reality

Universities
under
threat

Inside:-
G.D.L. Schreiner
on
Natal's response

HOWARD COLLEGE

A JOURNAL OF LIBERAL AND RADICAL OPINION

in this issue . . .

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EDITORIALS

1. Angola

For more than ten years, after those early days of 1975, the South African/Cuban involvement in Angola seems to have been conducted with a certain amount of caution. Now, with the large-scale engagement of both, and perhaps even some Russians, in recent battles, there is a real risk of the whole sub-continent being dragged to disaster.

Some rumours have it that there is a mood of self-congratulatory euphoria abroad in South African military and Government circles over the reported checking and turning back of the 1987 MPLA drive against UNITA. If there is, we hope it isn't the only mood to be found there. Common sense suggests that the predominant one should be anxiety over where South Africa goes from here.

You don't have to be very intelligent to know that this is a war that South Africa can never win. For that to happen the SADF would have to take over the whole of Angola, something which the world will simply not allow. A more likely scene, unless a peaceful solution can be found, is one in which the MPLA continues to control the greater part of the country, is recognised as its legitimate government by the world community, and feels honour-bound every year, when the season is right, to try to re-establish its control over the whole of it. That means clashes of the kind which seem to have taken place in late 1987, on an annual and escalating scale. Only a military maniac could contemplate such a prospect with anything but the greatest anxiety.

In this highly dangerous situation is it not time to go back to the beginning, to how it all began, and to see if what the South African Government feared then, and presumably still does, would not be a great deal less of a risk than what we have now?

It all began, as we recall, because of the South African Government's fears of SWAPO coming to power in Namibia and then, supported by a friendly Angola, pursuing policies hostile to South Africa, becoming closely associated with the Soviet bloc, and allowing the ANC to use its territory as a base.

That a SWAPO government would have been hostile to apartheid is certain, but how far that hostility would have been taken is another question. Not very, having regard to Namibia's economic dependence on South Africa, hindsight suggests. Even if it had gone quite far in the first emotional post-independence flush, we doubt it would have lasted, and suspect that South Africa would have been able to cope with it at far less cost materially and in terms of its long-term security interests, than it has paid and may still have to pay for its Angolan adventures. Mozambique provides the supporting evidence. Even without the destabilisation from which it has suffered we believe that country's self-generated economic disasters would have soon driven it into an accommodation with South Africa. So, too, we guess, Namibia.

Is it too late to turn the clock back?

To hold an election under UN supervision? To help whoever wins it on the way to independence? Surely not. In fact, from the South African point of view, this could be a very good time to do it. We suspect that both the Russians and the Americans will go to considerable lengths to avoid being drawn into a regional conflict whose course and end result would be totally unpredictable. This could include putting pressure on the Angolan factions to make peace, and providing the guarantees of its security on that front that South Africa requires. By some such process a long-term settlement might be reached. There is no way it will be by continuing along the course events are taking in Angola now.□

2. Ambivalence on Violence

Not all that long ago Natal was seen as an island of tranquility in the sea of violence which engulfed most of the rest of the country. This comparative calm was often attributed to the strong presence of Inkatha in the province.

All that has now changed. Natal, and Pietermaritzburg in particular, has become the centre of violence, while in other regions it has subsided. People associated with Inkatha are as much a part of it as anyone else. Ordinary people go in terror. If you ask them what is happening where they live the invariable answer is "The people are killing each other." If you ask them why, they invariably blame it on rivalry between the UDF and Inkatha. If you ask them who is to blame, they blame one side sometimes, sometimes the other, as often as not both.

Both groups stand publicly committed to non-violence, yet it is quite plain that many of their supporters do not take that commitment seriously. Why should they when it is hard to recall a single instance of either taking disciplinary action against one of its members for a violent act, either in Natal or anywhere else?

There is a serious credibility gap facing all the extra-parliamentary groups between what their leaders say about violence and what their followers do and it flows directly from a consistent failure on the part of the leadership, over the years, to act against the violent actions of their own supporters.

It is this failure in the past whose present consequence is a life of terror for ordinary, decent people. And there has been another consequence. Where, before, violence was sometimes the last resort of some elements of the extra-parliamentary groups, it is now often the first. There is a recent example.

In 1979, when the fares were put up on the bus routes serving the Northern Natal resettlement areas of Ezakheni and Osizweni, the people decided to boycott the buses and walk. They did so, some of them over 40 kilometres a day, for weeks, until the fares came down. In November 1987 the taxi fares in the small Natal Midlands town of Mooi River were put up. The almost immediate reaction was to burn the taxis. To boycott the taxis would have involved most people who used them in a walk of little more than five kilometres a day.

There are many reasons, economic, social, the state of emergency, to explain this changed attitude but one at least has been the highly ambivalent position of much of the leadership of all the main extra-parliamentary organisations in recent years, to the use of violence by their own adherents.□

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by Mervyn Frost

THE CONSTITUTION IN FLUX: NATAL'S PRESENT POSITION

The ongoing political process involved in the Kwa-Natal Indaba and the inauguration of the Joint Executive Authority in Natal are both exciting events. They are particularly significant when viewed against the back drop of the traditional mode of South African politics in which all constitutional change is initiated at the top; at central government level. What makes Natal exciting and different at the moment is the sense among sections of both the black and the white public that some form of constitutional progress can be made through the actions of ordinary people without their having to get involved in overtly violent revolutionary processes. This kind of hopefulness is in stark contrast to the helplessness which South Africans often feel in the face of the brutal choice: submit or fight.

But how hopeful are the developments in Natal? Is a just regional dispensation possible? Is the Indaba blueprint the one to strive for? It is not possible to tackle these questions without a grasp of the present constitutional position of Natal. The South African constitution as a whole is in a state of flux and it is my impression that many South Africans do not understand what is going on. Some observers make the mistake of suggesting that because the government has dropped the rhetoric of grand apartheid and has not replaced it with any new and equally precise ideology it must be that the government has resorted to **ad hoc** policies. This is not true. I want to argue that the National Party dominated government has a clear and sophisticated plan for the future constitutional development of this country, that several of the stages of the plan have already been implemented, and that the future stages are not hard to discern. Furthermore, I think that what happens in Natal is of the utmost importance for the unfolding of the greater plan.

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM
Partial Democratisation: A Failed Strategy

Let us look at the present state of constitutional development as a whole and at its component parts. In order to do this we must take note of the way things were. In the years after the National Party came to power it set up a massively complex edifice of laws specifying the ways in which the people of this country would be governend. The complexity was impressive, but the underlying principle was as simple as can be. It was the principle of separate development under National Party domination. This principle was refined to apply to all aspects of people's lives. Four homelands were given autonomy, but the major lever of power, viz the power of the purse, was/is still firmly in the hands of the South African government.

During this stage it would have been difficult to misunderstand the outline of the South African constitutional structure. Nowadays, however, things are different. During the past ten years there has been a spate of legislation which in one way or another has had a bearing on the changing constitutional structure of South Africa. Understanding the underlying logic of the whole process is not as easy as it once was.

The first tentative plans of the government towards reform after the failure of the Coloured Person's Representative Council involved blueprints to incorporate Coloureds and Indians into central government. One such plan involved setting up three separate parliaments at central government level. This was never put into effect and instead in 1983 the new constitution was installed which involved a single three chambered parliament. The underlying logic of this manoeuvre was clear enough. It was aimed at ending the white monopoly on governmental power and establishing a modicum of power-sharing between the elected governments of the three groups involved. Simple extension of the franchise would have brought about either a change of government or a huge enlargement of the opposition in parliament. Instead the three chambered arrangement with a cabinet incorporating the majority parties from the three houses had the effect of incorporating the Indian and Coloured leadership into the government. It was hoped that the Indians and Coloureds in the government would develop interests in common with the existing government. In particular the constitution was designed to ensure that they would have an interest in the stability of the system. Furthermore, it was clearly hoped that the base of electoral support for the government would be expanded.

The 1983 constitution had one feature though that I want to highlight. It involved setting up **democratic** procedures (imperfect ones to be sure) and these required by their very nature that the Indian and Coloured people be invited to come forward and play the democratic game as outlined. This invitation combined with the gallery of world opinion, which had been invited to watch a democratic reform process in progress, created the ideal circumstances for the use of the boycott weapon.

This weapon was seized upon and used by all those internal actors who argued that the new constitution was imperfect because it did not incorporate black South Africans into government at the highest level. Boycotts against the elections for the Indian and Coloured House of the tricameral parliament were successful. Members were

elected on miniscule percentage polls. It was around this issue that the United Democratic Front formed, prospered and extended its activities to include school boycotts, consumer boycotts and the like. Politics escalated to unrest, then to violence and as a result states of emergency were called and are with us still.

In summary then, this the first phase of the constitutional reform process involved changing the rules and inviting some of the previously excluded South Africans in to play politics according to the new rules. This mode of constitutional reform is always open to the boycott weapon. But there are other modes of reforming constitutions which are not so vulnerable to boycotts, these are somewhat more obscure procedures and the South African government is presently hard at work implementing them. It is to these that I now wish to turn.

