a **process**, it has steps and stages.

But between now and the workers' state Habib is incapable of envisaging a concrete **process**, that is other steps, or stages, or phases. This means that he is unable to develop any substantial practical revolutionary strategy and tactics.

Instead, Habib relies on a big bang view of the socialist revolution: 'Workers will often act in unison with their class enemies against their long-term class interests. But this is not to suggest that the hegemony of the ruling class can never be threatened. At precise moments in history, **objective conditions** weaken the ideological, political and economic hegemony of the ruling class **and compel** the proletariat to engage in the struggle for state power. But these moments, known as "revolutionary crises", never last long.' (p73) (my emphases).

I certainly agree that, partly as a result of objective conditions, there can be a revolutionary moment, a massive accumulation of contradictions that opens up possibilities for the revolutionary seizure of power.

But Habib gives us no sense of building towards these moments, or of deepening, in active struggle, the crisis of the bourgeoisie. Instead, his perspective can only result in passivity, relying on the spontaneism of 'the moment'. At best (though Habib does not spell this out) all we need is a small vanguard that keeps

itself pure and poised, unsullied with involvements in present phases of struggle, or with popular fronts or alliances. There is no need to worry about present smallness or ineffectivity, after all history will eventually 'compel' the working class to wage our kind of struggle.

The crucial missing link is Habib's inability to grasp the perspectives of popular power.

The parliamentary road - or people's power?

It is true that the SACP has in recent years committed itself in principle to a multi-party democracy. And it is also true that if there are elections for a democratic Constituent Assembly or a new non-racial National Assembly in the coming years, the party will almost certainly contest these elections - either independently or in some kind of electoral pact with our allies.

But is this the same as pursuing a 'parliamentary path' to socialism? Habib (quoting Mandel) accurately portrays some (and I could add quite a few more) flaws in a narrow parliamentary approach in a capitalist society (p73): the state with its repressive and bureaucratic apparatuses is never neutral, the entire economic climate is permeated by capitalism, the bourgeoisie owns and controls the commanding heights of the media, etc. These objections to a strategy narrowly focussed on winning socialism through parliamentary elections come neither as news, nor as something with which I disagree.

These are arguments against a single-track, narrow electoral approach. A socialist parliament all on its own, surrounded by a capitalist economy, reactionary armed forces and the old bureaucracy, and by a host of anti-worker ideological institutions, is a parliament that is not going to last long.

It is precisely for this reason that long before workers' state power (whether the breakthrough is made in elections or in insurrection) wider struggles for popular hegemony and empowerment are absolutely essential. These struggles need to be waged in all the trenches of civil society - schools, townships, the work-place, on the land, and in the media. These are struggles that need to build the organs of popular power - self-defence units, township committees, work-place structures, village committees, etc.

It is true that working class state power will, in principle, create the conditions under which these popular organs and struggles will be able to flourish. But the



As we build a mass-based ANC and a relatively large SACP, are we trying to build electoral machines which treat their members as voting fodder? Are we preparing ourselves for bureaucratic power, getting our policy blue-prints and pin-stripe suits all ready?

converse is also absolutely true.

This approach, and it is a practical approach that speaks directly into the struggles on the ground in our country, is foreign to Habib. In fact, he completely misunderstands an SACP spokesperson interviewed in *WIP* 60 who says the 'parliamentary road can never be separated from extra-parliamentary struggle'. Habib doesn't even notice the reference to extra-parliamentary struggle, and takes this as evidence that the SACP is pursuing the 'parliamentary road'.

But popular mass struggles, popular power, popular hegemony (that is, intense mass struggle) can create the conditions in which parliamentary elections (or, for that matter, an insurrection) can become a real turning point, and in which parliamentary (or insurrectionary) gains can actually be defended.

Habib cites the Chilean experience in the 1970s several times as proof of the impossibility of the 'parliamentary road'. Chile is no more an argument against socialists contesting elections, than the crushing of the Paris Commune of 1879 is a proof of the futility of insurrection.

The dictatorship of the proletariat

For Kitson the move away from the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat

in Slovo's pamphlet and in the SACP's 1989 programme is purely cosmetic and opportunistic: 'It (the concept) is not mentioned in the new party programme, *The Path to Power*, although the need for workers' power to establish socialism is. This is like wearing a transparent figleaf.'

But it is precisely because workers' power and the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' are NOT synonymous that the SACP at its 7th Congress in 1989 dropped the concept from its programme.

Nor is Habib's explanation of the SACP's shift on this matter valid. It is not a shift rightwards into a narrow parliamentary road. In fact, the SACP's dropping of the concept 'dictatorship of the proletariat' is a shift leftwards. It is a shift away from a narrow, statist and bureaucratic conception of working class power. It is precisely this narrow statism which, it seems to me, is at the core of the stalinist deviation.

It is crucial that we understand this, not for narrow polemical purposes, not so that we can turn the tables on Habib and accuse him of failing to wean himself adequately of stalinism. We need to break away from a narrow statism in order to address one of the most crucial challenges of the present.

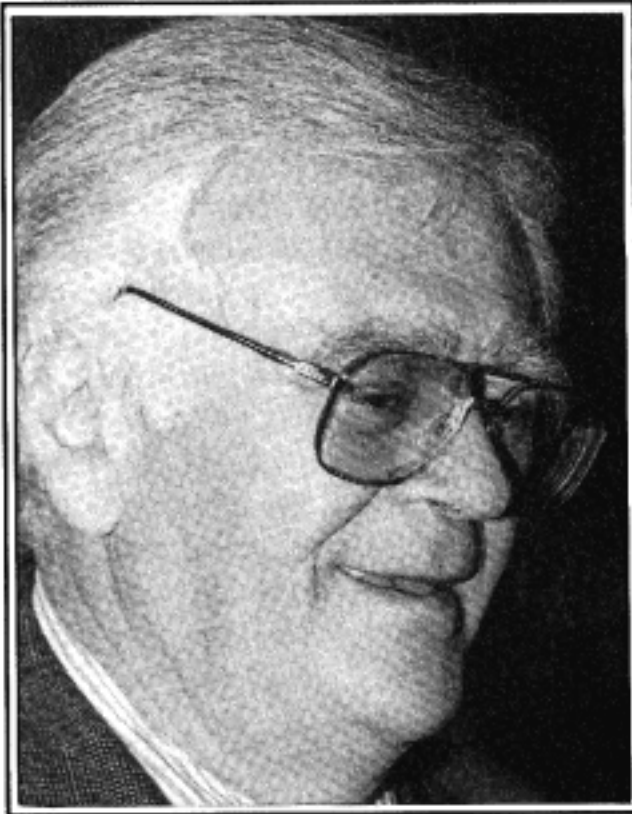
As we build a mass-based ANC and a relatively large SACP, are we trying to build electoral machines which treat their members as voting fodder?

Are we trying to do no more than prepare ourselves for bureaucratic power, getting our policy blue-prints and pin-stripe suits all ready? And what do we mean by trade union independence? Do we mean that organised workers should stay aloof from the wider struggles for political power, leaving these to the middle strata, to the next generation of anti-worker bureaucrats?

Or are we, rather, not trying to build mass formations, capable of mobilising millions of people in active struggle to defeat the present regime? Are we also not trying to build for the future, mass formations that are able to deepen and defend the longer-term process of national democratic transformation? And should they deepen and defend this process, not just from positions within the state, but from all the trenches of civil society? And, finally, is this not the most direct road to a democratic socialist South Africa?

Neither dogmatic fundamentalism, nor a passive waiting for the 'revolutionary moment' help us to answer these, the real questions of the day. •

Leninist fantasies and SACP illusions: A response to Kitson and Slovo



JONNY STEINBERG argues that marxism-leninism, because it theoretically determines the 'will' of the masses, is fundamentally opposed to the SACP's commitment to multi-party democracy.

In the last issue of *WIP*, Dave Kitson severely criticised the SACP for its deviation from the principles of marxism-leninism. He argued that the parliamentary democracy which the party advocates, 'the superstructure on the base of a capitalist society, ... will not avoid the inexorable crises which are endemic to capitalism...' (*WIP* 73, p28). Parliamentary democracy, argues Kitson, must be abandoned for the classical marxist notion of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the only conceivable 'superstructure' under which socialism can operate.

I would be the first to agree that, despite its pronouncements to the contrary, the SACP has abandoned the cornerstones of leninism. Its principled allegiance to multi-party democracy, to political pluralism, to the various 'bourgeois democratic' forms so scathingly rejected by Lenin, place the SACP's socialist programme in a conceptual and theoretical contradiction to the model of revolution generated by classical marxism.

Flawed critique of capitalism

Yet, unlike Kitson, I greet the party's affirmation of so-called 'bourgeois democratic forms' with a sigh of relief. The post-capitalist political forms advocated by Lenin are rooted in a fundamentally flawed theory of capitalism, a theory which, if it is used as a guide to social transformation, will place South Africa dangerously close to reproducing the stalinist legacy.

Kitson reprimands Slovo for complaining that 'there was not enough in classical Marxist theory about the transition period to provide a detailed guide to the future' (Slovo, *Has Socialism Failed?*, cited in Kitson p28). Kitson is at pains to illustrate that neither Marx nor Lenin predicted the future. What Marx did do, he continues, was to uncover a 'scientific' critique of the capitalist mode of production, a critique accurate enough to outline the only conditions of possibility for the destruc-

tion of capitalism and the birth of a socialist order.

Here again I must wholeheartedly agree with Kitson. Every line and concept of Lenin's 'The State and Revolution' (the only text in which Lenin coherently spelt out his theory of revolution and of post-revolutionary society) draws its inspiration from Marx's critique of the capitalist mode of production. If one has gripes with the classical marxian concept of proletarian revolution, it would be nonsensical to point to insufficient writings on the subject, as Slovo does. Rather, one should look to the conceptual basis upon which the notion of proletarian revolution and proletarian dictatorship arose; namely, the marxist-leninist critique of capitalism. It is here that my argument against Kitson arises.

The state as an instrument of dictatorship

In Lenin's analysis of the bourgeois state, he insisted that it ought to be 'smashed' so as to unleash real substantive democracy.

For Lenin the very existence of any state is a function of class domination: 'The state is a product and a manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms. The state arises where, when and insofar as class antagonisms cannot be reconciled.' (1975, p314).

The very separation of the polity from the economy, the division of labour which places some agents exclusively in the political sphere and the majority of agents exclusively in the economic sphere, is for Lenin, a product of class society and a function of class dictatorship. At the heart of capitalism, argues Lenin, is the bourgeoisie's expropriation of wealth created by the proletariat. Yet the reproduction of the mode of production founded on the exploitation of one class by another requires political power.

If capitalism is to reproduce itself it requires an instrument of coercion which is separate from and out of the reach of the masses. Hence, the separation of the pol-

ity from the economy, hence the birth of the bourgeois state, a specialised instrument of coercion, separate from civil society and outside of the grasp of civil society.

It is important to note that for Lenin, the reshuffling of agents within the existing state apparatuses is not sufficient for democratisation. The very perpetuation of a specialised instrument of coercion which operates above society is an impediment to democracy. Hence, the working class's strategic utilisation of its access to parliament is not a viable road to socialism.

Here Lenin is very explicit: 'To decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament - this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism...' (1975, p342). Indeed, Lenin argues, 'Capital establishes its power, so securely, so firmly, that no change of persons, institutions or parties in the bourgeois-democratic republic can shake it' (1975, p319).

What is required by the proletariat to destroy the private expropriation of wealth, to destroy capitalist relations of production, argues marxism-leninism, is political power. And to obtain political power, the proletariat must smash the bourgeoisie's instrument of power, namely, the capitalist state.

In smashing the state as an instrument which operates above society the proletariat must destroy all the cornerstones of representative democracy, and replace them with forms of 'direct democracy'. Parliament, a plurality of political parties, the separation of the judiciary from the executive, all the functions of the representative state, must be destroyed. They are to be replaced by forms of administration which are rooted within the fabric of civil society, under the direct control of each and every ordinary working person.

These are the political forms of the marxist-leninist dictatorship of the proletariat, 'the political forms at last discovered for the economic emancipation of labour' (Marx, 'The Civil War in France', part III).

Kitson is therefore spot-on in his assertion that, for marxism-leninism, parliament is exclusively part of the capitalist superstructure, a function of bourgeois dictatorship. Proletarian dictatorship, on the other hand, constitutes the socialist superstructure. In marxism-leninism the two are, as Kitson implies, mutually exclusive - proletarian dictatorship is only possible when bourgeois dictatorship is



'The SACP has abandoned the concept of proletarian dictatorship, yet it has embraced the concept of working class power'

destroyed.

The dictatorship of the proletariat is, for marxism-leninism, the last time political power will ever be wielded; as capitalist relations of production are dismantled under the supervision of proletarian government, as the conditions of exploitation are undermined, so social classes wither away. And with the demise of exploitation there is no longer a need for anyone to exert political power. The dictatorship of the proletariat withers away to be replaced by a stateless society, a society where all agents perform both productive and administrative functions.

Proletarian dictatorship and political pluralism

Slovo proclaims that Lenin never abandoned the concept of political pluralism (1990, p11-28). Yet if Lenin did believe in a form of pluralism it is gulfs apart from what Slovo has in mind. Marx and Lenin did not call their conception of post-revolutionary politics a *dictatorship* to emphasise the role of political pluralism!