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

A New Start: Redistributing Government

I cannot consider all of the pieces involved in the changing constitutional structure. These include the proposed National Council, the reform plans for the President's Council, the operation of the changed provincial system of government, the introduction of Regional Services Councils, the Joint Management Committee system, the Joint Executive Authority in Natal, and the Indaba proposals. I shall confine myself to comments on a few of these.

The present reform programme takes place against a background in which all normal politics has been effectively curtailed through various items of legislation and the imposition of the state of emergency. The core notions underlying the government's complex structure of constitutional engineering are:

First, the government has widened the focus of the reform process from a narrow preoccupation with central government to a broader focus which includes all levels of government. What might appear to be piecemeal strategies are part of a comprehensive programme.

Second, the point and purpose of the reform process is no longer primarily aimed at the broadening of democracy through the creation of new representative institutions, but at the creation of multi-racial power sharing executive structures at all levels of government.

Third, the creation of such structures of government is to serve the purpose of creating common interests between different regions and groups where none previously existed. As is well known the parts of a federation have a common interest in the wellbeing of the whole. It is this type of common interest whch it hopes to forge.

Fourth, this federal type practice will, the government hopes, introduce a dimension of redistribution of resources at local level.

Fifth, there is a cost cutting dimension to the reform strategy. Separate governments, providing independent services to each group in South Africa are expensive. Several of the reforms are aimed at providing economies of scale with regard to the provision of services

Sixth, the overall strategy is to create local government by local people paid for by local people (because the regions of South Africa are already racially defined

regional government translates in a more or less straightforward way into ethnic government.)

Seventh, an important goal of the present reforms is to ensure that local governments have the financial and police muscle to govern effectively.

I want to repeat the core idea of this whole reform package. The government is seeking to create multiple sites of multi-racial government and thereby aiming to defuse the charge of white rule in South Africa. It seeks to create common interests between whites and blacks where none previously existed. These common interests might pave the way for the introduction of democratic practices at a later stage.

What the government does not intend to do is to devolve overall policy making power. There is a huge drive to overall coherence behind this scheme. This requires centralised policy making. The local governments are to be responsible for carrying out policy, they are to have the right and ability to raise the monies necessary to do so, they are to catch the flack for local government failures, and they are to have the police power to govern properly. Nevertheless, overall policy making remains at central government level.

REGIONAL SERVICE COUNCILS

The future outline of the overall structure can best be seen in the Regional Service Council system. This system has already been installed in several parts of the country, but is blocked in Natal because of opposition emanating from the KwaZulu government. I suspect that matter is probably at present under renegotiation and that a modified RSC package will be accepted in the not too distant future. The government's initial mistake in this regard was not to have consulted with the KwaZulu government in designing the RSC system. The benefits of the system are such that I doubt very much whether the KwaZulu government will, in the long run, reject them **in toto.**

Sometimes in the structure of a cell one can see in microcosm the structure of the composite body of which the cell is but a part. I want to argue that in the RSC system one can see in outline what the government envisages for the whole. Let us look at the micro blueprint contained in an RSC.

The legacy of grand apartheid is such that South African cities consist for the most part of separate areas, where each area is inhabited almost exclusively by people who have been classified as belonging to a specific group (whites, blacks, coloureds, asians), and within each of these areas there are in place separate representative bodies of one kind or another to provide government for those areas. The RSC is an indirectly elected committee designed to provide a level of government overarching these territorial components with a view to providing for their common interests especially with regard to the provision of services such as the provision of water, electricity, refuse collection, sewage and so on. The revenue for the provision of these is to be raised within the area to be governed.

I find it difficult to find a word to adequately describe this form of government. Some light is thrown on this form of government by calling it a "racial/territorial federation". It is not a federation proper in that previously autonomous units have not voluntarily come together. Instead the sub units have been forced to federate. It also lacks that essential component of federations which is a rigid constitution. In

RSCs the constitution has been imposed from above and the powers on high can change it at will. But an RSC is a mini federation in these ways:

(a) A superior level of government is put in place over a set of inferior regional governments.

(b) The spheres of competence of each level of government are clearly marked out, i.e. the sub units retain autonomy with regard to specified matters, in particular the "cultural" affairs peculiar to the people living in that territory. Similarly the central or federal government has been given carefuly stipulatd tasks.

(c) The arrangement has a confederal aspect in that the representatives of the areas on the RSC committee are indirectly elected, i.e. the white, black, asian and coloured municipalities will each elect who is to represent it on the RSC committee.

(d) Like all federal governments the central government will be richer than the sub unit governments and will have to effect a measure of redistribution from the rich components to the poor ones.

What is happening with the institution of the RSC system is a major change in the constitution of local government and we need to notice the following political aspects of the process. For the sake of clarity let us not think about a whole set of RSCs, but just one.

First, blacks (non whites) are brought into the central government of this RSC without the franchise system being tinkered with at all. Whites have traditionally been terrified of modifying the constitution to involve blacks at central level because they feared that any new arrangement would have to give the preponderance of power to a black majority. In the RSC blacks are brought into central government in what looks like a mere rearrangement of administrative matters. But the new arrangement is not merely what it appears to be.

Second, a major constitutional reform is brought about without the constitutional process falling into what I call the "boycott trap". Wherever a government tries to reform by drawing up a game plan and then inviting the outsiders in to play, the outsiders have every incentive to boycott, i.e. to refuse to play until they get their preferred set of rules. What the outsiders want will be far beyond what the planners are prepared to give and a stalemate will result with a hardening of attitudes all round. In the long run violent conflict is likely. The RSC strategy is designed to achieve political reform through administrative sleight of hand and avoids falling into the boycott trap.

Third, although the RSC we are considering may be wracked by internal dissension about the amount of representation each area has on the RSC central committee (as the plan stands at present the representation is inordinately skewed in favour of the white areas) and about the proportions in which the resources are distributed, nevertheless these differences will be minor compared to the common interest this RSC as a whole will have in getting a larger slice of the cake compared to competing RSCs in other areas. This competition will force multiracial regional interests to emerge.

Fourth, notice that for black areas prior to the formation of the RSC resources used to come from central government via the Administration Boards via the Department of Plural Affairs (as it was once known). This responsibility has now been pushed down to the RSC.

THE JOINT EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY OF NATAL/KWAZULU
A Macro RSC in Embryo

It is not surprising that the government agreed to accept the outcome of negotiations which had taken place between the Natal Provincial government and the KwaZulu government over a number of years and which had culminated in a set of proposals for the establishment of a Joint Executive Authority. A little thought reveals that the JEA is a macro RSC in embryo. It thus fits in nicely with the overall logic of the government's reform plan. All the core elements of a large RSC are there. The component parts of the arrangement are territories occupied predominantly by a given racial/ethnic/cultural group, each with its own provincial government structure. The JEA establishes an overarching level of government, with the people sitting on it getting there indirectly through the existing governments of the region (the Zulus on the JEA get on to it via the KwaZulu government and the whites via the Provincial government). Like the RSC the JEA is directed to provide a set of specified services to the component parts. However, the parallel with a JSC is not quite right as things stand at present because the whites and Asians on the Provincial Executive Council are not appointed via institutions of local white and Asian government, but by central government.

A KWA-NATAL LEGISLATURE?

The JEA proposals negotiated between KwaZulu and Natal were acceptable to the government and enacted in the Joint Executive Authority Act 80, 1986 because they fitted in with the emerging logic of their reform proposals. The blueprint which emerged from the Kwa-Natal Indaba does not fit in with that logic and has accordingly been rejected. It is not difficult to understand why. As the Indaba proposals now stand the lower house would be dominated by a Zulu majority, albeit a conservative Inkatha based majority. The National Party has on several occasions said that it is not in principle opposed to the re-establishment of a provincial legislature, but it is concerned about what it terms the "protection of minorities". No doubt it considers that one way of achieving this might be through a three parliament system within Natal, with whites represented in one parliament, Indians in another, and the Zulus in the KwaZulu legislative assembly. The members of the JEA would then presumably be indirectly nominated through these parliaments. (Note this would parallel the RSC system in which municipal parliaments are elected by each group and then in turn elect or nominate people to the RSC).

Once again I want to point out some of the political niceties about the way in which the government has tackled the process of reform at provincial level. Had the government tried drawing up a plan to incorporate blacks directly into the provincial government system the whites would have turned the plan down motivated no doubt by their traditional fears of majority domination. This may not have applied in the Cape anbd Natal, but would have definitely been true in the Orange Free State and the Transvaal. However by legislative fiat the government abolished the old elected provincial councils and established a modicum of inter-racial power sharing in the provincial executive committees. Furthermore many of the powers which used to be lodged with the central government department of Bantu

Affairs and Administration went first to the Department of Constitutional Development and Planning and have now been devolved to the provincial government. Thus the provincial governments now have more powers than the old provincial councils had.
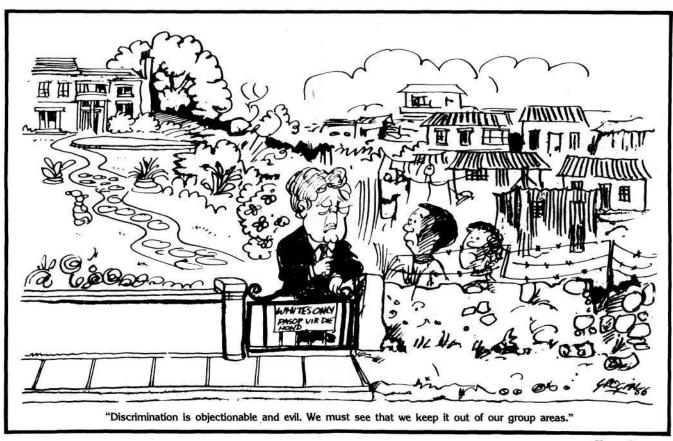
As a next step the government is in effect saying to the various groups in the provinces that they may now set about devising ways of installing democratic processes for electing the multi-racial power sharing government which is already in place. I cannot imagine people responding negatively to such an offer. The rule being followed here would then seem to be "Establish multi-racial power sharing government first, democratise afterwards".

SOME CONCLUDING COMMENTS

What is extraordinary about the constitutional manoeuvring which I have outlined is that the government, in implementing it, is not too preoccupied with the whole problem of legitimacy. In documents I have read and in ministerial pronouncements the government priorities are first to secure and maintain stability, second to establish good government which provides the services which people need and only in the third place will it then turn to the whole problem of legitimacy. The thinking guiding this order of priorities is that when a government provides good services it will then be comparatively easy to win legitimacy. This is in sharp contrast to the thinking behind many opposition groups who argue that any new constitutional dispensation must first have legitimacy before it can operate and provide services.

The other remarkable thing about the constitutional engineering efforts of the government is the way in which no attention is paid to involving any of the existing black political organisations such as the ANC, the UDF and the PAC to mention but three. These organisations, which are political realities, are simply ignored.

In this paper I have tried to portray as clearly as possible what I discern the logic of the government's reform plan to be. It is only with a proper understanding of this that we might properly evaluate possible plans for the future of the region.□

"Discrimination is objectionable and evil. We must see that we keep it out of our group areas."

Tony Grogan
Reprinted from the Black Sash Calendar, 1987.

by G. D. L. Schreiner

THE UNIVERSITIES, FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND GOVERNMENT

A short while ago, on an otherwise unremarkable evening, the television programme Network provided South Africans with some moments of high ironic comedy. This was the sight of the Minister of National Education, who belongs to a government which supports political censorship, control of press freedom and the total banning of some organisations and their views, hotly defending academic freeom and, in particular, freedom of speech on our campuses. He was doing this in order to explain why he had found it necessary to intervene in the traditional freedoms of the Council of South African Universities. In a series of specious statements (i.e. statements that seem to be fair, attractive or plausible, but are wanting in genuineness or sincerity) he claimed that, because, on some campuses, there had recently been occasions on which speakers had been prevented from putting their views, the Councils of those and other Universities should lose their longstanding right to autonomous control of discipline over their students and staff. It was, he claimed, now necessary for the Minister, acting through the various "eie-sake" Ministers of Education, to intervene. The form of the intervention is simple; it is a ministerial instruction to the Chairmen of University Councils defining conditions in relation to the disciplining, of both staff and students, which, if not fulfilled, entitles the Minister, at his discretion, to decrease the amount of money available to that University from the state subsidy.

Before discussing the wisdom of this intervention further, it would seem necessary to describe briefly what has been happening at South African Universities in recent years. It is necessary to ask why it is that certain newspapermen have attacked the authorities of some Universities and accused them of bias and of being "soft" on disciplinary action in relation to incidents which affect freedom of speech. It is necessary to ask, further, why it is now that such confrontational issues are appearing on our campuses.

It is certainly true that recent years have shown an increase in the number of occasions on which confrontation between invited speakers and parts of University communities has occurred. The circumstances surrounding the invitations that have been issued and the projected events themselves have been varied. On some campuses, speakers who represent "the left" have not been issued with invitations to speak. Indeed, this goes further, in that some student organisations, widely recognised at other South African Universities, are unable to obtain formal recognition and correspondingly find difficulty in having their views put forward on those campuses. On the other hand, on other campuses those who have been prevented from speaking have ranged from homeland leaders who adhere to their expressed intention of working within the system through to official representatives of organisations such as Unita, who were invited by students of a more conservative political persuasion and arrived on at least one campus with an armed bodyguard. One of the more highly publicised incidents concerned Mr Conor Cruise O'Brien. He was prevented from speaking on two campuses to which he had been invited, not because of the political views he would have expressed, but because he was seen to be an academic scab — a breaker of the overseas academic boycott which a significant number of students and some staff see as a necessary step in support of reform processes in South Africa. This rejection of O'Brien as a speaker should be seen as in stark contrast to the refusal to allow another speaker to use an invitation to speak on a University platform because he was perceived to be a person who had committed political crimes against those in his own community who disagreed with him.

In attempting to understand what is happening within South African Universities in relation to "freedom of speech" and who may be invited and by whom to use University platforms, it is necessary to bear three points in mind.

The first, is that there are certain points of view which cannot be propogated either from a platform or from the floor in opposition to views from the platform without the proponent of these views placing him- or her-self in danger of arrest. This is because of a number of laws in this country which make it impossible to further the aims of certain organisations. The opportunity then that should be available in a University which should at all times be concerned with rational argument and discussion about differing points of view is not there. The dice are loaded — certain views may be openly supported — others may not.

The second point that needs consideration is that no University community is now isolated from the pressures that exist in South African society as a whole. The external polarisations that now exist and which were strongly exacerbated by the exclusion of Black South Africans from the recent constitutional changes which led to the tricameral parliamentary system, play an important part in influencing the attitudes and actions within University communities. Black student communities, whether at ethnic or open Universities are members of both this University and external communities. In this they are no different from other students, but they are subjected to peculiarly strong pressures not to be, or not to be seen to be, isolated from their own wider communities. They are therefore asked to demonstrate their solidarity with the non-University Black community and are asked to do this by supporting the external groups' actions. Because there is no parliamentary way in which Black South Africans may exert political pressures, they have to use the only methods which are available to them to express their indignations. These are necessarily of the confrontational type — boycotts, strikes and, perhaps, even more severe forms of direct action. A part, then, of the student bodies in those Universities who have really significant numbers of Black students have demands placed upon them which cut across the University's

desire for calm and rational discussion of all sides of social and political issues. It must be expected that as the external, non-University, tensions increase and necessarily take the form of confrontational behaviour, this will be reflected inside University communities.

The third point which needs recognition concerns only two kinds of Universities. In Universities which derive their student communities essentially from the Black South African community, it is highly probable that they will find tensions arising internally between those who favour a more conservative working within the system approach and those who have lost faith that this approach can lead to any adequate reform process. In those Universities which now have significant Black student populations, the student body is pulled in two diametrically opposing directions. One part is concerned with conscription and is increasingly having the experience of being used to back the forces of law and order. The other part is liable to be at the receiving end of such actions and there can be no wonder that there is a rising tension between these two groups within a single University community. One of the manifestations of this rising tension concerns the issuing of invitations to visiting speakers to use University platforms for the furthering of their views. There is no wonder then that incidents have occurred in which speakers have been prevented from speaking, posters and pamphlets have been torn down or destroyed, and that it is easy to make the interpretation that some invitations have been issued which are perceived as deliberately provocative. This must be seen against the first point mentioned above, that the laws of the country exclude many speakers whose views are sincerely held but may not form part of the South African debate. But it must be asked whether the Councils of those Universities where such incidents have occurred have failed in their duty to the educational purpose and obligations of their Universities. It is generally true that these Councils have achieved, very successfully, the completion of the academic year. Although there has been considerable publicity, particularly about incidents at the Universities of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand, neither University has not completed its annual academic programme successfully. All those Universities which have strongly defended academic freedom and in particular freedom of speech in the past, have condemned those incidents which have limited these freedoms. There have been independent commissions of enquiry about the worst of such infringements and Councils have acted on those recommendations which are feasible.

What then has the relevant Minister done then in writing to the Councils of our Universities and involving Section 27(1) of the Universities Act of 1955. First, he has strengthened the hand of those who wish to disrupt our Universities. He has done this by weakening the position of each University Council as it applies what it considers to be appropriate disciplinary action in each new set of circumstances. For each Council now faces the threat that, if their action is found by the Minister to be inappropriate or inadequate, he may remove from that University a part or all of its state subsidy. In normal years, i.e. years in which the economic conditions are such that no arbitrary cut is imposed on the state contribution, this would amount to more than 75 percent of the expenditure of a residential University. It is clear that no University Council could hope to carry out its responsibility to the teaching and research endeavour of its University if such an action were taken by the Minister.

Indeed, such an action would be the most certain way of preventing the successful completion of an academic year — one of the expressed aims of the conditions.

Secondly, the Councils of Universities are charged with preventing the use of University premises and equipment of all kinds for the promotion, support or organising of any of a number of activities, including boycotts of either particular firms or particular products, work stay-aways etc. The Council is charged, too, with taking disciplinary action against such staff and students. It is entirely inappropriate that University Councils should be made to function as extensions of government law enforcement. Either the matters contained in the Minister's conditions are lawful or they are not. If they are not, the due process of the law should apply as it does to all citizens not connected with Universities and University members whether students or staff should not be subject to the double jeopardy of punishment by the law and by the institution. There is a paragraph published in an advertisement from the University of Natal which summarises very effectively the objection to this part of the Minister's conditions.*

"The laws which the Universities are required to enforce on pain of withdrawal of state subsidies, indiscriminately modify basic rights (including rights vital to the proper functioning of a University), invest public officials with vast and unchecked powers, provide for the suppression of political dissent, and abolish hallowed procedures and safeguards for the protection of citizens against injustice. It is implicit in the conditions that the criterion for ministerial action to withdraw subsidies is the extent to which the Universities are willing and able to enforce these contentious laws and **not** the extent to which they are successfully carrying out their educational objectives and fiscal responsibilities." It should also be added that this responsibility imposed on the Councils is not confined to activities on University campuses.