On the contrary, the smashing of the representative state means the smashing of multi-parliamentary democracy, and hence the smashing of political pluralism as we know it. Indeed, for marxism-leninism, the very idea of finding out or testing the will of the proletariat is bourgeois fetishism. Says Lenin:

'We must also note that Engels is most explicit in calling universal suffrage as well an instrument of bourgeois rule. Universal suffrage, he says... is "the gauge of the maturity of the working class (my emphasis — JS). It cannot and never will be anything more in the present-day state." (ie under parliamentary democracy). The petty-bourgeois democrats ... expect just this "more" from universal suffrage. They themselves share, and instil into the minds of the people, the false notion that universal suffrage "in the present-day state" is really capable of revealing the will of the majority of the working people and of securing its realisation (Lenin, 1975, p319-20).

What did Engels and Lenin mean when they said that under a multi-party parliamentary democracy universal suffrage can only 'gauge the maturity of the working class' and cannot reveal the will of the proletariat? They meant that the objective interest of the proletariat (and hence the objective will of the proletariat) cannot be empirically discovered; rather, it is theoretically determined. Let me elaborate.

Determining the 'will of the masses'

At the core of classical marxism is the understanding that the conditions for socialism arise because the development of capitalism inevitably fosters an irreconcilable contradiction between the forces of production and the capitalist relations of production. The constant need to generate profit under the wedge of competition forces capitalists to increasingly sophisticate their productive machinery, indeed, to increasingly displace workers from production and replace them with machinery. This has two contradictory manifestations which throws capitalism into crisis.

On the one hand, the increase in fixed capital proportionate to labour forces capital to produce an ever-expanding output. Yet on the other hand, the displacement of scores of workers from production and the increase in the rate of exploitation dwarfs the buying power of the working class. Capitalism's huge productive output cannot go to market. Production and circulation cease. The forces of production lie fallow.

The capitalist mode of production is placed in the ironic position where it has overproduced on the one hand yet generates mass deprivation on the other. If only products could find a route to the needy proletariat without making a de-

tour through the market, the forces of production would again operate and the conditions would exist for their unfettered advancement.

Because the proletariat bears the brunt of the antagonism between the forces and relations of production, it is in its objective interest to free the forces of production from their fetters, to destroy capitalist relations of production (see Engels, 'Socialism: Utopian and Scientific', part III and Marx, *Capital* Vol 1, chap 32).

It is from this understanding of the 'laws of capitalist motion' that marxism-leninism dicards the empirical testing of proletarian will as ridiculous and instead opts for dictatorship as the only correct route to communism. Marxism-leninism does not need universal suffrage and political pluralism to determine proletarian will. Proletarian will has, for Marx and Lenin, already been determined by the laws of capitalist development.

Multi-party democracy is obstructive both in the path to socialism and in the operation of socialism. It operates to separate the polity from the economy and hence to perpetuate class domination. Universal suffrage operates, under the dictatorship of the proletariat, not to determine proletarian interest but to modulate proletarian government, to progressively transform subjective proletarian interest into objective interest - or in Engels' turn of phrase, to usher in the conditions of proletarian 'maturity'. The universal suffrage of marxism-leninism is, as Kitson would presumably reiterate, a far cry from the SACP's understanding of universal suffrage.

The history of capitalist development since Marx's death has brought attention to the frailty (or the questionable nature at any rate) of Marx's conception of the capitalist laws of motion. And with the concept of the laws of motion under scrutiny, so is the assertion that the will of the working class can be theoretically determined.

The SACP's own research into the South African economy would suggest a refutation of classical marxist economics. The state's current project to construct the new political economy in such a way that the working class is divided into a core and a periphery, reveals a number of things about South African capitalism. The core gains access to relative privilege through the operation of the capitalist market, which is drawn into the corridors of state power. The periphery, on the other hand, is marginal



'Marx and Lenin did not call their conception of post-revolutionary politics a dictatorship to emphasise the role of political pluralism'

to both the formal economy and collective consumption.

The Regulation Theory which the party leans on to glean an understanding of South African capitalism suggests that capitalism can and does regulate the relationship between production and the market (a regulation Marx deemed impossible). It suggests that there is no reason why the market should inevitably fetter the productive forces, that there is no reason reason to believe that capitalism will progressively empoverish the proletariat homogeneously and collectively.

It is at this point that the marxist-leninist road to socialism must be viewed suspiciously, and it is at this point that both Dave Kitson and the SACP must be brought to task.

The dangers of authoritarianism

From the above critique of the classical marxist laws of motion, it can be concluded that nobody's class interest can be theoretically determined.

And if nobody's class interests can be theoretically determined then the will (or perhaps wills?) of the masses must be empirically tested. I see no other path to do this other than the path of parliamentary democracy.

(The co-existence of representative democracy and participatory democracy is

conceivable. Indeed I would argue, along with the SACP, that it is a crucial ingredient for a socialist South Africa. However, it is a discussion which is beyond the bounds of this paper).

Kitson's assertion that parliamentary democracy is the superstructure of capitalism while proletarian dictatorship the superstructure of socialism emanates directly from the marxist-leninist belief in the theoretical determination of class interests.

If we in South Africa abandoned multi-party democracy for proletarian dictatorship we would abandon all hope of creating a society whose path is determined by the masses.

We would be embracing Lenin's invalid assertion (despite Slovo's contrary claims) that the party already knows what the proletariat wants because the party has science on its side. We would, in essence, be travelling the well-worn path to stalinism.

Marxism-leninism and the SACP

The SACP has abandoned the concept of proletarian dictatorship, yet it has embraced the concept of working class power and retains its desire to see a socialist South Africa. This is far from being a contradiction in terms. Intrinsic to the SACP's vision of the road to socialism is the notion that any party which claims to lead the working class must prove this through the parliamentary ballot box. Indeed, the SACP embraces so-called 'bourgeois democratic forms' as pivotal to democratic socialism. These principles can and must be brought wholeheartedly into the communist fold the world over.

Yet why the SACP embraces these principles in the name of marxism-leninism boggles the mind. Surely it is time to lay the 'revered classics' to rest. Surely it is time to acknowledge that their role in the socialist canon must come to an end.

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Insurrection in South Africa?

GRAEME BLOCH challenges the romantic notions of insurrection current amongst sections of the left, and argues that the objective conditions demand a long-term 'war of position' strategy, which creatively exploits the terrain of negotiations

A number of key issues of the day hinge around the question of insurrection. These include an approach to negotiations; the issue of defence committees and their more general strategic significance; the nature and type of mass mobilisation, its demands and targets.

There can be no revolution without revolutionary theory. But insurrection is not an abstract or a general concept: it points to a specific moment, a particular combination of forces, and rapid tactical and strategic shifts. Insurrection is a concrete problem requiring concrete strategies and preparation. It occurs at the centre of a complex range of forces, international, psychological, political, economic and cultural.

At one level, insurrection is a description. It refers to an armed seizure of power; the identification, neutralisation or control of key strategic points; the immobilising of government functions and the substitution of an alternative popular authority.

At another level, the term insurrection points to a qualitative shift in social relations, a decisive movement of mass-based direct action to effect a shift in class powers, a short and intense period of rupture and break in which the basis of a new social order is installed.

In the period of the mass, all-round uprising, all restrictions and conventions are rejected, subordinated to the full-frontal assault on the citadels of power, often with the use of force to subdue the ruling classes' own dependence on violence as the last resort of class rule.

There is a romantic appeal about insur-

rection to any revolutionary. The problems of social domination and exploitation are confronted vigorously and directly; they are resolved instantly, or transformed at the least by the first and decisive moment of an uninterrupted process. The key institutions of domination are identified and occupied, the centre of power crumbles to the will and conscious intervention of the subordinate classes.

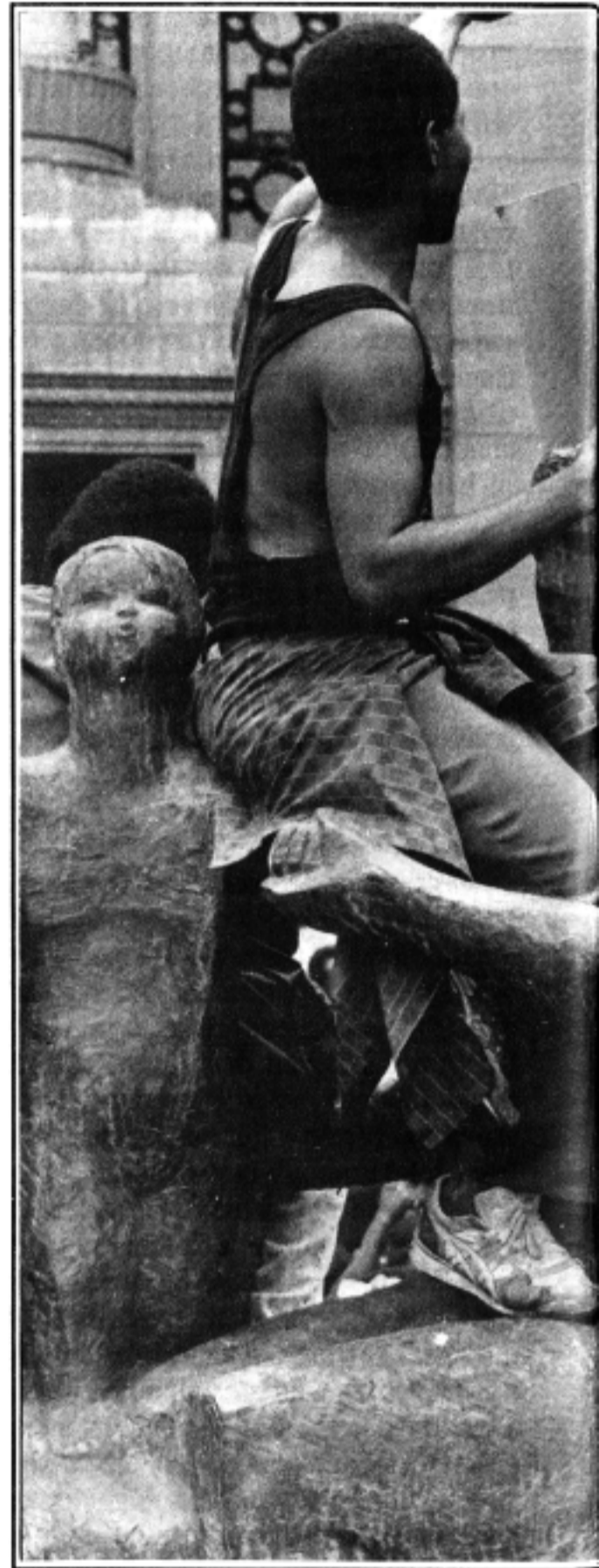
This idea of the key moment, of a real decisive clean and deep surgical break, with the removal of all the dross of the past as the scales fall from the people's eyes, has clear attractions. History moves with seven league boots and complex problems are subsumed to the revolutionary moment.

Yet we need to subject this strand of thinking to rigorous examination. In the face of manifest problems in building and sustaining socialism - not only in Eastern Europe but also in the Third World, from Nicaragua to Vietnam to Mozambique - it is correct to question assumptions and presuppositions about the process of fundamental social transformation.

How are social relations to be transformed at all levels: political, economic, social, personal? How are racism and economic exploitation to be eliminated, such that there is not a mere transfer of power to a new exploiting class? How are institutions, social practices and ideological formations to be re-formed or constituted?

Classical marxist origins

The idea of insurrection is of classically marxist origin (though not exclusively so). It rests on a tradition of thinking about the state and power that goes back



to Marx's idealised formulations about the Paris Commune.

In Lenin, the theory of insurrection was given practical effect and real strategic meaning. The vehicle for mass intervention was identified in the tight vanguard of revolutionaries that make up the Communist Party, with a clear plan, a political programme, and a base in the soviets and popular assemblies that challenged and defied both tsarist and capitalist rule.

Lenin's theoretical formulations found expression in 'The State and Revolution'. His position is concentrated in the slogan of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', whose simplifications and problems have been the source of a permanent blind-



To treat the insurrection like a picnic is to seriously underplay the complexities of establishing and maintaining the momentum of socialism

spot in marxist thought.

Identifying power by a centralised and concentrated political moment, Lenin reduces the problems of constructing socialism to technical exigencies as the state withers away. A range of political questions disappear. Class contradiction is identified with naked force and a relationship of violent suppression.

Joe Slovo (1990) has helped open a debate in South African left circles about the origins of stalinism. He has been rightly criticised for his focus on the personal aspects of the abuse of socialist power, rather than a structural analysis of the forces that sustained the anti-democratic tone of stalinist rule (see eg Habib & Andrews).

Yet the same critics have been reluctant to discover some of the origins of the problem in the limited conceptions of power and politics generated by Lenin, and the strategic errors of the leninist approach.

Treating insurrection like a picnic

Revolution may not be a dinner-party, but to treat the insurrection like a picnic is to seriously underplay the complexities of establishing and maintaining the momentum to socialism.