Finally, the Council is charged with reporting to the Minister "any incidents of unrest, or disruption or any other occurrence against the happening of which the preventative measures . . . are directed". The Council must also report its own actions and if these do not meet the Minister's requirements after an intervening period, the subsidy may be withdrawn. Again it is an inappropriate activity for our Councils who may reasonably claim that they have enabled their Universities to fulfil their educational objectives while preserving a totally effective fiscal responsibility.

There remains a question which must be asked. Why is it so that only certain Universities have taken such sharp exception to these Ministerial conditions? It can only be that those Universities that appear to have accepted this new imposition have not yet realised the full impact that these conditions will have on the real atmosphere of enquiry which is integral to the concept of a University. True educational and intellectual endeavour cannot be maintained in institutions which are divided within themselves or in institutions in which the members are by virtue of these externally imposed restrictions likely to be excluded from the international body of knowledge which is a part of their life-blood. All South African Universities need to be a part of the world's intellectual endeavour and will place themselves in peril if they ignore this fact.□

*The full texts of this advertisement and of a statement previously issued by the University Senate follow.

UNIVERSITY OF NATAL

STATEMENT

by P. de V. Booysen, Vice Chancellor and Principal and Chairman of the Senate
G. C. Cox Chairman of the Council

"On 19th October 1987, the ministers of state responsible for educational matters in South Africa, purporting to act in terms of certain provisions of general legislation relating to universities, imposed certain conditions on South African universities and indicated that non-compliance with them could lead to the withdrawal of state subsidies. Though on the surface these conditions appear to be concerned with the maintenance of normal university functions such as teaching and research and with the proper use of public funds, in effect they seek to constitute the universities as the enforcement agencies, both on and off their campuses, for some of the most objectionable provisions of the government's security legislation and to extend political control to the university campuses."

"The laws which the universities are required to enforce on pain of withdrawal of state subsidies, indiscriminately modify basic rights (including rights vital for the proper functioning of a university), invest public officials with vast and unchecked powers, provide for the suppression of political dissent and abolish hallowed procedures and safeguards for the protection of citizens against injustice. It is implicit in the conditions that the criterion for ministerial action to withdraw subsidies is the extent to which the universities are willing and able to enforce these contentious laws and **not** the extent to which they are successfully carrying out their educational objectives and fiscal responsibilities."

"The University of Natal, through its Senate and Council, has declared its opposition to the ministerial conditions and its inability to acquiesce in them. Notwithstanding the disturbed societal conditions that surround it, the university has maintained an internationally recognised record of scholarly achievement. Without external interference or coercion, it has successfully maintained all of its academic and research programmes and has dealt with threats to these activities in a manner that has accorded with the highest traditions of academic institutions and minimised the risk of conflict, division and disorder. The University has also fully honoured all of its fiscal obligations. The University fully intends to continue with its important task of advancing and disseminating knowledge through free enquiry and the free exchange of information, opinions and ideas. It is also committed to maintaining the free and stable order that is essential for true educational and intellectual endeavour."

"The conditions which the government is seeking to impose on the university will jeopardise rather than promote that important endeavour. Amongst other things, the enforcement of the conditions will create strife within the university, will alienate it from large sections of the wider community and isolate it from the international community of scholars. The conditions will also bring the university's internal disciplinary proceedings into disrepute by undermining their impartiality and objectivity, and will almost certainly render them unworkable. In short, the conditions are an intolerable intrusion into university autonomy and freedom, a recipe for strife and disorder and a threat to the entire academic enterprise."

"The university, moreover, believes that the ministerial conditions, in addition to being unnecessary and harmful, are an improper exercise of statutory powers. Accordingly, the university proposes, at the earliest opportunity, to challenge their validity before a court of law."

P. de V. Booysen, Vice Chancellor and Principal and Chairman of the Senate

G. C. Cox, Chairman of the Council

STATEMENT

(by the Senate of the University of Natal, 28th October, 1987)

It was unanimously RESOLVED to submit the following statement to the University Council:

"The Senate of the University of Natal has given careful consideration to the letter, under date 13 October 1987, addressed by the Minister of Education and Culture (House of Assembly) to the Chairman of the University Council, and to the accompanying conditions imposed on the Unviersity by the Minister under Section 25(1) of the Universities Act (No. 61 of 1955).

These conditions mark a change in State/University relations of a profoundly disturbing nature. In particluar, Senate wishes to draw attention to the following:

1. The imposition of the conditions constitutes an invasion of the University's autonomy, and an unwarranted interference in the management, by the established organs of university government, of university affairs.

2. The conditions seek to make the university a criminal law enforcement agency, which is a wholly inappropriate function for an educational institution.

3. The conditions require of the University that it enforce laws (including provisions of the Internal Security Act 1982 and the emergency regulations published under the Public Safety Act 1953) which are legitimately viewed by large sections of the University community and the wider public as unacceptable for the reasons that they:

   (i) indiscriminately suspend or modify the basic rights of citizens, including rights vital for the proper functioning of a university;

   (ii) invest public officials with vast and unchecked powers;

   (iii) provide for the suppression of political dissent;

   (iv) abolish hallowed safeguards and procedures for the protection of citizens against injustice.

4. The enforcement by the University of these contentious laws will create division and conflict within the University community, and will endanger the peace and order that the Minister's regulations purport to further. Moreover, such enforcement will alienate the University from large sections of the wider community.

5. Compliance with the Minister's conditions whether enforced or voluntary, will isolate the University from the international community of scholars. The cultural boycott of South Africa, which has already assumed serious proportions, will be given an enormous impetus, and is likely to be extended by the non-recognition of South African degrees, the termination of academic exchanges (including exchanges of people, information and ideas) and an embargo on academic publications. These developments will gravely injure both the universities and the wide South African community in respect of the furtherance of knowledge and technology in all fields, including the sciences.

6. The Minister's conditions will bring the University's existing disciplinary procedures into disrepute by undermining their impartiality and objectivity, and will probably render them unworkable since service on disciplinary courts will become unacceptable to members of the academic community.

7. The application by the Minister of restrictions on the University's subsidy has, as its logical end-point, a situation in which the University, for want of adequate funding, may be unable to ensure the continuation of all its academic programmes — i.e. the very situation which such financial restrictions are purportedly intended to prevent.

8. Notwithstanding the disturbed societal conditions that surround it, the University has maintained an internationally recognised record of distinguished scholarly achievement, and has served the people of this country with dedication through teaching and research. Without external interference or coercion, it has successfully completed its academic programmes year after year, and it has dealt with threats to those activities in a manner that has both accorded with the highest traditions of academic institutions and has minimised the risk of conflict, division and disorder. There is, thus, no need for ministerial intervention, and the Senate regards the conditions imposed upon the University by the Minister, not simply as unacceptable, but as ill-considered, illogical and wholly unnecessary.

In the grave circumstances that now face the University,

Senate REAFFIRMS its commitment to:

   (i) the dissemination and advancement of knowledge through free enquiry, and free exchange of information, opinions and ideas; **and**

   (ii) the maintenance of the good order that is essential for free education and intellectual endeavour.

Since these commitments are fundamentally threatened by the conditions imposed on the University by the Minister,

Senate solemnly DECLARES its refusal and indeed its inability to acquiesce in those conditions, and CALLS upon the University Council to use every means at its disposal to rid the University of this wholly unjustified and unacceptable imposition." □

by David Welsh

THE FAITH OF A DEMOCRATIC LIBERAL

(An address to P.F.P. members. We hope it will stimulate discussion in REALITY — Editorial Board)

The events of the past six months have left us battle-weary and shell shocked. The frustrations of being a small, preponderantly white opposition party in a seemingly intractable situation are palpable. Some, no doubt, believe that we have been finally marginalised or made irrelevant as far bigger antagonistic forces face up for the final apocalyptic clash.

Frustration can take several forms, and not the least destructive of these is a tendency to ideological faction-fighting and hair-splitting over rather small strategic and doctrinal points. It can also lead to a search for surrogate targets as displaced aggression seeks a release for its pent-up energy.

I have no intention of offering you advice on immediate strategic issues: I do not have the skills for that, and in any case it would be presumptuous on my part to attempt to do so.

Rather, I want to stand back and look at some of the values that underpin our commitments. I do so for two reasons: first, because many need to be reassured that liberal values have a long and honourable record in South Africa, not as an exotic import but as the thoroughly indigenised strain of a powerful and universal set of political beliefs; and secondly, because, as I shall argue, only liberal values are compatible with properly democratic forms of government.

Central to liberalism has been the belief that the individual is endowed with certain rights. The rightless individual is a stunted, diminished creature because, lacking that space or freedom, means that he or she is denied the opportunity of maturing into an autonomous, moral being.