In South Africa, this viewpoint is given practical expression in the Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action (Wosa): '...the state is a product of irreconcilable class conflict within the social structure

which it seeks to regulate on behalf of the ruling class. The state is the organised political expression, the instrument, of the decisive class in the economy.' (Habib & Andrews, p92)

'Socialism would only be realised through the overthrow of the bourgeois state and the system it represents and defends. This can only occur through the mass actions of the working class which would eventually culminate in an insurrection. The socialist state can and will only be built on the ashes of its bourgeois predecessor.' (Habib & Andrews, p93)

Similar assumptions appear to be the basis of formulations in the propaganda of the Marxist Workers Tendency. The strategic perspective of armed workers



Antonio Gramsci: 'A social group can, indeed must, already exercise "leadership" before winning governmental power'.

and youth, at the barricades and in direct confrontation with the security forces, opening up the class war against Buthelezi and Inkatha, transforming (much-needed) defence committees into the basis of attacking formations: these calls ring with appeal to 1917 and the popular authority of the Soviets. They beg for the seizure of the town hall, parliament and printing presses as the bourgeoisie is suppressed and disappears.

This is the romantic 'berets and barricades' conception of the revolution. There is an absence of a clear strategy that goes beyond vague calls and general formulations.

Similar strains, perhaps even less clearly formulated, are to be found in positions adopted by the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), with an anti-colonialist twist. Here too, the oppressor disappears or is driven into the sea. Violence becomes a Fanonist, cleansing act that purifies the revolutionary scene, in the allusive phrase 'One Settler, One Bullet!'. Again, the insurrection is unstrategised, and lacks specificity.

Surprisingly, similar approaches have been central in the SACP programme, *The Path to Power*. Here it is argued that 'The partial uprisings which have become a feature of our mass struggles must also be seen as a school for the accumulation of insurrectionary experience.'

And further: 'The crisis facing our ruling class will be aggravated still further by a combination of mass upsurge, in which working class action at the point of production will play a key role, mass

defiance, escalating revolutionary combat activity, intensified international pressure, a situation of ungovernability, a deteriorating economy and growing demoralisation, division, vacillation and confusion within the power bloc...Seizure of power will be a product of escalating and progressive merging of mass political and military struggle with the likelihood of culminating in an insurrection.'

Multi-layered perspective

Processes of social change are simplified and strategies remain general. Against this, one needs to develop a more clearly-formulated critique, as well as a new conception that is dynamic, all-round and multi-layered.

(i) In the first place, power is not centralised in the citadel. It is diffused in a range of practices, institutions and ideologies throughout society. While the political may represent the decisive concentration, the moment that must be prioritised, it is clear that revolutionary bases need to be built at all levels: ideological, spiritual, physical, economic.

Eliminating the racial parliament will not ensure that sexist ideas no longer remain; a socialist economic policy will not transform undemocratic educational practices in the classroom. The challenge to undemocratic rule must of necessity be diffuse, and will thus also be uneven.

(ii) Contradictions cannot be simply reduced to class contradictions, and relations to those of suppression and force. Marxism, to its discredit, has failed to produce adequate theorisations of nation-

alism, ethnicity, religion, gender, culture. Rather than a conception of a two-class stand-off, we need to see ideology as the cement that unifies a counter-hegemonic bloc. Social movements, often organised around non-class contradictions, enrich a confident and independent civil society.

(iii) Change itself needs to be theorised as a complex combination of social processes. These include objective and subjective factors, the ability to read the developing moment in its constituent elements as well as in its combination.

(iv) Revolution includes periods of slow build-up (in which trenches, ramparts and defenses are built or occupied) as well as periods of decisive action, direct confrontation and rapid all-round mobilisation.

(v) A strategic question has been sharply posed by the problems of modern revolutions. Even if power is seized, how is it to be kept? No society can be perpetually at war. No revolutionary can glibly talk war without seriously considering its social effects, on future generations, on the culture of tolerance and democracy, on the physical ability to construct and reconstruct.

How is mobilisation to be politically maintained? How is support for the goals of the revolution to be sustained amongst the democratic majority, if not through the social formation as a whole? These are not light questions.

(vi) Political will is not enough to transform either the relations or the infrastructure of the new society. In the Soviet Union, the best revolutionary cadres were removed from mobilisation to staff the administration of government. Bureaucracy and inefficiency reflected real shortages of skill and the means to run the society at a practical level.

To manage a modern economy and other social institutions, to deliver the goods that genuinely transform the quality of life of those who have sustained the revolution, is more than just a matter of wishful thinking.

Antonio Gramsci

These perspectives have been developed from the theoretical work of Antonio Gramsci. He argued that the 'internal relations of a country must be understood and conceived in their originality and uniqueness if one wishes to dominate them and direct them' (Simon, p34).

To create and sustain a revolution, it was necessary for a fundamental class to establish 'hegemony', or 'intellectual and moral leadership':

'A social group can, indeed must, already exercise "leadership" before winning governmental power (this is indeed one of the principal conditions for the winning of such power); it subsequently becomes dominant when it exercises power, but even if it holds it firmly in its grasp, it must continue to "lead" as well.' (in Simon, p22).

The concept of hegemony is embedded in a field of concepts that will not be elaborated here. However, hegemony is not conceived in terms of a simple construction of alliances, but includes the concept of 'national-popular':

'A class cannot achieve national leadership and become hegemonic, if it confines itself only to class interests; it must take into account the popular and democratic demands and struggles of the people which do not have a purely class character, that is, which do not rise directly out of the relations of production.' (Simon, p23)

The building of hegemony involves a crucial ideological aspect: 'The illusion that characterises the ultra-left is that the working class will eventually come to adopt Marxism in its pure form as its ideology. Instead, there has to be a more complex synthesis of class objectives with themes that have arisen out of the original and unique history of each country.' (Simon, p61)

From here, Gramsci develops the strategic conception of the 'war of position':

'This war of position does not exclude the possibility of very sharp struggles, even violent ones, against the coercive organs of the state. What it means is that the decisive struggle for state power can only be won on the basis of a decisive shift in the balance of forces in civil society...the shift in the balance of forces and the transformation of the state are likely to take place in stages, so that the achievement of each stage creates the conditions for further advances.' (Simon, p75)

Not reformist

Gramsci's war of position is neither an argument for reformism, nor for a watered down form of social democracy. The correct strategy, tactics and organisation depend on a concrete analysis of the given situation and of the overall balance of forces.

Indeed, 'insurrectionary tactics' emphasize the learning experience and empowering activity that come from unified and direct popular actions. The

emphasis on popular, grassroots struggles around a range of social issues is a crucial perspective to challenge all relations of domination. The active revolutionary process from below asserts how transformation is a day-to-day series of challenges, not one single moment.

Such a creative attempt to develop Gramscian concepts in the South African situation has been attempted by Karl von Holdt (1990).

There are a number of strategic considerations that appear to weigh heavily in favour of an insurrectionary approach. Yet the concrete situation cries out against a full-blown insurrectionary perspective.

The terrain of negotiations

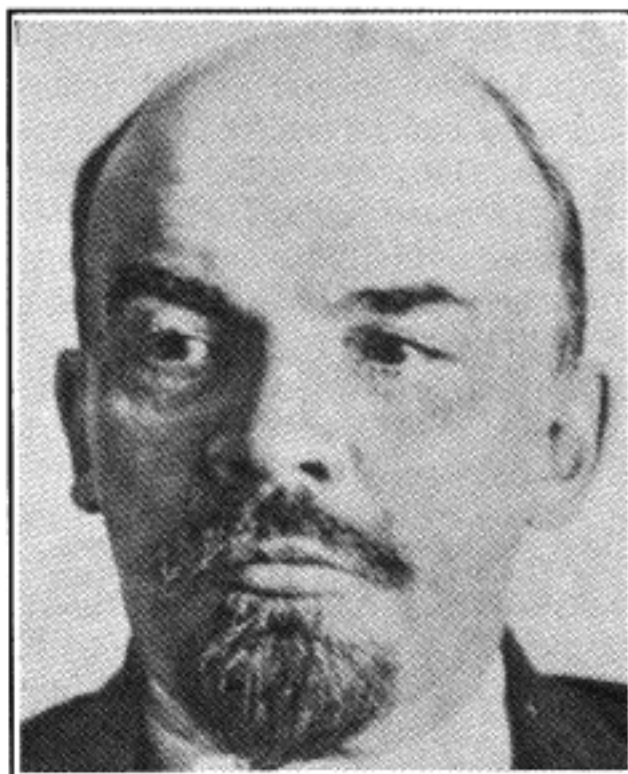
While the SACP programme sees no contradiction between this perspective and the 'negotiated transfer of power', it is clear that current political developments seriously question the above formulations. The emergence of the terrain of negotiations has shifted the possibilities for an insurrectionary approach.

Negotiations requires a new form of politics. These include the politics of pressure, of opening up space, of enhancing organisational capacity while occupying bases and terrains, and also of compromises.

Negotiations themselves can occur in a situation of weakness. The aims of the state are precisely that; in particular, to demobilise and remove the scope of mass popular actions from the field of struggle.

There is the ever-present danger of the current processes resulting in what

Lenin: His simplifications have been the source of a permanent blind spot in Marxist thought.



Gramsci called 'passive revolution'. This is the 'revolution from above' that leaves fundamental social relations intact. It demobilises the ongoing capacity of the masses to identify and challenge their domination.

Negotiations without mass politics and pressure are not an alternative to insurrection, but a fundamental shift in goals and objectives.

War of position

I have challenged the romantic notions of insurrection, pointing to theoretical and practical limitations. Real gains are possible from the current situation, and from an attempt to properly theorise and develop the terrain of negotiations. Even if it were possible to seize power in an insurrectionary moment, a range of critical problems, relating to sustaining and delivering the promises of the revolution, remain.

Against this, the paper has argued for the building of alliances and political support in a war of position. In the current conjuncture this includes the overwhelming necessity of participating in the processes of negotiation. This means putting aside long-held formulations about insurrection, that demobilise and prevent the emergence of concepts adequate to the current tasks.

The struggle is not a short-term one, that can simply wish away complex processes of social change that may take generations to accomplish. Nor can people be disciplined into line, but must be mobilised, convinced and won over. The goals and objectives in one's head cannot be confused with what exists on the ground.

Nonetheless, a reality of the moment is mass politics, and mobilisational politics. There is a need to enhance the institutions and structures that can sustain this.

While we may no longer look forward to the insurrection itself, there is no need to abandon 'insurrectionary tactics', and the militant, direct mass action that accompany it.

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ERIC SINGH surveys the deepening social crisis, including the rise of fascism, that is spreading across east Germany, his adopted country, and argues that while the former communist leadership must be held responsible for the failures of socialism, in the areas of social welfare and international solidarity the GDR achieved much more than their western counterparts

Germany after unification: Shattered hopes and stark realities

Ever since the Wende (change) in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) I have been inundated with questions of my reaction to the events in Germany since October 1989. The period in question has not been easy for anyone, least of all for the people of east Germany, irrespective of their enthusiasm for the unification with the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). Gone is the rampant euphoria which swept through this part of the world in those hazy days of October and November.

Today Germany is once more united, bringing with it stark realities which east Germans are now having to face. How many times have I heard east Germans saying: 'We did not know this would

happen', or 'I did not want this'. Young east Germans have welcomed unification: travel is now unrestricted provided the cash is there. And here is the nub. Gone is the security of vocation provided by the state and the job guaranteed with it. That is just one aspect of the situation. The true extent of the problem, which affects many facets of life, is still to be felt.

Benefits of social security

Despite the criticisms levelled against the East German rulers there is agreement that benefits of social security can never be repeated. The most privileged people in the GDR were undoubtedly the children. The state paid huge sums for their welfare. Mothers could work with the security that their children were safe in the kindergartens, which were either provided by the state or various enterprises. The average monthly kindergarten payment per child amounted to around 20 marks (R12). Today, the price is between 2 and 2,5 marks a day, and continues to rise. In the FRG the minimum cost has been over 300 marks (R180) a month.

Since 1971, the GDR made a concerted effort to overcome the housing problem by providing thousands of homes in the country at minimal rents. That is now a thing of the past. Rents are expected to rise to almost four times the present level. These and other social measures cost the state around 58 billion marks (R34,8bn) a year.

Such huge subsidies (which included cheap transport and basic food) meant that something had to be neglected. The meagre investment in industry resulted in the poor upkeep of many huge industrial plants, which in turn has been a factor influencing foreign firms' reluctance to invest in industry.

Before the Wende unemployment was unheard of. Today, thousands of people, roam the streets in search of work. The economy has been run into the ground deliberately, say the pundits, so that the hawks can have labour for grabs. This in turn has prompted people to comment that yesterday they were the 'Zone' (a derogatory Western term to denote GDR as a Russian Zone) and today we are the 'colony' (of the West). According to estimates, by mid-June two to three million people will be out of work - a staggering figure given that the east German popula-

tion is around 16 million.

People are being advised to tighten their belts until relief comes in about four to five years. In the meantime prices soar. Those who have kept their jobs are now doing the work of three or four people despite earning a fraction of the wages paid in the west, thereby causing headaches for trade unions in wage negotiations. The future looks bleak for the vast majority of the population who face a situation they could not have imagined.

What went wrong and why?

People are asking what went wrong and why. The simple truth is that the leadership of the SED (Socialist Unity Party - an

ship from holding out in Wandlitz, safely out of the view of the people. Explaining this, Dr Gregor Gysi, leader of the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS - formed in late 1989 to replace the SED), said he could understand the establishment of the Wandlitz settlement after the events in Hungary in 1956. But he challenged the validity of it after the securing of the borders in 1961. I will be even more generous and add ten years to the affair.

Moving out of isolation

The year 1971 witnessed the collapse of the isolation of the GDR. States were stumbling over each other in their rush to establish diplomatic relations with it. This included such countries as the USA, France, Great Britain and their allies, who for years stubbornly supported Bonn's contention of sole representation of the entire German people.

The GDR and the FRG became members of the United Nations (UN) in 1973. Both were welcomed into the forums of its various commissions and began to play active roles in the international arena, with their experts working in many UN agencies. The Special Committee Against Apartheid was strengthened through the active participation of the GDR.

Sadly, the performance of the GDR emissaries did not penetrate the thinking of its leaders. Instead of moving out and joining the world community, the SED leadership's adoption of an introverted attitude cut the population off from the outside world. They turned their backs on the people and then had the audacity to say the population was behind them.

The SED leadership did not trust the masses on whom they imposed strict travel laws. The Stasi (State Security) were also known to act cruelly against anybody who dared to challenge the status quo. Among the victims were solid, tried and tested revolutionaries.

The Biermann affair

The Biermann affair of 1976 put the seal on the SED leadership's attitude. Wolf Biermann is a folk-singer whose father was in the ranks of the Communist Party during the 'Third Reich' and was killed by the Nazis in a concentration camp. They lived in Hamburg.

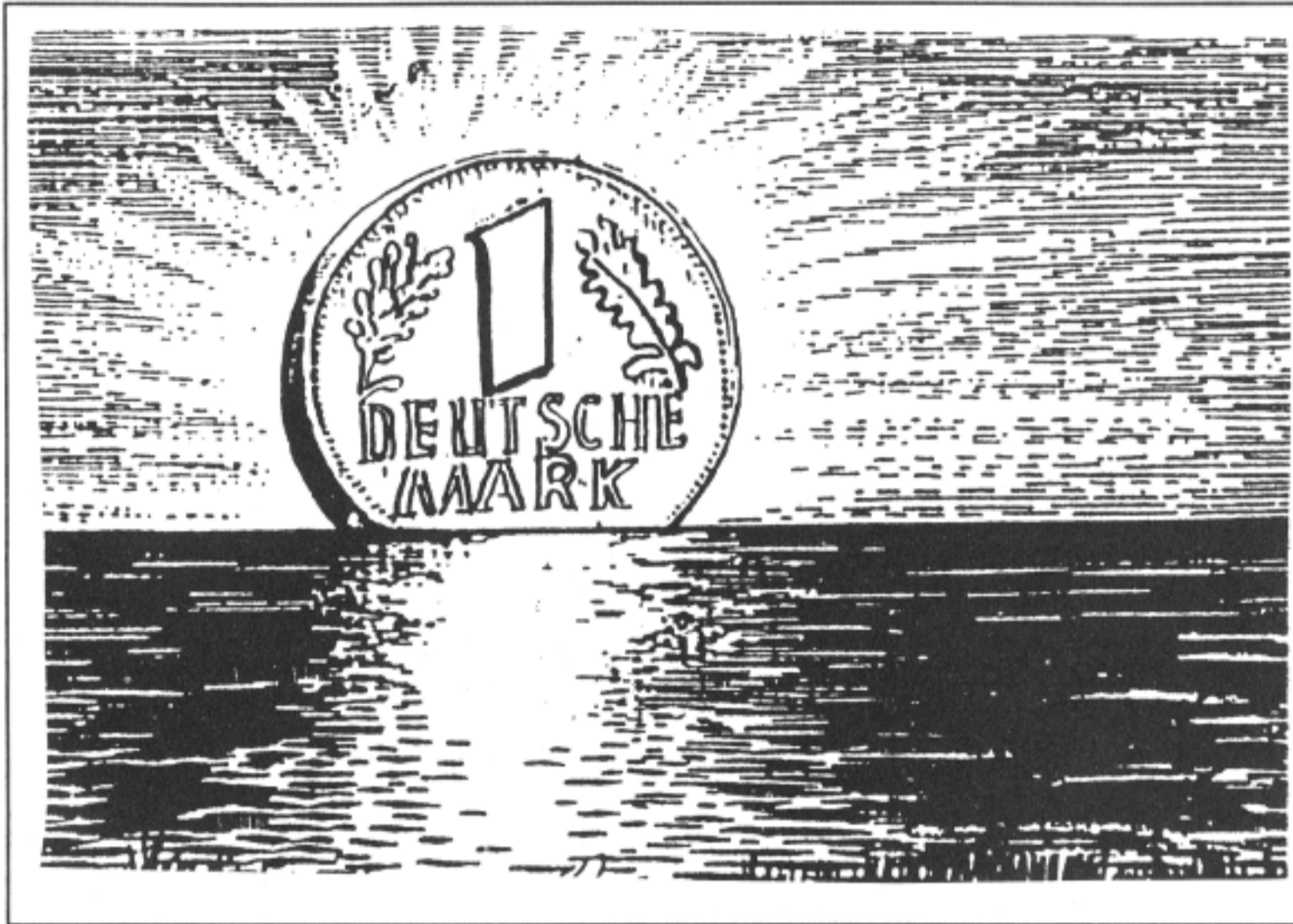
With the formation of the GDR (1949) young Wolfgang was invited by the SED



amalgamation of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) and Social Democratic Party in the Eastern sector of Germany in 1946) failed to liberate themselves from the cold war mentality. This is somewhat understandable. They were the victims of a concerted effort by the West to destroy them and they showed heroic patience and resilience in withstanding this.

In fact the construction of the Berlin Wall and the securing of its borders in 1961 contributed immensely to the GDR's economic stability and strength. Over the past 20 years the country was among the industrial giants of the world, occupying 8th or 9th position.

But this did not stop the SED leader-



The glitter of West German capitalism: As prices and unemployment in East Germany rise at astronomical rates, the enthusiasm is beginning to wane

to live and school in East Germany, which his mother could not afford to do in the FRG. Whilst studying at the Humboldt University in Berlin, Wolfgang came into conflict with official thinking, which resulted in his being blacklisted - so that he was unable to work. Over the years his music became fairly popular in the West. When asked to leave the country he refused.

Finally he was allowed to tour the FRG in 1976 and in one concert, which was relayed over West German TV, he lashed out at the SED leadership, which then revoked his GDR citizenship and declared him *persona non grata*. This move caused an international furore. The repercussion was most felt in the GDR itself. Thousands of people, including musicians, writers and celebrities, signed a protest note and demanded a repeal of the measures taken against Biermann.

The SED's intransigence led many leading people from the cultural world of the GDR to leave the country for the FRG.

This episode pushed the SED more and more into a corner. The backbone of socialist democracy is undoubtedly its practice of democratic centralism. But the Biermann affair changed this concept. Whilst centralism was enhanced, the democratic process died. No arguments were accepted in party meetings. Orders from above had to be rubber-stamped by the branches. Failure to ac-

cept these orders resulted in 'culprits' being branded as 'dissidents'. Even (ex-Prime Minister) Erich Honecker's travels abroad failed to break this mentality and strangehold on the party membership.

East German internationalism

The founding fathers of the GDR, many of whom were graduates of the anti-fascist movement who came either from exile or from the Nazi prisons and concentration camps, were genuinely promoting the interests of the people. Not even the most ardent opponent of the GDR will deny that to a large extent the state did precisely that. Nobody who left the GDR can ever claim that he/she was economically in the doldrums. The strange sight of motorized 'refugees' flooding the FRG speaks for itself.

Another side of GDR that people from the Third World remember is the support that they received from the government and people of the state which went out of existence on 3 October 1990. I am convinced there are millions of people all over the world irrespective of whether they are in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Korea, Cuba, Chile, Indo-China, West and North Africa, just to name a few, who will endorse this statement.

ANC members also found friendship and support in the GDR, especially in the dark days of the early 1960's. *Sechaba*, the official organ of the ANC in exile, was printed in the GDR from January

1967 until October 1990.

The ANC's Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College in Tanzania was also made possible by the generosity of the GDR. These are only some examples of the support the GDR gave the ANC. Over the years assistance was rendered in many other fields too, including medical treatment for ANC cadres and in the diplomatic field.

The ANC was not the only recipient of the GDR's generosity. According to figures released by the Solidarity Committee in 1989 (last figures available) close to 120 000 people from Africa, Asia and Latin America have studied or undergone vocational training in the GDR since 1970. Working as engineers, doctors, farmers, teachers, economists, cultural and highly skilled workers, they are now active in the economic and cultural development of their countries.

Over the same period, about 22 000 specialists from the GDR worked as economists, engineers, teachers and vocational instructors, physicians in developing countries. Most active in this field was the the GDR youth movement FDJ.

What about the other Germany? Where does it fit into the picture in terms of its relationship to the ANC in exile? Bonn has always been a close patron of Pretoria and looked upon the ANC as a communist-dominated terrorist organisation. Although there were no official ties, this attitude changed slightly after the ANC

set up a mission in Bonn in the early 1980's.

But this does not mean that the ANC had no support there. On the contrary a number of groups have been instrumental in supporting the ANC's Bonn mission and in providing educational facilities for its cadres. Nelson Mandela's visit to Bonn last year has signalled a shift in attitude towards the ANC.

Mistakes of the leadership

The current misery in east Germany must be attributed to the former SED leadership, which failed to read the situation correctly. Even when the Stasi pointed out the real situation in the country it was brushed aside. In an interview before his overthrow Honecker said studying Stasi reports gave him the impression that he was reading the Western media, which meant they could not be taken seriously.

The SED leadership also failed to understand the weakness of a state built on the shaky foundation of a victorious Soviet Red Army - the state was neither established nor accepted by the masses. The people rejected a divided Germany. Few accepted the GDR and among those who did there was much room for opportunism. This opportunism was created by the SED. If you wanted to get anywhere, then SED membership was your safest passport.

The case of Joachim Streich, one of the few European footballers to have played in over a hundred internationals, illustrates this. At the Olympic Games in 1976 he won the gold medal with the GDR team.

But the fact that he got to Montreal at all is a classic piece of opportunism. He was told that if he wanted to be selected for Montreal, he had to join the SED. He did so although politics was of no interest to him. 'All these years I was a dues paying member of the SED', he said in an interview. Today he is a trainer of a second division team in West Germany.

The re-emergence of fascism

Most significant is that the masses who rejected the GDR, show no hesitation in identifying themselves with the West German state.

What makes it even more remarkable is that Bonn was ruled by people who were very active in the Third Reich (under Hitler) until Willy Brandt and his Social Democrats ousted them from power in the 1972 elections. This did not prevent former Nazis from holding key positions in the judiciary and other important sec-

tors of the state. Younger Nazis have now replaced the old guard, especially in the police force.

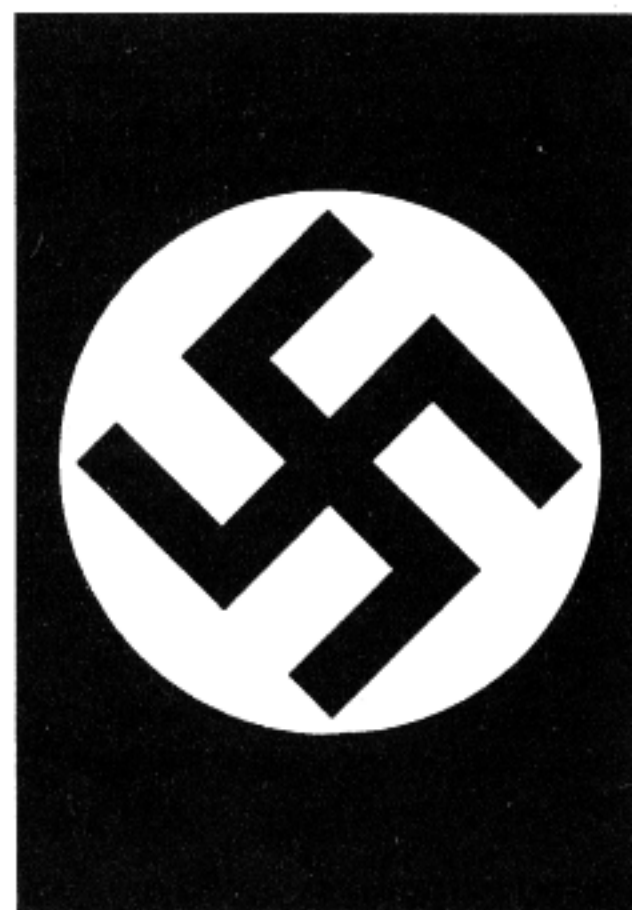
It is thus not surprising that the head of fascism is again openly showing itself in east Germany, although there are efforts to try and pin this onto imports from the West.

Dr Wolfgang Brueck, legal sociologist and criminologist from Leipzig, comments on right-wing activities in east Germany: 'My considerations are as follows - if a country with a left-wing oriented social system loses its identity and undergoes a deep crisis, a turn to the right is bound to occur. The loss of orientation has especially grave consequences on young people. They tend to look for a new place in life on the opposite of the spectrum.