The securing of human rights, universal adult suffrage, free elections, and the independence of the judiciary — these are the core elements of democratic liberalism. I was a little surprised to read, as a criticism of the PFP, that it stands for "a liberal, Western non-racial democracy, which may be a noble ideal, but means nothing to those who have no homes and are squatting in the veld".

I should have thought that empowerment by means of the vote, being secure in the possession of rights against the arbitrary exercise of power (such as forced removals), and protection against racial discrimination would be welcomed by those to whom this supposedly alien system "means nothing". The whole struggle against apartheid has been a struggle for human freedom and dignity, which stand at the core of the liberal idea. Governments in liberal democracies do not destroy defenceless communities and dump them on the veld.

It is true that liberalism's origins are Western — so, for that matter are socialism's. The point is surely that democratic liberalism has transcended its geographical origins and become more universal in its application, and even more universal in its appeal. Indeed, no other system can rival its appeal.

Liberal-democratic systems have not thrived in Africa: perhaps only Botswana, Senegal and Mauritius come close to meeting their criteria: but the point is that so-called "Western" forms of government are those most widely aspired to by black leaderships who seek to restore constitutional government.

Similarly, in its political sections the Freedom Charter suggests very strongly a liberal-democratic type of political system as the goal.

More to the point is whether, given the critique of democratic liberalism, any society has produced a more effective and more equitable system. I have yet to hear of one, and until I do, I will continue to believe that a system which provides for the peaceful change of government and secures rights to its citizens represents a major feat of human achievement, which South Africans would be wise to strive to emulate.

All I have said begs the question of whether these utopian principles are capable of successful implementation in South Africa, with its legacy of deep division and raw conflict. Liberal-democracy has not fared well in deeply divided societies. Democracy, in one of its dimensions, is a way of regulating conflict, but its fabric is delicate and the intensity of racial or ethnic conflict may rip it to shreds.

The liberal-democrat has to accept long odds; but the question is whether any other system has a better track record in securing stability and justice in divided societies; and the answer is no.

This brings me to a controversial aspect of PFP policy — the minority veto. I shall say little about it since it is the principal subject of a Party commission of which I am a member. All I shall say is that it was not inserted into the policy as a covert means of protecting racial privilege. Rather, it was an effort to cope with the besetting problem of every divided society, namely, how do you cope democratically with the distinct possibility that the operation of competitive politics will produce permanent majorities and permanent minorities, with the latter being excluded in perpetuity from a share in power?

This was the problem of Northern Ireland, where from 1921 to 1972 the parliament or Stormont conducted its affairs along formally democratic lines but with the result that the large Catholic minority formed a permanent and powerless opposition. In another unhappy case, Sri Lanka, a comparable exclusion from a share of power largely explains the turbulence of the Tamil minority. Many other examples

could be cited. Domination of minorities by majorities is hardly more democratic than the reverse.

South Africa is different from all of these in one crucial respect: we cannot predict with any certainty what configuration of political groupings would crystallise as parties fought fully inclusive democratic elections under circumstances of voluntary association, i.e. without compulsory membership of statutorily defined population categories.

It would be a fair bet to suppose that both racially mixed and racially exclusive parties would be thrown up in the process. It is highly likely that South Africa's legacy of racial, class and ideological divisions would impress itself upon the party system. A non-racial democracy is the ideal, but for non-racialism as an animating spirit to penetrate the warp and woof of society in general and the political system in particular will take time.

I have tried neither to defend nor to criticise the minority veto. My concern is more with the problem that the veto was intended to cope with. That the problem is a real one is hardly deniable: in one form or another it recurs in every divided society. Whether the veto is the most appropriate way of dealing with it is ultimately for the Party to decide.

While I am a believer in constitutions and constitutionalism, I am not so naive as to suppose that constitutions alone can regulate and mitigate major social conflicts. Whatever constitutional mechanism we ultimately propose will have to be construed as a secondary line of defence against the abuse of power.

Ultimately, the best protection for minorities, in whatever shape or form they crystallise, will be derived from three interlinked factors: their usefulness to the majority, their interdependence with the majority, and the extent to which they are perceived as non-threatening by the majority.

A second set of considerations turns on how we suppose the transition to a democratic system might occur. The question invites endless speculation, but I would say that it is inconceivable that a position will be reached where today's dominated groups could simply write their own constitution and impose it. I do not believe in the apocalypse, or the "big-bang" theory of change. I foresee rather a long process of struggling to break out of a deadlock.

It is this deadlock or "no-win" situation that is the major feature of South Africa today. Blacks have acquired, or are acquiring a veto power in society as a result of their increased labour power, growing consumer power and their sheer weight of numbers, to name but a few of their resources. The old order of domination has lost all its legitimacy, and it will find it increasingly difficult to coerce and repress in the way that it has done historically. At the same time, the state has not used much more than a quarter of its potential coercive capacity in dealing with the violence of the past three years — and in saying this I am, of course, aware that it is the state's structural violence that was largely responsible for the violence in the first place. The point is that the revolution is unlikely to happen.

Deadlocks can last a long time and they can inflict a devastating toll on the society as it diverts more of its energies into destructive conflict. It is not easy to persuade conflicting factions to reach a compromise, and to begin to rechannel their joint energies into the creative task of reconstruction.

Either there will be an historic compromise in South Africa: or we are doomed to a wasteland.

Political settlements become feasible when conflicting factions mutually recognise that the conflict is deadlocked, and that neither is going to be able to impose its will on a comprehensively defeated adversary: both will sustain severe losses, but neither will be eliminated as a force. The crucial mutual perception requires a mutual appreciation of the adversary's strength and staying power — and I fear we are still some way off from that critical threshhold.

Were it to be reached, the next stage of conflict accommodation, in turn, becomes feasible: that is, that a compromise, while not securing to either side everything that they want, at least holds out the promise of an end to violence and mutual destruction, as well as important material and psychic benefits as the joint task of reconstruction is enabled to get underway.

It is here, I believe, that what the PFP has been saying may ultimately bear fruit. It has been advocating the politics of accommodation and the politics of power-sharing. It has pointed the way forward to an alternative political system that could satisfy the reasonable aspirations of a great majority of South Africans. It is not so much the detail of policy that counts: much more important is the spirit and direction.

If my analysis is correct, it carries certain implications. First, that how the present power-holders react as the pressures upon them mount is of crucial importance. In turn, this implies that, contrary to the views of some, white politics **are** highly relevant. A second implication is that if it will be impossible to force or to persuade the power-holders to **abandon** power, pressure of circumstances may well induce them to **share** power. An option which holds out some measure of security to them might facilitate the process. We have to be absolutely clear, though, that "security" does not mean the shoring up of racial privileges: it means the securing of rights.

You will realise that I am not making confident predictions about some ultimate vindication of what we stand for. We have learned, painfully, about the limits of our political influence, but I would not rule out the possibility that we have had, and will continue to have, a quiet, unseen but definite catalytic effect on the discourse of South African politics. Today's visionaries sometimes become tomorrow's architects. Parties or groupings can only acquire significance to the extent that they believe that they have a role to play and then set about trying to play that role as well as they can.

It has by now become a cliché that the PFP's position on "law and order" cost it dearly in the election. We must not allow ourselves to be browbeaten into weakening the stance we took. The PFP has a truly honourable record as a principled upholder of civil liberties and the Rule of Law. We have always maintained that these institutions are the very conditions of a free society, and our insistence has been a nagging reminder of how far down the road of authoritarianism South Africa has travelled.

Although it is not much comfort, the upopularity of the PFP's views was a classic case of killing the messenger. But our position rests on more than principle. A. S. Mathews, one of South Africa's foremost legal theorists, has recently argued that the indiscriminate use of coercive authority has exacerbated the conflict. He writes: "Even if order is restored in the short term, the chances of future peace and accommodation have been gravely harmed by making security authorities . . . unaccountable to the law."

No party can condone the use of violence, but we must certainly reject a security apparatus that is more concerned with buttressing the **status quo** than with maintaining law and order.

I turn now to another aspect of PFP policy which has made us unpopular in other quarters, and that is the question of economic policy. We are perceived on the left as the party of high capitalism, although the policy, as I read it, accepts a mixed system and a strong element of welfare-ism.

I would make no apology for an emphasis on the market system as the most efficient instrument yet devised for the production and allocation of goods. But what impresses me more is the clear correlation between states that are preponderantly market in their orientation and the ability to sustain those freedoms which must be central to any adequate notion of democracy. The converse is equally clear: that socialist systems which embody state ownership and central planning invariably turn out to be authoritarian. This latter kind of state, whether it is Marxist-Leninist or radical African socialist, has not only been disastrous in purely economic terms, but utterly destructive of human rights as well.

The problem with hard-line socialists is their absolute conviction that history is on their side and that they are in exclusive possession of the revealed truth about what is good for the rest of us. From their dogmatic certitude you might infer that they can point to a number of humane, prosperous and open societies that exemplify their convictions: but this, alas, they never can do. Promising models appear like oases on the horizon and then dissolve into sterile tyrannies.