'Historical factors also exist. We are part of a country which was permeated by a fascist ideology more than five decades ago.

In our (GDR) presentation of history we failed to point out clearly enough that in 1933 German fascism had a mass basis. Only one per cent of the German population fought in the resistance movement. To the vast majority of Germans (in the GDR) anti-fascism was, so to speak, "bestowed" upon them after 1945. But no people can get away from the dark side of its own history, they remain facts and

Fascists, who for a long time held positions of power in West Germany, are openly emerging in East Germany after unification



continue to produce effects. On top of this, a small group of anti-fascists in the GDR declared themselves to be the victors of history - something in itself which has to be questioned - repressing the complex aspects of their courageous resistance'.

Is fascism a passing phase in Germany, and what are the possible repercussions for its neighbours? Dr Brueck comments:

'Fears of right-wing extremism in Germany are well-founded. After all, our history has taught them a lesson, and it would be wrong to trivialise today's right-wing tendencies. In a nationalistic fervour there always arises dangers for the neighbouring peoples. Even if the right-wingers are cautious in their comments today, who knows whether they will be demanding the shifting of the frontiers soon after conditions have changed' (*News* No. 5/90).

Bitter about the war

There are sections of the German population who are very bitter at having lost two wars.

The allies have not been forgiven for having enlisted the help of the hated Russians to defeat 'Deutschlan' and the role of the deportee organisations (those expelled from Czechoslovakia, Poland etc after Hitler's war of world conquest) is very frightening. They have not accepted the treaty of unification whereby Germany waives claims to former territories in Poland and elsewhere. This is considered betrayal.

These Landsmannschaften (as they are officially called) are not to be taken lightly. They are a powerful block whose votes are wooed by the leading Bonn parties. They have an enormous political clout. Some of its leaders, old Nazi functionaries, are members of the Bundestag (Bonn Parliament) within the ranks of the ruling Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union coalition.

Hopefully, the Germans have learnt from history, though at times this looks doubtful.

Recent pro-war propaganda about the Gulf war has been disheartening. All forms of protest were swept aside. Now the Bonn government is picking the pockets of the people to pay for their involvement in the Middle East adventure.

* Eric Singh is a South African exile living in Berlin. He left South Africa in 1962, worked for Sechaba until 1978, and was attached to the GDR Solidarity Committee from 1964 to 1976. This article was written in January 1991.

Business has made a mess!

Statistics on the economy show quite clearly that business has messed up the SA economy. Shareholders and management think only of their profits. Even now, they do not take into account what is needed to develop the economy of this country. We cannot trust businessmen to run this economy. Business is still saying that they can bring down unemployment if we allow them to make big profits. **That is nonsense.**

It is now clear that:

- Even government and some big capitalists admit that there is a major economic crisis in SA.
- They now admit that the criticisms which Cosatu made in the past were correct.
- Profits are still very high, at the expense of increasing unemployment, and less productive capacity.

Workers are facing an increasing cost of living, especially through VAT. Unemployment will continue to grow very fast unless we take steps to restructure the economy. This restructuring must be negotiated. Government and business must negotiate industrial strategy, investment to create jobs, technology policy, training strategy etc.

Economic growth 1980-1990

TABLE I

Average annual economic growth rate

1960 - 1973	5,3%
1973 - 1980 (higher gold price in 1973)	3,2%
1980 - 1989	4,6%

TABLE II

Real growth rate of industrial sector

1960 - 1973	8%
1973 - 1980	4,6%
1980 - 1989	0,6%

(falling gold price in 1980)

(64% of jobs in the formal sector are in industry)

TABLE III

Increase in jobs created in industrial sector

1960 - 1970	448 000
1970 - 1980	313 000
1980 - 1989	28 000

BERNIE FANAROFF of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa), severely criticises management incompetence, and the government and business for their handling of the South African economy, and argues that a new industrial strategy has to be negotiated with the trade unions

So from 1974-1989 new (additional) jobs in the formal sector amounted to 1,2 million. The increase in the labour force during this period was 4,7 million.

In addition, because of the cost of living, households and government had no money to save. Only the shareholders of companies could afford to save. But they did not invest their money in productive investment. Instead, they put their money where they got profits - but they did not create jobs.

The shareholders invested their profits into:

- property speculation;
- shares on the stock exchange (JSE);
- capital-intensive takeovers of other companies.

At the same time, incompetent management has led to lower capital efficiency. Labour productivity has risen, but slowly.

From 1980-1990 unemployment has increased from 3 million to 5 million.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

This is a measure of the total wealth produced in South Africa each year. GDP grew very little in the 1980's. GDP dropped in 1990:

TABLE IV

GDP growth

1986	0,1 %
1988	3,8 %
1990	- 1%

GDP per capita peaked in 1982 and it has

dropped since then (ie the country's wealth per person has dropped). GDP per capita is now decreasing at a rate of 4% per year.

There was rapid growth of jobs in the informal sector in 1980-1990: 8% per year. This was mainly in the taxi industry, when it was deregulated, and in hawking when that was deregulated. **This will not happen again.** If there is further growth of informal sector jobs while GDP is dropping, it will only result in a lower level of income per worker in this sector.

South Africa has the world's highest income inequality (GINI Coefficient). To reverse the increasing unemployment will need a minimum 6% per year GDP growth.

The mining industry

In the past, SA has always relied on the gold mining industry to pull it out of economic problems. Now the figures show that SA's gold mining industry is declining. South Africa's share of world gold sales has decreased from 70% to 40%.

Other countries can produce cheaper because their gold is not deep under ground like it is in South Africa. In addition, South African management is very backward. There might be up to 200 000 retrenchments in the gold mines in the next few years.

A luxury economy

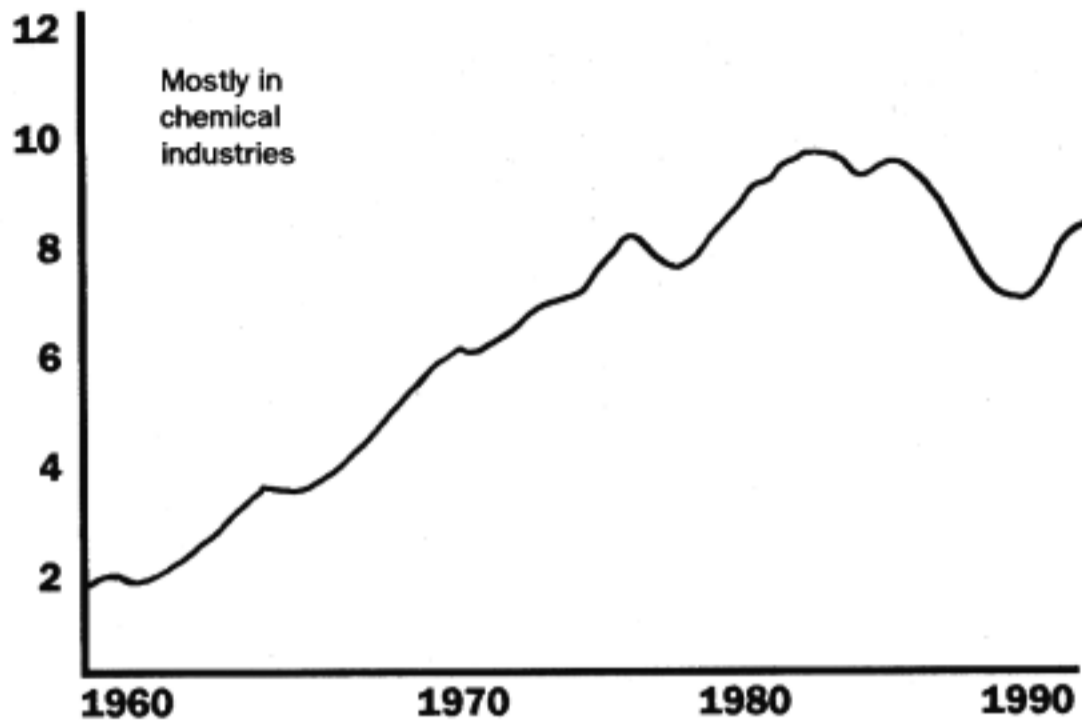
Most production is for luxuries - things which can only be bought by rich people (eg Mercedes and BMW cars).

Business and government have no policies for the economy:

- Business and government have not invested in training and skills. They prefer to import skilled workers from overseas.
- Business and government have no technology policy.
- Business is not prepared to spend on research and development.

Business invests very little in modernisation of machinery and production. Business and government have no policy for the development of industry. Shareholders think only of their own dividends.

Gross domestic fixed investment in machinery and equipment



They are not prepared to spend money on training, job creation, research and development etc.

TABLE V
Average expenditure on research and development

JAPAN	6% of sales
U.S.A.	3% of sales
S.A.	0,5% of sales (approx)

Business only makes parrot cries. They say that the solution to the economic crisis is :

- Lower wages;
- No stay-aways;
- No government interference.

This is nonsense.

But things are changing. Now some Big Capitalists are admitting that the things which Numsa and Cosatu said for years are true:

- that there is an economic crisis;
- that management is incompetent;

Dividends are kept high through cost-cutting - but results in loss of jobs and cutting of production. On this page are some graphs which show that management has kept profits high. These graphs are from a survey of 245 companies which are listed on the JSE.

Gross domestic fixed investment by manufacturing

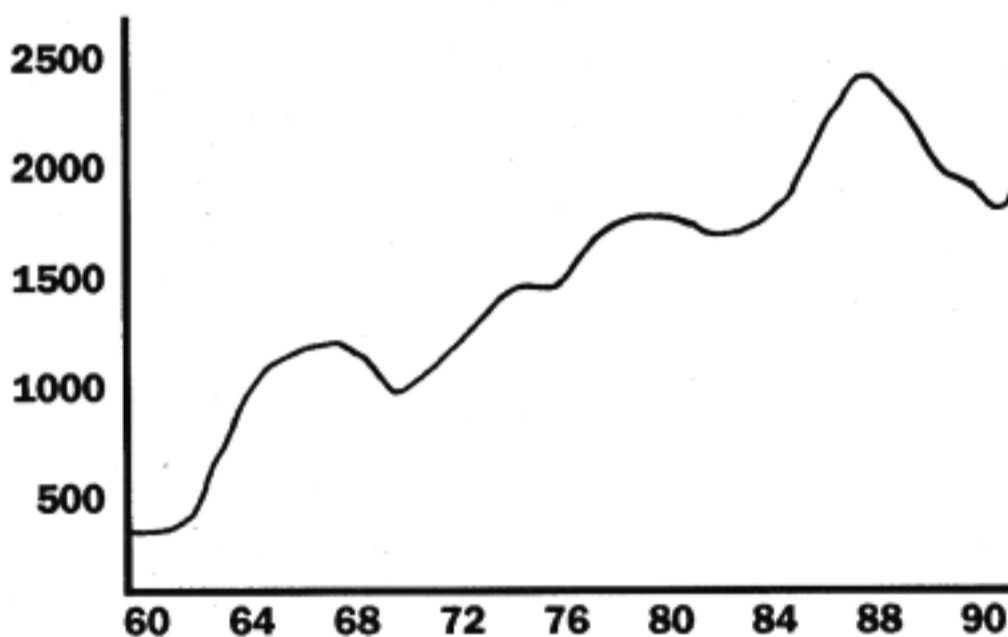


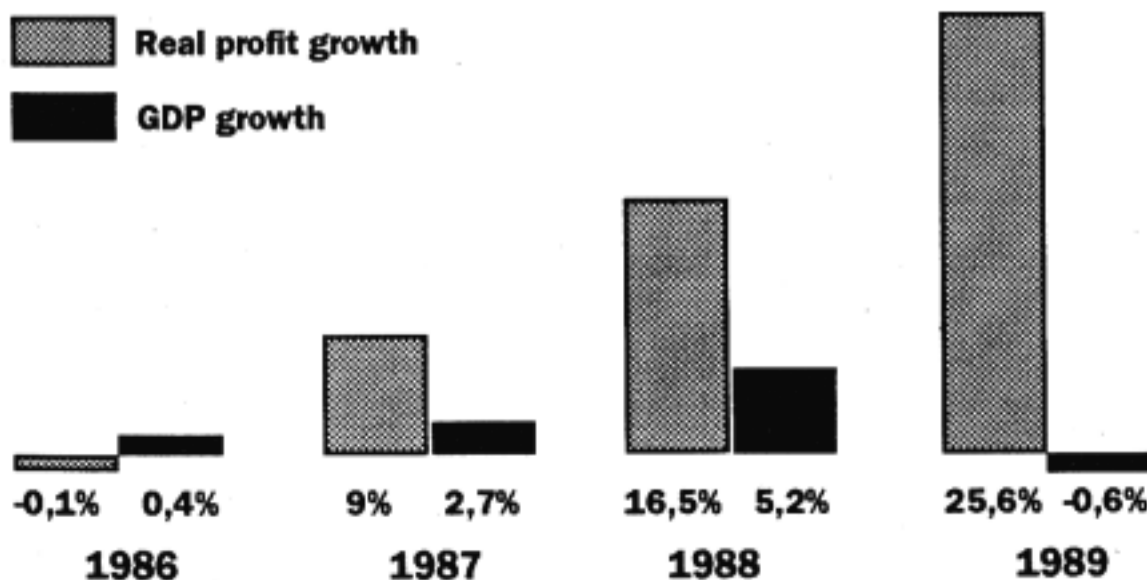
TABLE VI
Profit of JSE companies, 1990
Average % increase
245 companies surveyed in 16 JSE sectors.

Engineering	45%
Industrial holdings	34%
Electronics	18%
Steel	16%

TABLE VII
Return on assets of JSE companies, 1990

Motor	23%
Steel	19%
Industrial holdings	18%
Engineering	16%

Profits after inflation



Government does not look ahead. For example, they are cancelling orders for telephone switchboards and retrenching workers. But they want twice as many telephones by the year 2000. So they will have to rehire workers after 2 - 4 years. That is just stupidity!

Workers are facing increasing costs. The bread subsidy will be cancelled at the end of march 1991. VAT will be added onto food, rent, bus and train fares, phone calls, etc. Metal workers will not benefit from subsidies, so VAT will increase costs for workers.

If we do not restructure industry and the economy, unemployment will in-

crease very fast to be very, very high. **Very high unemployment will mean that no political settlement will be stable.** Management condemns workers and union for stayaways. But management is silent about:

- The murderers and thieves of the CCB
- Torture and killing by the security police
- Magnus Malan's misconduct
- Corruption in the Department of Education and Training
- Waste of money in apartheid institutions
- Vigilante attacks and murder of their own workers in Natal Sebokeng, Katlehong, Tokoza etc.

Management is irresponsible for not condemning De Klerk for his protection of Malan, the CCB, the SB, the DET, the Tricameral circus etc. **Management must accept:**

- The process of political negotiation will require workers to mobilize. Negotiations can't be one sided.
- Business and government must negotiate the future of industry and the economy with the unions.
- Management must respect workers and unions more.

Job creation through investment

The only way to reverse the trend to higher unemployment is through very big investments which will create jobs. These include:

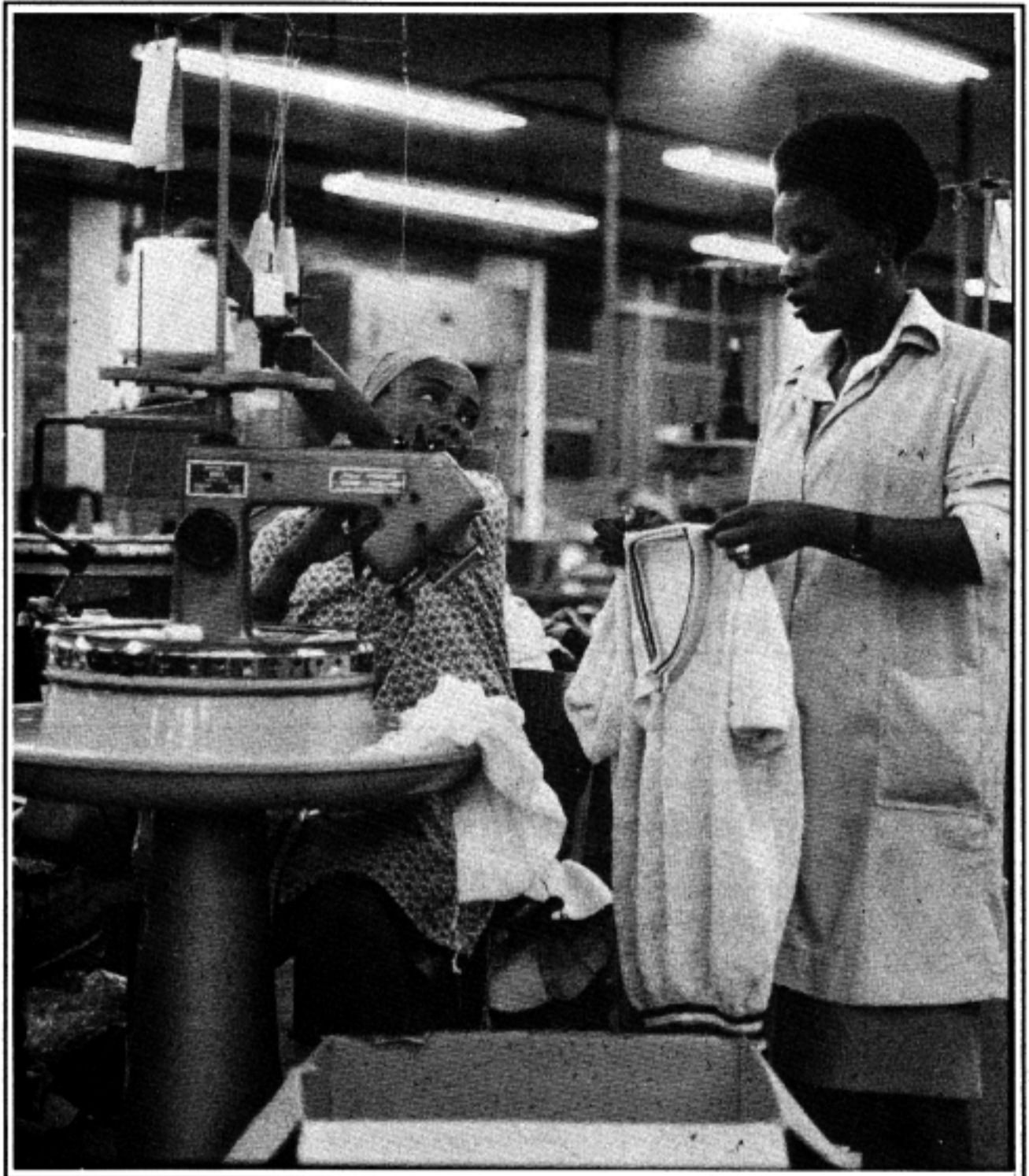
- electrification for all houses;
- affordable housing for all;
- telecommunications;
- education and training;
- beneficiation etc.

Some money for these investments will come from:

- Scrapping apartheid structures such as the tri-cameral circus, the security police, the DET, many health depts. etc.
- Stopping corruption in government.

This will not be enough on its own. We can also borrow from the world bank and commercial banks overseas, and the international monetary fund. But if we look at the best of Africa and South America, we see that these organizations can force a country to follow economic policies which are not in the interests of the masses. Most economists agree that we have enough funds inside South Africa for most of these investments. The problem is: How do we unlock these funds? We can use:

- nationalization;
- taxation;
- prescribed investments.



'We have to create more wealth for the manufacturing industry in South Africa'

But on its own, even this is not enough. We have to create more wealth for manufacturing industry in South Africa. We have already seen that we can't rely on the gold mines anymore. This means that factories in South Africa will have to become more productive, so that they can supply the things needed by the masses and compete in the export market.

Higher productivity does not mean low wages. Higher productivity does not mean workers have to work harder. It means:

- planning;
- much more training for all workers;
- investment in modernization and in research and development; - better management;
- better planning and marketing;
- use of the extra profit to provide more job security, more jobs and a living wage;
- a coherent industrial strategy.

All of these things must be negoti-

ated with the trade unions. For instance, we don't accept that the Industrial Development Corporation has the right to sell its shares in SASOL etc, without negotiating with us. The terms and conditions of major investments must be negotiated.

This raises new issues for business:

- Negotiating industrial and investment strategy.
- Accepting some responsibility for taking a stand on vigilante and state violence.
- Accepting that the political negotiations process needs both sides to have some power - not only De Klerk. This means accepting the need for mass mobilization - not just dismissing workers as ISCOR did on 1 February 1991.
- Dealing with unions and workers in good faith - not like DORBYL. •

** Bernie Fanaroff is the secretary of the organising section of Numsa. This paper was presented to the National Industrial Council for the Iron, Steel, Engineering and Metallurgy Industry in March 1991.*



Fighting factionalism in the Western Cape

GLEND A DANIELS spoke to Cosatu unionists in the Western Cape, and found that, although impressive gains have been made over the past few years, much needs to be done to overcome intolerance and divisions before the region can operate effectively

While the Cosatu-Western Cape region has grown to 14 affiliates and 139 000 paid up members, it is considered by many to be one of the weaker regions of Cosatu. The region is riddled with ideological conflict and has an unsatisfactory record of democratic practice. Some unionists deny that these divisions are crucial, while others place it at the centre of an understanding of the region's organisational problems.

Ideological conflict?

To date one of the most serious problems in the Western Cape has been the conflict in the Food and Allied Workers Union (Fawu) (see *WIP* 72). The problem in Fawu, according to Cosatu regional secretary Lucy Nyembe, is 'now resolved'. But according to former Fawu general secretary Jan Theron, who was centrally involved in the conflict, it is far from resolved. He feels that in fact the situation has worsened. In his opinion, those that say the issue has been resolved actually mean that one faction has won - and so criticism will continue to be repressed.

Nyembe says it was an 'ugly issue' and it is a relief that 'it is now over'.

For Theron the only way to resolve the many difficulties in the Western Cape is to admit that these exist in the first place. It would appear that unionists in the region are over-sensitive and find it very difficult to face the problems.

The set-backs in the region are peculiar to the Cape only, according to Sactwu's Enrico Fourie, who is on the Cosatu Regional Executive Committee (REC). He denies that ideological factors are crucial: 'factionalism has always been over-emphasised, and is not the key reason for organisational difficulties. The ideological divisions are among the activists only.'

But surely it is the activists that do the work and the work is hindered by constant ideological squabbles and factions?

'No, this is too simplistic an understanding by far,' Fourie maintains.

In support of Fourie's view, Nyembe asserts that ideological debates relating to 'workerism', 'trotskyism' and 'stalinism' are confined to middle class intellectuals and students, and has only in a limited way 'reared its ugly head' in the union movement.

Theron disagrees strongly, saying that in fact political fighting in the Cape cuts across class barriers and exists in all organisations, and is very evident in unions.

Coloured identity

Fourie feels that there have been 'certain historical factors' which have contributed to organisational difficulties. In his opinion, Western Cape unionists have had to deal with an all-pervading 'coloured' identity. While mass organisations have had credibility and legitimacy, he feels this has not translated into organisational practice and support.

The coloured community, says Fourie, does not have a binding cohesiveness, like the african community, and this is partly due to the fact that they were relocated time and time again. In addition, he feels that the coloured labour preference policy contributed to alienating coloured people from politics.

'The forced removals and dislocations, instead of bringing the communities closer together, have actually created further divisions and dislocations, creating very different cultures within that race group. These issues served to make Cosatu weak in the Western Cape,' says Fourie.

This happened not just with Cosatu, but with all organisations. 'We won't for example get the same level of support that Port Elizabeth would get if we called for a stayaway.' He also feels that the lack of african leadership in the region is a problem.

Enormous strides

Fourie argues that organisational tasks and campaigns continue even though debate happens. He feels that Cosatu Western Cape has made enormous strides over the last few years by drawing previously conservative unions into the federation. This has been one of the most important achievements in Cosatu since 1987. For example, ex-Tucsa unions in the garment and liquor sectors have now joined the federation. In previous years the democratic movement tried to win over these unions without success.

Cosatu was able to do this by showing them the validity of certain campaigns, especially the Living Wage Campaign. Now Cosatu is dominant in the Western Cape, with very few unions outside it. One of the last bastions, the Typographical Union, recently disbanded. The demise of conservative unions has at last brought african, coloured and indian workers closer together.

Cosatu at its inception in the Western Cape was not a force to reckon with as the United Democratic Front (UDF) was, but is now regarded as an equal partner with other major progressive bodies, says Fourie. He adds: 'The labour movement



'Issues of democracy and worker control are not just issues for Fawu, but for all unions and organisations'
— Lucy Nyembe

has historically always been weak in this region, but recently it has actually taken major leaps forward and it is not as weak as it was'.

Problems in the region

Theron is not as enthusiastic as Fourie about Cosatu in the Western Cape.

Like other unionists, who would not be named, Theron said there were problems and complaints that the REC did not meet as often as it should. One unionist said there was poor co-ordination and when meetings did happen, few unions attended. 'This is a major problem, there is little communication between us and the region.'

Theron feels that one had to be honest about these problems and should not gloss over them. He says that the situation in Saldana Bay is a real indictment on Fawu: 'Sea Harvest and Saldana Bay used to be amongst the most militant unions where workers organised, now these workers have been co-opted and there are now company committees there instead of unions. It is an indictment on Fawu, what are they doing about the situation? There is a lot of laziness in the unions.'

Nyembe emphatically disputes the allegation that the Western Cape is the weakest region in Cosatu: 'No, it is definitely not the weakest region, our region was not mentioned in the last congress as among the regions that needed urgent attention'. But she admits that there were many difficulties in organising, and that historically the region has been weak.

'The labour movement only got off its feet after the formation of Cosatu', she said. The major affiliates, like Numsa and Sactwu, only really got started in the Western Cape in 1987. The South African Municipal Workers' Union (Samwu) only established a region in 1990, whereas previously it was only a Cape Town branch.