Unquestionably the issue of capitalism and socialism is one axis of South Africa's conflict. We cannot afford to be complacent about capitalism's record in South Africa, and nor can we react to socialism's critique in knee-jerk fashion. We have to recognise that the grotesque inequalities of our society will not be overcome by invoking the free market as a panacea. There is a social-democratic strand of thought in the PFP, which I personally would wish to encourage. (Social-democracy, I might add, has been described as the liberalism of liberals who really mean it!)

These reflections lead me to another issue which has forced liberals — unnecessarily — onto the defensive: communism. Only the wilfully ignorant believe in "the total onslaught", just as the credulous will accept unquestioningly that the ANC is a pawn of Moscow. These aspects of the issue, however, concern me less than the wider question of what is the best prophylactic against communism. I would unhesitatingly respond that the best answer is to democratise society. If you look historically and comparatively at the circumstances under which Marxist-Leninist movements have acquired power you will observe the striking fact that in no single clear-cut case have they been voted into office in democratic elections.

I believe that this is the kind of retort we should make to the shameless exploitation of the issue by the Nationalists and their tame **handlangers** in the SABC; and we should not cease to point out to whites just how intellectually and spiritually impoverishing it is to perceive their society and the world through the miasma of "total onslaught" thinking.

There remains a substantial middle-ground in South Africa, by which I mean people of all colours who would prefer a negotiated advance towards a democratic South Africa over the perpetuation of inconclusive violence and haemorraging conflict. You will find middle-grounders span the political spectrum from elements inside the NP to the ANC. They don't agree on every aspect of future policy, but they are united by a common fear of the abyss of racial war, and a belief that reasonable people arbitrate their differences through democratic parliamentary institutions. The liberal faith in these institutions is the distillation of several centuries experience. What the great liberal Attorney-General of the Cape, William Porter, said in 1853 remains true in 1987: "Now, for myself, I do not hesitate to say that I would rather meet the Hottentot at the hustings, voting for his representative, than meet the Hottentot in the wilds with his gun upon his shoulder."

I hope I have given you some grounds for believing that your efforts have not been futile. It is to the PFP's credit that time and again it has bounced back after suffering blows that would have knocked out a party made up of men and women of lesser mettle. It has not been easy to stand up for decent values and rational policies when this has attracted flack from both right and left. There has been dangerous polarisation, but I believe that it would have been far more serious had it not been for organisations like the PFP that have stubbornly stood in the middle ground.

Perhaps our time will come: you may derive some comfort from the cynical saying that "men and nations act rationally when all other possibilities have been exhausted".

Hang in there!□

by Colin Gardner

AN IMPORTANT GATHERING

On the last weekend of September — just before the news began to be dominated by the disastrous Natal floods — there occurred a gathering which may perhaps prove momentous in South African political history. It was the Five Freedoms Forum National Conference, held at the University of the Witwatersrand.

The Five Freedoms Forum is a Johannesburg body, an alliance of organisations who strive for real social and political change. The organisers of the conference felt that the time was perhaps ripe to try to reinvigorate white opposition to apartheid. The hope was that as many as 400 people might attend; in fact more than twice that number turned up — mainly whites, but blacks too, from all over the country. At the opening and closing sessions there were well over 1 000 people.

How can one account for this enthusiasm? Well, clearly many opposition whites — from PFP supporters to UDF supporters, with many somewhere in between — felt the need for some sort of consolidation. Most people there had been depressed in varying degrees by the State of Emergency and by the implications of the May 6 election, but they had also been cheered by the example of Dakar. They probably all felt that real negotiation is the right and the inevitable future for South Africa, but that with an intransigent Government the middle term prospect might well be further delay, repression and civil war. People went to the conference, I think, because they wanted to be actors in an ongoing historical process, not merely victims of history.

They were attracted too, undoubtedly, by the distinction and the range of the main speakers: Dr van Zyl Slabbert, independent MPs Wynand Malan and Jan van Eck, PFP MPs Peter Gastrow and Robin Carlyle, Azhar Cachalia of the UDF National Executive, Sydney Mufamadi of Cosatu, Rev. Frank Chikane the General Secretary of the SACC, Bob Tucker the Managing Director of the SA Perm, prominent Afrikaners Professor Abram Viljoen, business consultant Christo Nel and Rev. Nico Smith.

These speakers — and others (academics, journalists, professional people) — all spoke very well. But did they have anything in common? Although there had been little or no prior consultation, a central theme began to emerge from the first: it was the need for all those who are genuinely opposed to the apartheid structure, but particularly whites, to underplay their differences and find ways of working together. As Van Zyl Slabbert said at the opening session: "We must ask ourselves: are the things which unite us more important to us than those which divide us?" That was a challenge to everyone present — for probably almost everyone, in opting for or preferring one form of opposition, activity or strategy, had been tempted to

despise or distrust those who opted for a different one. The main tension, needless to say was between those who believed in working through parliamentary structures and those who favoured extra-parliamentary methods.

The conference was not all a matter of plenary sessions. On the Saturday morning there were five simultaneous forums, at which a further set of speakers (one of whom was myself) introduced discussions on a variety of specific topics (economics, education, the media, militarisation, cultural and sporting boycotts); and on the Sunday there were 11 workshops, each devoted to a crucial current issue. A "monitoring committee" was appointed too, with representatives from all the main regions; this met between sessions in order to gauge and discuss the mood of the conference and the direction which it seemed to be taking.

The general movement towards mutual tolerance and co-operation was not a wholly smooth one: it would perhaps have been unnatural if it had been so. At the plenary sessions on Saturday afternoon one was conscious of some fairly bitter currents flowing between some of the extra-parliamentarians and some supporters of the PFP. But the slight moment of crisis passed, and was probably valuable, for from then onwards things seemed to gel. Several of the speakers at the final sessions put a powerful case for a broadly-based collaboration. Michael Evans, for example, a lawyer and former chairperson of the Western Cape End Conscription Campaign (who has been detained several times), stressed that extra-parliamentary groups had often, by their style and their preconditions, cut themselves off from most whites.

David Webster, a Wits academic and convenor of the monitoring committee, emphasised that every sector of the democratic opposition has a vital contribution to make to the cause — that for example the easy contact with blacks which many extra-parliamentary groups enjoy could be usefully combined with the easy contact with many whites enjoyed by the parliamentarian groups.

Several speakers expressed the view that many whites, perhaps particularly Afrikaners, were far more likely to be influenced by meeting and listening to blacks than by being harangued by white liberals of any sort. The point was made too that if the Americans and the Russians could work together to defeat Hitler, it ought surely to be possible for people of rather different persuasions and strategies to get together to end apartheid and usher in a non-racial democracy in South Africa.

But get together to do what, exactly? It was agreed by all that the Government will not negotiate until it is weakened, and a Government can be weakened by various kinds of erosion — by a complex campaign which would involve

bringing people together, opening up new perspectives, getting people to encounter new pressures and possibilities. Each opposition group would continue to do its own thing; but they would try to find ways of understanding one another and working together.

A final conference resolution — passed unanimously — included the agreement to meet again in six months time, to review progress. In the meantime participants from each of the major regions are to pursue the thrust of the Conference at their own local level.

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P.S. — This article was written shortly before the formation of the NDM (the National Democratic Movement).

In several centres mini-conferences, based on the Five Freedoms National Conference, will take place before long.□

Reviewed by Ralph Lawrence

THE LEGACY OF APARTHEID

> Robin Cohen, **ENDGAME IN SOUTH AFRICA?**, London, James Currey and Paris, UNESCO Press, 1986, 108 pp. Price £4,95.

Robin Cohen is a former South African now living in Coventry, where he is Director of the Centre for Ethnic Relations and Professor of Sociology at Warwick University. He completed this slim volume on the character of apartheid in late 1985 when South Africa was rediscovering the experience of living under a formally declared state of emergency. His study is one of three evidently commissioned by UNESCO. In addition to Cohen's book, we can savour the prospect of seeing the South African state subjected to Harold Wolpe's scrutiny, and the role of Pretoria's military to Abdul Minty's.

Robin Cohen limited himself to considering the demographical and geographical manifestations of apartheid. Not again, you say to yourself. How many more trees have to be felled for paper before such a well-worn topic is finally laid to rest? Well, the modest sapling necessary for Cohen's cause is a worthwhile sacrifice. He set himself a fascinating exercise. First of all, what are the defining characteristics of apartheid in South African society? What, in other words, makes apartheid apartheid? Then, secondly, if South Africa's current rulers fell from grace somehow and were replaced by a regime determined to dismantle apartheid, how successfully could this be done? Would any vestiges of apartheid survive in a post-apartheid order? And, if so, which elements would prove intractable? In attempting to respond to the second set of questions at the moment, the social scientist is forced to indulge in speculation, as Cohen acknowledges. Still, speculation, if informed and prudent, can aid our understanding of the likely turn of events in a society's course. With that in mind, let's reflect on the argument advanced by Cohen.