Nyembe feels that Cosatu has gone through a turbulent period recently, especially with Fawu, whose internal problems affected its ability to contribute to the region. But 'issues of democracy and worker control are not just issues for Fawu but for all unions and organisations', she says. Other unions are small and struggling to build themselves. These include the public sector unions, whose obstacles have been privatisation and labour legislation. Many of these unions suffered from not having stop-order facilities — for instance the South African Railways and Harbours Workers' Union (Sarhwu) only acquired these facilities last year.

'The problem has also been the fact that different unions, because of their unequal resources, do not have the same ability to respond to campaigns, like the living wage campaign and the workers charter campaign', says Nyembe.

Nyembe says she is concerned about the level of democracy, or the quality of democracy in Cosatu and in different unions. There has to be a system where all levels of the unions are involved in decision- and policy-making:

'Democracy would have to be deepened at different levels. And better communication channels need to be set up. We are to have a range of workshops on the issue of democracy, not democracy per se but related to an issue. We don't want the situation where it is only the larger unions that make decisions and only officials that make policy.'

Campaigns

But the Western Cape clearly has the capacity to rise to the challenge, as the response to the Labour Relations Amendment Bill demonstrates. Unions have largely been fighting problems they face

in their own industries, like retrenchments, which is currently a major problem in the Cape.

Last year refuse workers organised under Samwu had an enormously successful strike which lasted for a month. The demands were for a better working environment and for resignation of the Khayelitsha town councillor. There was a general upsurge in the public sector last year, with health workers and House of Representative workers all taking industrial action over wages.

According to Nyembe: 'We are now reaching a stage in Cosatu where we are rationalising our campaigns. They have to be more focused and strike more of a balance between general workers rights, the political scenario and economic rights. At the last conference Cosatu adopted a campaign against retrenchments and for job creation. In the Western Cape this is particularly important because of the lack of industry.'

Nyembe concedes that campaigns in the Western Cape have not all been successful. Whereas in the Transvaal unions are making progress in the **organisation of women**, in the Western Cape this is not the case. According to her even Sactwu, which has a predominantly female membership, has no women's forum.

Sactwu organiser Preggs Govender explains: 'It was raised as an issue some time ago but not recently - there has been no clarity on whether there should be a women's forum. But soon Sactwu will be embarking on two campaigns, health and safety and childcare, which will have important implications for women.'

Cosatu decided at its last congress to take affirmative action for women. Nyembe is encouraged by the fact that when this is raised in the unions, it meets with no resistance.

The **Living Wage Campaign** was taken up more as a Cosatu campaign rather than with individual unions. 'The issue in individual unions arose during times of strikes. Each union must come up with their own minimum wage. The concept of a general minimum wage is not a useful one, as we are dealing with very different industries and unions' comments Nyembe.

The minimum wage issue has caused much controversy in recent months. She also feels that 'unions should also consider specific times of the year for bargaining as this strengthens the unions and Cosatu.'

The **Workers Charter Campaign** became a priority campaign only in cer-

tain unions, according to Nyembe: 'We had discussions groups around the issue but unfortunately it very quickly moved into a discussion of a Constituent Assembly. We had a special congress to discuss workers rights in the future and where they go - in the law, to companies, or in a constitution. We decided that they go in all three places'.

But the situation regarding the Workers Charter Campaign is not so different from that of the Transvaal, where some unions have put a lot of work into the campaign and others have barely collected demands.

Fighting factionalism

It seems that the labour movement in the Western Cape is not as weak as it was say three years ago, but it has a long way to go before all its problems are resolved. Although some unionists dispute that ideological conflicts are a major issue, it is evident that a lot of time and energy has gone into 'faction fighting'.

Debate is important and crucial - it is the suppression of it that seems to be the problem.

Veteran trade unionist, Lizzie Abrahams, who organised for the food and canning union for over 40 years, is perturbed:

'I am very sad when I see what has happened in Fawu, more time gets wasted trying to solve the problem than actually getting on with union work - but then even so, the problem does not get solved anyway. In fact things just get worse, and many factions do exist. The region has no reason to despair especially if it takes the issue of democracy seriously, and more acceptance and tolerance reigns. But because the region has had this horrible history of conflicts, tensions, and intolerance, changes will not happen overnight. Still it has to happen if the region wishes to build and recruit like it has never done before, and have a qualitatively better organising style'.

It is encouraging that in some quarters there is a commitment to changing styles of operating and deepening the levels of democracy (Nyembe admitting that these have to be reviewed). Old fashioned and intolerant, 'stalinist' ways of operating will have to be buried before any progress will be made. Further, the tendency to gloss over problems only exacerbates difficulties instead of resolving the problems.

* Glenda Daniels is a former Weekly Mail journalist, and joins WIP in May.

NUM demands: Restructure the mining industry!

MBULELO SOMPETHA reports on the crisis facing the mining industry, and its effects on mineworkers and their places of origin

The 7th congress of the National Union of Mineworkers (Num), held in Johannesburg during the last week of April, and attended by more than 800 delegates, was the most challenging in the union's 10-year history.

The most immediate issue was the crisis in the gold mining industry, and this was reflected in the theme of the congress: Restructuring the mining industry for a democratic South Africa. Num wants a restructuring of the mining industry as whole to address this crisis, which includes challenging old-style patriarchal forms of management. The congress also felt that the widespread wave of retrenchments brought on by the crisis had to be dealt with now, as it could not wait for a democratically-elected government to address the issue.

At its last congress in 1989, the union set a membership figure of 400 000 as its target. At the time of this year's congress it had 270 000 paid-up and 90 000 signed-members, a total of 360 000. The massive retrenchments hitting the industry will see a large chunk of its membership disappearing.

So far Num has succeeded in securing a provident fund as well as severance pay in some mining houses to help retrain retrenched members. But in general there has been a clear lack of co-operation from management on the issue. The union views it as a national crisis which it feels should be discussed with the Chamber of Mines, instead of individual mines.

'They don't care a damn about us!' The effects of the current retrenchments cannot be viewed in isolation from the

general problem of massive unemployment in South Africa. If increasing unemployment cannot be checked it will add to the already high levels of instability in the country - now and under a future government.

The number of workers employed by the mining industry at its peak in June in 1987 was 526 000. By the end of 1990 close to 100 000 workers had been retrenched, and according to Num's research 99% of those workers are still without jobs. Chamber of Mines (COM) Chairman Clive Knobbs announced recently that more than 190 000 miners are employed on mines which were unprofitable at the current gold price. If the situation does not improve thousands more workers will soon be retrenched.

The average black miner is among the lowest paid in South Africa. The current average minimum wage for black mineworkers is R500 a month, in contrast to the white average of R3 500. Since its inception the gold mines have been the backbone of the economy. Throughout all those years black workers' standard of living did not improve, and there has been no development in their mostly rural home towns. A Western Transvaal regional organiser of Num expresses his bitterness:

'Mines have been making profits since their establishment in 1886 and for only 2 years that they have been experiencing problems, they are retrenching us with nothing to live on. They do not care a damn about us. I feel that a new democratic government should take control of the mines from the present owners'.

Regional effects

Most of the workers on the mines come from all over Southern Africa - from Lesotho, Botswana, Mozambique, Swaziland, as well as the bantustans. The mineworkers' home areas are very dependent on their wages. For example in both Mozambique and Lesotho mineworkers repatriate 60% of their wages in the form of deferred payment. Some R383 million was remitted to Lesotho by 1989, with Mozambique receiving some R110 million. The economies of these countries have been distorted by colonialism to be suppliers of cheap labour for the mines - with little economic development to sustain them otherwise.

Num estimates that more than 80 000 mineworkers nationally have been retrenched since 1989, 36 000 of which has been in the Free State region alone. Transkei and Lesotho, as the biggest suppliers

of migrant labour, have also been heavily affected by retrenchments, with up to 14 000 workers from Transkei already retrenched. According to the Chamber of Mines' 1990 figures, 100 376 workers were Transkeian migrants, 99 791 were from Lesotho and 48 875 Mozambique. With the threat of more closures thousands more will join others who are already out of work. Retrenchments and closures of mines are likely to turn many small towns into ghost towns if the situation in the mining industry does not improve. Of these, the Free State town of Virginia has taken the worst battering. Over the past 2 years, Rand Mines' Harmony mine, near Virginia, has retrenched 10 000 workers. This has had a devastating effect on the town.

In the nearby Phomolong village, which used to house mineworkers with their families, some houses stand empty. According to the town secretary Marius Davis, there are up to 400 empty houses in town and the council is feeling the pinch from the loss of income on service accounts.

Workers demand retrenchment packages

To ensure that workers get a better deal when retrenched, the Num has proposed that among other things there should be 4 months notice given, 4 weeks pay for each year worked, and workers should receive training. Management's counter-offer has been 1 week's pay for each year worked. This caused Stilfontein workers to stay away from work on 20 March (the mine is due to close at the end of the year).

Despite the great amount of insecurity retrenchments have brought for Stilfontein workers, their resolve to fight for a better deal has not dampened. As one shaft-steward said: 'We want the mine bosses to pay us all so that we can survive while we are look for other work'.

At negotiations with Num recently, the Stilfontein mine-owners offered to set aside R3 million for both a severance package and a fund to retrain both black and white workers. Taking disparities between black and white workers into account, Num feels that this is too little and that some clarity is still needed on how the training is to be conducted.

Workers wary

Stilfontein workers are wary about the reasons management have given for their retrenchment. While they accept that the gold price on the international market is low, they are sceptical about an announce-

ment by the Chamber of Mines that the union should not demand any increases this year. This is supposed to allow management to create 50 000 job opportunities and lessen retrenchments.

Workers are also suspicious about the mines' sub-contracting to companies which have very little or no union presence whatsoever. In this context workers see an attempt to destroy Num. They feel that while the economic reasons for retrenchments may be valid, there are also political reasons. As one Stilfontein worker said:

'As members of Num, we are affiliates of Cosatu which is aligned to the ANC - most likely our next government. They want to make sure that our future state inherits the social problems of the past government, which will be difficult to correct in a short space of time and ultimately cause instability. We hope our congress will try and work out policies which will guide us for the future'.

Racism still the basis for exploitation

Historically, the Chamber of Mines has been responsible for migrant labour system. It has through all these years thrived on a cheap, reliable supply of labour. Various South African governments met its needs by passing tax laws, land laws and pass laws to force black men off the land and work for low wages.

While the apartheid state has finally admitted the failure of its policy of white supremacy, the situation has not improved on the mines. Mineworkers are still herded into overcrowded single sex hostels and compounds, with workers in many hostels still using cement bunkers as beds which are totally unfit for human habitation. Racial discrimination still forms the basis of exploitation of labour. It is against this background that Num calls on mineworkers to formulate an anti-racial discrimination charter, alongside its demand for the nationalisation of the mines.

This strategic industry is suffering from a hundred years of economic mismanagement and as such negotiations for retrenchment packages, though important, will remain palliatives as long as they are not linked to an overall national plan to create jobs in the place of origin of retrenchment victims. To this end Num is calling for an industry-level 'mining summit' between all mine unions and employers to look at the ills faced by the mining industry. In particular, Num wants a role in the restructuring of the industry in order to create jobs. •

An ultra-left pilgrim's progress

Franks Anthony has written a remarkable novel. Like many significant works of literature, what it discloses goes way beyond its own up-front theorising, or probable intentions.

It displays, half knowingly, in its structure, language and story-line, the anatomy of a certain brand of ultra-leftism.

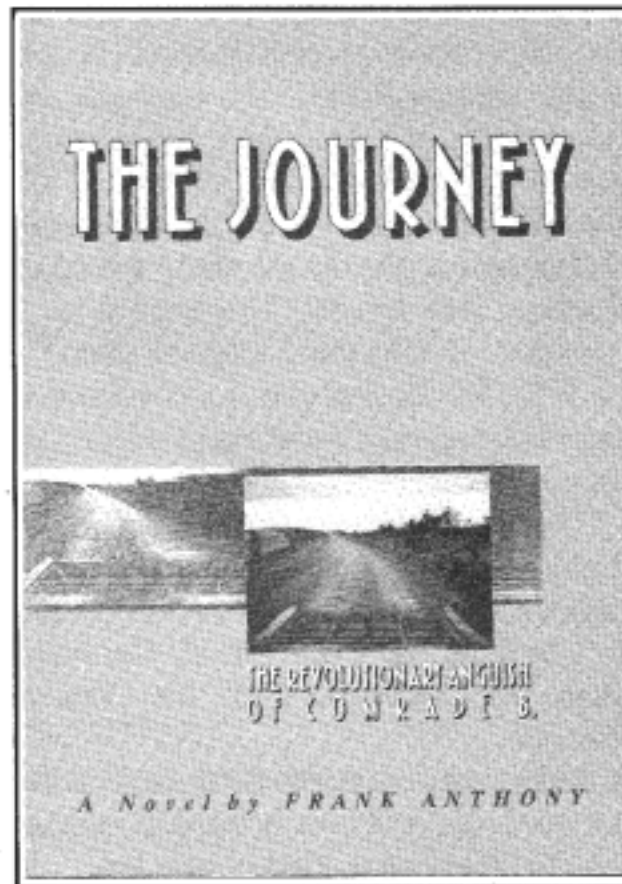
The Journey, set in the late 1980s, is the odyssey of Comrade B. A former Robben Island prisoner, the hero leaves his home city, Cape Town, and skips the border into what is almost certainly Botswana (though it is never named). From there he goes on to a secret rendezvous in a third country (Zambia, Lusaka if I not very much mistaken). The rendezvous is with Comrade Chair (a fictional figure whom I suspect is based on Apdusa's IB Tabata).

Comrade B sets off on this pilgrimage full of revolutionary fervour and confidence in some ultimate triumph of the working class. The specific purpose of the journey is to finalise plans for the belated launching of an armed struggle by the organisation of which B is the deputy and internal leader.

The journey is marred by a series of mishaps. Each step of the way suggests incompetence and a deepset rot within the organisation. Comrade B tries desperately to hold his growing demoralisation at bay. The culmination is the shattering rendezvous with a pathetically sad, corrupt and senile Comrade Chair.

B staggers out of this encounter in deep despair. This is the leader he has idolised (a 'black pearl of unnamed majesty' (p39), 'the socialist revolution personified' (p165), 'the human pinnacle of our vanguard' (p167)). This is the man, 'the most perfect human approximation to the ideal of a Marxist revolutionary of my ken' (p165), who has inspired B in his lifetime commitment, through detention, solitary confinement and 6 years on Robben Island.

Comrade B flies back to country number two (Botswana?) and, in sight of the South African border, climbs up to a cliff edge with the intention of committing suicide. There, literally centimetres



THE JOURNEY: THE REVOLUTIONARY ANGUISH OF COMRADE B.

By Frank Anthony
Ravan Press, Johannesburg (1991)
R29.95

Reviewed by JEREMY CRONIN

from self-annihilation, stripped naked, he looks out across the border, and beyond.

The Vision

His numbed mental finger rests on the rewind button. He loops backwards in imagination, along the trajectory of his outward journey, back through the Karroo, over the Boland, down into the Cape Flats and home.

And this sweeping vista, the classical dying person's 'entire life carried before their eyes', swells into a political vision. It is a vision of massive working class demonstrations.

But the demonstrations have all been 'hijacked', in Frank Anthony's terms, by the 'populists':

'A great silence descended on the crowd. Thousands of eyes looked at me in stupefied surprise. But when they came around they shouted with anger, "Who are you?"'

'I said, "I am the one who came to speak on behalf of the working class!"'

"Who invited you?"

"The working class did."

"We are the working class! We don't know you!" (p223-4)

This final and ultimate rebuff, lived out in imagination, does not propel Comrade B off his ledge to the depths below. On the contrary, the rebuff confirms him in his vocation! It recreates him, it brings him back to life.

"We don't know you!"

"Yes, you do. Only you don't know it yet." (p224)

The Prophet Unrecognised, the Voice in the Wilderness - Comrade B might have had some dreadful blows. But he remains fundamentally unrepentant in his style of politics. In the words of the very last two sentences of the book: 'Only then did I rise to dress myself. There was work waiting, a hell of a lot of work.' (p225)

Politics on the brink

The editor on the back-flap of the book claims there are 'No easy slogans or revivalist incantations here'. Well, maybe the slogans and incantations are not easy, but revivalism is here alright.

The near suicidal end of the book is entirely emblematic of a whole brand of political theory and practice. It is a politics of the strictest and most abstract dogmatism, a politics of the straight and narrow, of walking the brink:

'Such were the narrow parameters within which the revolutionary subsisted. It was in every sense like walking a tight-rope over a chasm whose deadly depths had proven beyond the ken of man. There was for the revolutionary turning neither left nor right. Any turning whatever from the straight course dictated by the revolution led inexorably to self-annihilation. Along the long and arduous road of revolution lay splattered the corpses of men and women who had not heeded the brutal demands of the path they had chosen.' (p70)

It is possible to read passages like these as purely satirical. But I am not so sure. If they are indeed satirical then the satire is coming from a place that cannot

think itself out of its own on-the-edge mind-set.

'Could one be a revolutionist *only* if one's life was so reduced to a single dimension and poised on the edge of total personal catastrophe; that to be an instrument in the service of humankind, of the masses, one had to become so insular?' (p87)

Everything in the book seems to answer this question with a loud and resounding Yes! Insularity, the Prophet Abandoned, the Voice in the Wilderness, these are the things that confirm the orthodoxy of the practitioner. There is no easy populism here. B's odyssey might produce disillusionment with a particular organisation, or with a particular Comrade Chair, but B keeps faith with his political logic.

And in this keeping of faith, the novel discloses the deeper anatomy of ultra-trotskyism. It rests on two fundamental pillars.

On the one hand there is a self that is abstracted out into virtual nothingness, into insularity - the Prophet Unrecognised. It is also a self that is reduced to virtual inactivity, since each action requires such minute moral and political examination. ('A large part of our activism was to prevent retrograde behaviour...' p61).

When Comrade B does act, as in his illegal crossing of the border, the activity is invested with such vast, sweeping historical and existential significance that neither B nor the reader has emotional energy left for much more.

On the other hand, over against the self as nullity, is the sweeping, romantic revolutionary vista: 'Pursuing the goal of revolution compels the pursuer to cast his perception wide, to make the world his stage; to penetrate and comprehend, but also to apprehend, the tidal waves of mass social movement, of social movement on a global scale. His vision perforce becomes wide-angled and majestic in its sweep!' (p38)

That, then, is the essential anatomy of this brand of ultra-leftism: abstraction of the I (and of the here and now on which that I stands) to the point of virtual disappearance. But this virtual disappearance is always conducted on the edge of some grand vista.

No wonder Comrade B doesn't really learn from his disaster. On the contrary, on the edge of suicide from a high place, he resuscitates. And the resuscitation is due precisely to the fact that alone on the brink he is once more back home, sym-

bolically, in the very ultra-leftism that has led him to the physical edge in the first place.

The grand voice

The abstraction of the particular in favour of a grand vista is deeply written into the texture of the novel itself. It is to be found in the strange disjuncture between the grand voice of Comrade B the narrator (sample: 'What was the portent of the deleterious nexus?' - p169), and the voice of Comrade B, the occasionally speaking character in the novel ("Hey man! What's up with you? Why the quiet game, man?" - p32). This last, active, interventionist voice is largely drowned out by the grand, contemplative, theorising voice.

The same process is present in the slightly irritating device of names for the main characters - Comrade B, Comrade R, Comrade M, Comrade Z, Comrade Chair, the Document Man, the Contact Man, etc.

To be sure, this is a well established literary device, used mostly by authors who wish to claim some kind of timeless universality for their subject. But when your mission is the illegal crossing of a southern African border in the late 1980s, the small question of whether your surname happens to be February, Jones or Mompoti actually matters - not the name itself, of course, but all that it signifies about the self.

Comrade B sticks out like a sore thumb in the front-line state into which he escapes. He is detained within hours. But he can only explain his misfortune by suspecting treachery, or by invoking a pseudo-marxist cosmology: 'I had walked across the path of the blow in that configuration of time and space. The real target was the working class.' (p146)

Perhaps a much simpler explanation would be that his name, and therefore everything about him, was not Mompoti.

Well, Comrade B might be guilty of gross misjudgment, my point is that the author aids and abets this kind of misperception with a literary naming device that washes out all signs of ethnicity, specificity, concrete historical reality. (Interestingly, Frank Anthony doesn't quite remain consistent to this device. The one key personage who does have a real name is B's arch rival in the organisation - the treacherous Moonsami. Is the inconsistency a symptom of some unworked through emotion?)

Trotskyism and stalinism

The case of Moonsami raises another fas-

cinating truth laid bare (unwittingly?) by the novel. This is the remarkable resemblance between B's brand of trotskyism and many of the core features of stalinism. I have already quoted some of the adulatory passages on Comrade Chair.

But besides a cult of the personality, there is also a cult of conspiracy and betrayal. The world out there is thick with Moonsamis. When all the romantic revolutionary vistas and cosmology remain unfulfilled, then B quickly assumes 'the most sinister conspiracy', everything becomes 'part of this undeniable conspiracy against me' (p160-1).

Even the most chilling feature of stalinism, the mass purges, has its counterpart here. When B's comrades show the least sign of deviating from the straight and narrow, he dumps them 'on the mass grave of revolutionary has-beens' (p48).

To be sure, this is purging without state power, no Cheka, no Beria. It terminates comradeship, friendship, understanding - but not life itself. Nevertheless, the attitude is chilling enough.

It is in this whole area that, for me, Frank Anthony's *The Journey* throws out its most intriguing challenge. It would be easy, but cheap, to have a good laugh at the misfortunes of Comrade B, holding him at comfortable arm's length. We could read the novel as the well deserved comeuppance of an ultra-left dogmatist.

But Comrade B is not the only person who has to grapple with the contradictory, complex reality of a leadership that once (in its distant exile or inaccessible imprisonment) could be elevated into an infallible ideal.

That idealisation was always infantile. The most outstanding revolutionary leaders have their imperfections, their weak sides. Faced with this mundane reality, we can become suicidal, a-political, or ... we can grow up.

In one of the wisest moments of the novel, Comrade B comes to realise that his idealisation of Comrade Chair, was always a postponement of his own political maturity.

At the end B has possibly outgrown his Comrade Chair complex. But the ideal leader, the authority figure is there to underwrite something else - 'Marxism' as The Line, Dogma, Timeless and Instant Truth (just add water).

I am less sure that B has worked his way out of that one.

• *Jeremy Cronin is a member of the central committee of the SACP, and editor of Umsebenzi and African Communist.* •

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In the event that the editor decides that other than minor editing changes are required, the article will be referred back to the author.

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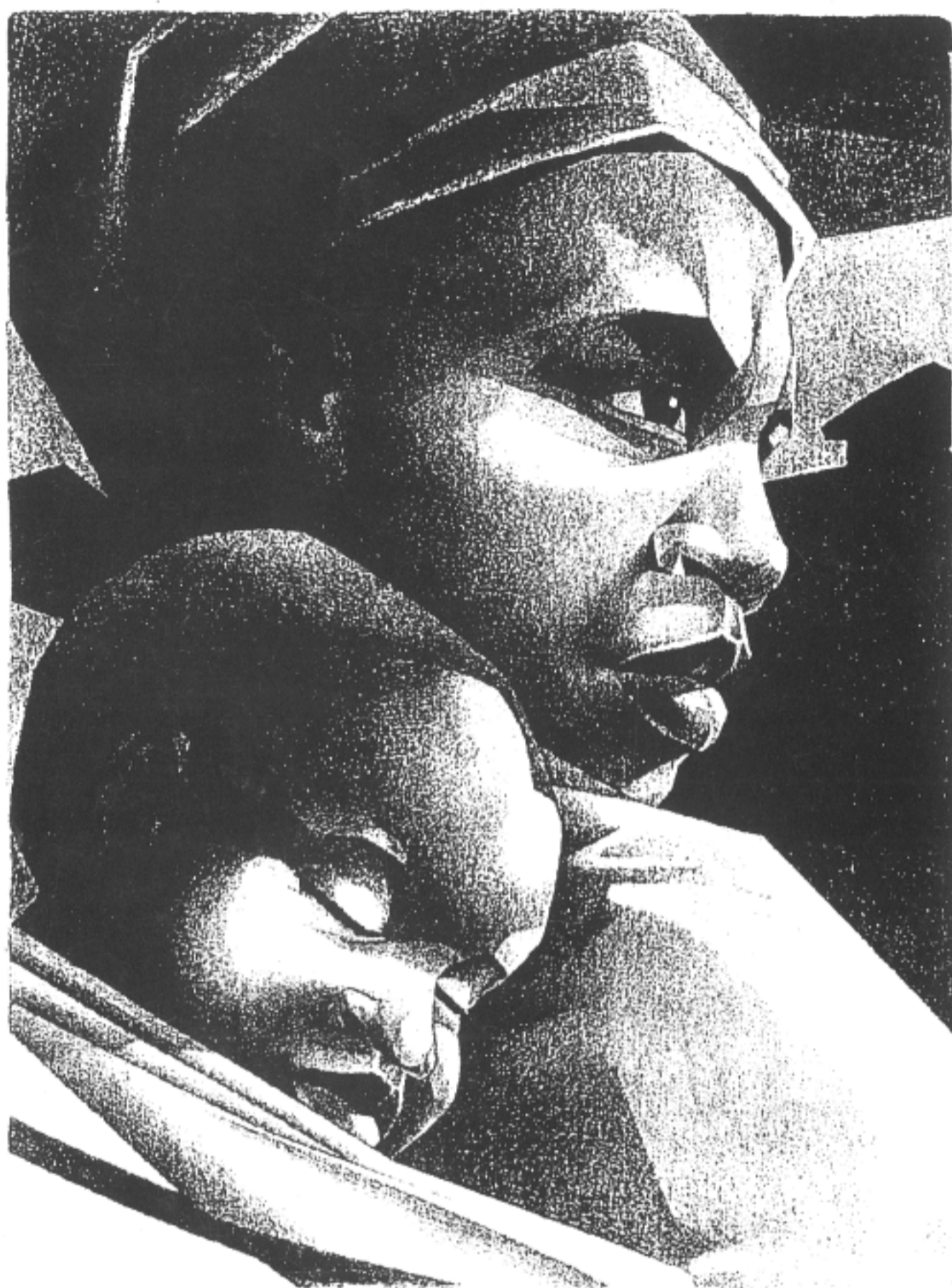
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