A LEAP OF FAITH

We begin with a leap of faith. The scholarly weight of **Endgame in South Africa?** is founded on two telling assumptions. Reject either of them and the edifice they are upholding will collapse. The one assumption can be expressed simply: white minority rule will be replaced by black majority rule. The transformation is inevitable, but how and when it will come about are beyond our ken. It's quite an assumption, isn't it? I want to dwell on this a little, for I believe it is yet a further illustration of what I call "the rationalist fallacy", so prevalent among observers of the South African scene who would dearly love apartheid to end. The fallacy takes various forms. I cannot specify them all here; a few representative cases will have to suffice. The moral exemplar is the most frequently stated. Good will eventually triumph over evil: apartheid is inherently unjust, an affront to human dignity, an anathema to contemporary societies the world over; therefore its demise is assured. Alternatively, apartheid is viewed as irredeemably contradictory. By such reckoning, the economic imperatives and the political imperatives of apartheid are incompatible; thus apartheid contains the seeds of its own destruction. Lastly, apartheid is anomalous: a minority cannot hold out perpetually against the majority, especially when the very existence of a ruling racial elite runs counter to the trend whereby colonial governments, notably in Africa, have handed over the keys of state to their erstwhile subjects. Of course apartheid is immoral, illogical and anomalous. Yet any or all of these judgements, of themselves, cannot be regarded as infallible predictions of apartheid's fate. The fact is that South Africa's future is inevitably uncertain.

Merely taking for granted the death of apartheid shows that wishful thinking has supplanted sober analysis. This is how the unwary fall prey to the rationalist fallacy: despite his agile mind, Cohen did not elude its clutches completely.

The second basic assumption made by Cohen is intertwined with the first one. What is it? In the long term, so his reasoning goes, South African history moves in a progressive, if not always linear, direction. Apartheid will be succeeded by a better, more just, social order. The process of change is likely to be problematic, even violent. There may be regressive steps, but adversity will be overcome eventually. Here, too, it is worth noting just how bold an assumption this is; an assumption, I might add, that Cohen nowhere spells out directly, yet it clearly suffuses his entire analysis. Quite obviously, there is no absolute guarantee of apartheid yielding to a less oppressive and more accommodating, shall we say, social and political life. To repeat, hope is a poor substitute for proper analysis. If you, dear reader, for the purposes of Cohen's argument, are prepared to accept these two major assumptions he makes, then you can proceed to follow his path of thought from such a point of departure to find out where it ends. The journey is both absorbing and rewarding. I can do no more than to highlight those aspects that most engaged my attention.

1975 AND 1976

Like so many authors taking the pulse of South African society, Robin Cohen identifies the uprising by black children of Soweto in 1976 as heralding a new phase in resistance to apartheid rule. There is no turning back. The declaration of a state of emergency in mid-1985, he suggests, reveals a government rocked back on its heels, being compelled hereafter to surrender the initiative to the forces of resistance. Before, the government acted and the people responded; now the situation is reversed. Social and political change will take place according to the dictates of the majority. Commentators should take this into account in their prognoses, Cohen avers. Whilst opposition by the majority of South Africans to Nationalist governments over the years is undoubtedly significant, what of other factors at play? Has not Cohen overly narrowed his focus on the dynamics of social change in South Africa? Allow me to demonstrate, again broadly, how the focus could usefully be widened.

1975 was a crucial year. Portugal had recently shrugged off the yoke of authoritarianism with profound consequences for her colonies in Africa. Angola and Mozambique gained independence in 1975. South African armed forces invaded southern Angola in the latter half of that same year, partly at the behest of President Ford's administration, in order to forestall a MPLA victory in Luanda. Although the South African military failed in this instance, something of a precedent had become established. Pretoria has regularly launched armed offensives against neighbouring countries during the past 12 years. The sole colony in Africa, Namibia remains illegally under South African occupation; the South African Defence Force has retained an almost perpetual presence in southern Angola, lending support to Jonas Savimbi's rebel movement, UNITA. Similarly, the Mozambican government's authority has been gravely threatened by persistent acts of rebellion, largely the work of the MNR, an organisation the SADF abets. 1986 saw a successful military coup in Lesotho. If not actually toppling the government there, South Africa's virtual blockade of the territory in the weeks leading up to the coup was a decisive contributory element. And ever since Rhodesia became Zimbabwe not a decade ago, Mr Botha's government has proved distinctly unneighbourly. From all these escapades three lasting conclusions can be extracted. First and most strikingly, the regime in Pretoria is at war against other countries in the sub-continent in an endeavour to shape the political fortunes of the region according to its own dictates. Secondly, this strategy of armed diplomacy is exacting a considerable toll on the South African economy and testing the morale of all those involved in the war effort. Thirdly, South Africa's aggressive stance towards its neighbours is, in essence, a fearful response denoting an admission of weakness. The fear? The fear of relinquishing power, signalling that the writ of apartheid is finally run.

Colonial governance's sudden demise in Angola and Mozambique left a deep scar on the South African psyche, among defenders and opponents of apartheid alike. For many black South Africans there was the revelatory experience of seeing that white minority need not be invincible. The transfer of power from Britain to the Patriotic Front at Lancaster House some four years later simply reinforced the lesson learnt. A resurgent, confident black youth took to the streets of Soweto shortly thereafter. The turbulence then spread to the townships of the Cape. Sustained acts of rebellion drove out the quiescence of the previous two decades. Furthermore, incoming governments surrounding South Africa offered sanctuary to the exiled African National Congress. Being closer to home made it logistically feasible for the ANC to build up political support and to wage bombing campaigns within South Africa. The might of black resistance was thus further fuelled.

SINCE 1976

Ever since 1976 the South African regime has been in an extraordinary bind. In addition to conducting military campaigns across its borders, the SADF has become increasingly embroiled in waging war against its own black citizenry within. Not only foreign policy but, of late, domestic policy as well has a pronounced military component. How has this come about? The reasons are twofold. The initial incursion by the SADF into Angola in 1975 brought military factors to the fore in national policy-making. Then, the SADF's champion, its longtime Minister of Defence, P. W. Botha, won the battle for the Prime Minister's office, before writing himself a new job description and so becoming State President in the Second Republic of 1984, the chief executive vested with, in practice, plenipotentiary powers. And, secondly, where Mr Botha goes, the military drifts along in his wake. As is common in government throughout the world nowadays, policies are not determined by legislative assemblies but by inner councils of the executive. In South Africa, the State Security Council, in which military personnel figure prominently, appears to have been accorded such a role. Indeed, the SSC is at the apex of an elaborately articulated nationwide network, the National Security Management System, constituting, perhaps, an alternative government and public administration working secretively beyond public purview.

Patterns of political activity have been markedly reshaped in reaction to the provisions of the South African constitution unveiled in 1983. The National Party splintered. Parliamentarians who deserted the fold gathered under the

umbrella of the new Conservative Party. The Conservatives have turned out to be not only a substantial electoral force, especially in the Transvaal, but also a countervailing power, making the government's attitude to the dismantling of racial barriers ever more circumspect. At the other end of the political spectrum, the United Democratic Front arose as a vehicle to give organised opposition to the birth of the Tricameral Parliament. Extra-parliamentary opposition has been a painful thorn in the government's flesh from that moment on. Parliament's emasculated role in attending to the affairs of state has lessened faith in that institution, prompting many citizens to transfer their efforts to the extra-parliamentary arena instead. Moreover, the trade union movement has grown rapidly in recent years since the government lifted restrictions, thus permitting black workers to be organised more or less free from direct state control. In December 1985, greater impetus and cohesion was given to the labour movement when an overarching body, the Congress of South African Trade Unions, was launched. These days COSATU is a major actor on the political scene outside parliament, often working in conjunction with the UDF to bring pressure to bear on the organs of apartheid rule.

This brief survey of noteworthy developments in contemporary South Africa would not be complete without some mention of the economy. Malaise is evident: foreign debt; divestment, disinvestment and sanctions carried out by companies abroad and trading partners; inflation, unemployment and recession at home. And add to this the crippling burden of the military's budgetary requirements. Add further the costs of drought and floods experienced in the 1980s. Hardly an edifying balance-sheet. What's most dismaying of all is the impression I have that those who are worst placed in the economy are really floundering. Who are affected most severely by the ravages of floods and drought? Where does unemployment strike hardest? Who feels increased prices of essential goods most keenly? I leave you to conclude the obvious. At the opposite end of the scale, those in sheltered employment, typically in the government service, and those who are associated with corporations that are able to impose their will on the market, barely notice any adjustment to their personal welfare caused by misfortunes in the South African economy.

It should be patently clear, I trust, from the items I have just enumerated that the course of events in South Africa's immediate past is exceedingly complex. In order to chart the fate of apartheid, one would have to explore all of these so as to discern the trends and tendencies at work. And yet even after completing so exhaustive, and exhausting, an analysis, no guarantees can be attached to the conclusions reached. But to revert to Cohen's study. What are his findings?

APARTHEID AND RADICAL CHANGE

What elements of apartheid, supposing there are any, will prove most impervious to radical change in South African society? To address this issue, Cohen maintains, one has to have some idea of what a post-apartheid order will be like. Cohen hazards a guess, based on a series of assumptions, all of which he believes are eminently plausible. Violence and economic crisis will beset South Africa, causing the downfall of the present regime and, in the long-term, ushering in black majority government, although some other bargained compromise may come earlier as the initial move away from apartheid proper. The ultimate

victors will be proponents of the Freedom Charter, a political party combining many, though not all, ANC and UDF sympathisers. To give it a name, Cohen invents the United National African Party, the UNAP. On gaining hold of the reins of power, a UNAP government will pursue a foreign policy akin to Mugabe's Zimbabwe: the Eastern bloc will not be shunned, South Africa will join the Non-Aligned Movement and will seek re-entry to the Commonwealth. Trade, foreign investment and aid will all be sought on a pragmatic basis. Power will be wielded by a black bourgeoisie by virtue of the monopoly it acquires over the state apparatus. This, then, is the scenario. If it came to pass — quite an assumption, after all, for which no concerted argument is offered — would apartheid disappear overnight? No. Let's discover why.

The real strength in Cohen's book is the way he manages to reduce apartheid to its fundamental elements, each having a form of ideology associated with it. Apartheid, says Cohen, comprises four pillars. Three of these he discusses in detail, revealing how they have altered with the passage of time. Though not as fulsome as Alf Stadler's **The Political Economy of Modern South Africa**, Cohen's account is stylish, erudite and succinct. All credit to him for embarking on so ambitious an analysis, even though it fails to accomplish all that it was designed to do.

FOUR PILLARS

The first pillar of apartheid is white minority rule itself. When apartheid goes, this will go too. Presumably a universal franchise will be adopted, although Cohen omits to say so explicitly. At any rate, a unicameral legislative assembly at the national level will come into being. Conceivably, participation by whites, coloureds and Indians might be assured for a specified period. Local government will be a crucial organ of representation, allowing communities to have their urgent needs dealt with by officials with whom they would be in close contact. Cohen maintains, however, that once the novelty of participation has worn off, blacks will lose interest in government and whites will carry a disproportionate weight in relation to their numbers. It's an interesting assertion, contentious but not unreasonable, which merits extended treatment. Cohen, however, is content just to make the point.

Apartheid's second pillar is the attempt to create and to harmonise racial categories and territorial boundaries. Here apartheid will linger after the UNAP comes to power. Although the Group Areas Act will be expunged from the statute book, communities will not become transformed as an immediate consequence. The market for land and housing will impose imperatives, and areas will come to reflect their character according to class rather than race. The homelands, notionally independent or otherwise, will be problematic. Cohen seems to imagine that they might continue as distinct entities, given some autonomy but linked somehow to the central government. Shades of the princely states in colonial India?

Regulation and control of the labour supply is the third pillar of apartheid. Freedom of movement and freedom to seek employment will prevail under a UNAP government. But a system of incentives will have to be introduced to direct labour to where it is required. The agricultural sector will remain dependent on the commercial farms owned by whites. A continuing supply of labour to these enterprises will have to be guaranteed. Likewise, workers will have to

be enticed to the gold mines, for the economy could not survive without the sale of the metal on the world market.

Finally, apartheid's fourth pillar is the ability of the regime to keep social control, to restore stability whenever the need arises. In fact, any government is charged with this responsibility. Given South Africa's turbulent past and present, Cohen remarks, violence is unlikely to come to a halt as soon as apartheid is formally abolished. Truculent, unrepentant whites might resist the new order, as might conservative blacks deeply hostile to a UNAP government. Appropriate steps will have to be taken by those in power. They may have to deal, in addition, with angry, frustrated, black youths when economic rewards do not match their expectations. And how will the government of the day view squatters amassing in the urban areas in search of education, employment and similar services? Order will be a major priority for a UNAP administration; and in pursuing it liberal values may well go by the board.

The general picture Cohen paints is familiar enough: in a word, Zimbabwe. The trade is a simple one. In return for relinquishing political power to the presently disenfranchised black majority, whites will be able to retain substantial economic power and privilege. No government, unless bent on economic, hence political, suicide could contemplate replacing the captains of industry with idealistic recruits. As Cohen argues, the nightmarish comparison white South Africans frequently draw with other African countries is both misleading and unnecessary. The Republic's mineral wealth and strategic location keep her in the reckoning of the global community. In South Africa there is sufficient skilled personnel and resources to allow further industrial development. All in all a reassuring vision, except to the residents of Soutpansberg, no doubt.

In my view, there are too many unexplained assumptions in Cohen's argument to make it thoroughly compelling and convincing. If only there had been fewer assertions and more evidence. Nevertheless, there is much to commend in his book. Above all, I enjoyed the spirit of his enterprise. It's vitally important for we South Africans to eschew wishful thinking. There is nothing more dangerous and counterproductive in politics than false expectations. The abolition of apartheid rule will not transform South Africa into heaven on earth, and it's as well to realise that. But, by the same token, infernal hell need not be visited on us either. In trying to calculate what a post-apartheid South Africa might look like, Cohen does us all a service. Debate and discussion about the future of this country can usefully be centred on a set of proposals, and these Cohen gives us.

A closing thought. Societies under siege, under threat, tend to become intensely inward-looking and parochial. Such is the situation in South Africa; it has been so for quite some time. But in order fully to comprhend our society and to gauge what lies ahead, we have to pay attention not only to the peculiarities of South Africa, but also to what is transpiring in comparable countries. Cohen mentions the post-colonial societies of South-East Asia. Over the last few years I have come to believe there is much to be gained by trying to discern the character of what I call advanced Third World societies. South Africa belongs in such a category, I suggest, together with Nigeria, India, Argentina, Brazil and, maybe, Indonesia. Whilst not embarking on quite such a voyage of discovery, Cohen does expose the reader's thoughts to such a possibility, which is indeed welcome. For this reason too, then, apart from the others I have alluded to elsewhere, **Endgame in South Africa?** is an unusually timely and relevant contribution to the understanding of our troubled society.□

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by Michael Worsnip

CHURCHES IN CAPTIVITY

Servants of Power is of undoubted value to the critical historian of South African Church history. It is, as the blurb describes it, the "first serious revisionist account" of South African Church history and is of great value therefore to the scholar, the student and the serious thinker. There is, of course, a lamentable lack of published material on the South African Church and what there is suffers from manifold problems of perspective and presupposition. So Dr Cochrane's new book is a welcome attempt at correcting this deficiency and providing an alternative way of analysing the history of the "English-speaking churches" and their relation to the tem,poral power in South Africa.

Cochrane's book is one which takes very seriously the economic, social and political stage on which the so-called English-speaking churches operate and in so doing provides us with a fairly complete picture of a church bound hand and foot to the very structures it sought (every now and then) to criticise. The churches, according to Cochrane, were "dependent on those same powers which produced the problems which concerned them. They were dependent no only in a material sense . . . but also on the ideological plane as well . . ." [p. 114]. The way in which the church attempted to deal with such issues (for example) as the extension of Pass Laws to women and children; hardships on farms and house raids by police; advances made to blacks in reserve areas by mnining agents thereby forcing them into wage labour; exploitative wages; ill treatment and inadequate representation in courts of law, was by resolutions directed at the government asking the authorities to debate or rescind certain pieces of legislation or to provide relief. "[The churches **felt** the anguish and resistance of the indigenous people but [were not] . . . able to speak and act in solidarity with them." [P. 112].

Cochrane piles up evidence upon evidence ot the fundamental lack of understanding and analysis on the part of the churches in the arena of economic realities and thus shows us how completely moribund they were in effectively countering the growing exploitation on the part of the ruling power. In Cochrane's assessment, ". . . the years up until 1912 show little evidence of any critical analysis by the Church of the structures of expropriation and exploitation . . ." [p.102]. And this, while at the same time the churches "contained the largest black, colonial member-ship of any institution under the direct control of the colonists" [p.55]. The churches, "grievously limited by their essentially British perspective" failed to support the masses when any form of real resistance occured because such resistance posed a threat to the economy "upon which they fed" [p. 89]. It is this, according to Cochrane, which provides the solution "to the apparent contradiction between a Church championing the oppressed while expressing deep antipathy towards any immediate resistance on their part." [**ibid.**]

After 1920 there is more evidence of social analysis, but ". . . the Church battled with itself . . . as it sought to discover what its social function was" [p. 129]. While the church in the early 1920's may have produced a "flurry of critical moments and ideas", these did not "prove strong enough to shake the foundations of the Church's functional dependency on the ruling class" [p. 132]. Although there were, on occasion, some fairly radical demands, "no specific analysis, no particular programme, no unambiguous policy, and no theological clarification seems to have been carried out" [p. 133]. The Church, towards the end of the decade displayed "a growing interest in apolitical spirituality accompanied by demands that the Church spend its energies on specifically religious tasks" [p. 144].

The second part of the book is (thankfully) more readable than the first, whose slow procession of one fairly dull historical fact after another leaves one looking longingly at one's shelves for an Agatha Christie to relieve the literary indigestion. And this is a pity because the second part of the book gives a valuable explanation as to why the author has chosen the method he has. It is here that Cochrane makes a very telling statement:

"If we take the analysis of the Church's captivity to the dominant structure of the political economy seriously, and if we recognise that characteristic marks of this structure are domination and dependence, exploitation and poverty, then it must be faced that that conflict lies not essentially between Church and state in South Africa, but within the Church." [p. 222f.]

This, it seems to me, is saying something very profound and certainly something which needs to be heard. The problem is that I can't imagine any but the most dedicated reader reaching page 222! Dr Cochrane has taken a particularly appetising walnut (the placing of the South African Church in the warp and weft of economic realities) and crushed it with an extremely heavy book, and the reader is left with a rather unpleasing mix of shell and sand to pick over.□