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## PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL



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## EDITORIALS



# 1. KEEPING CONTROL

Since Parliament rose the Prime Minister has taken two steps aimed, it is said, at moving South Africa away from the rigidities of Verwoerdian apartheid towards something more "relaxed". He has made appointments to the Cabinet and he has made appointments to his President's Council. The most important appointments to the Cabinet were those of Dr. Gerrit Viljoen, former head of the Broederbond, as Minister of Education, and of General Magnus Malan, former head of the Defence Force, as Minister of Defence.

The point not to be forgotten about the Cabinet and the President's Council appointments is that that is exactly what they are ----- appointments. No doubt Dr. Viljoen and General Malan will be found safe Nationalist seats which will, in time, return them to Parliament, but even within the limits of South Africa's strictly circumscribed democratic processes, this is an intrusion on the free choice of the voters. Even the local Nationalists aren't going to be voting for the man of their choice. They will be voting for the man of the Prime Minister's choice. This may not be very significant in a non-functioning democracy like ours, but it is, nevertheless, one further instance of the authoritarian imposition of what those at the top think is good for them, on those at the bottom who have never had any say in the matter.

It may be that the Prime Minister needs the support of such people to push through the ranks of Afrikanerdom the reforms which he and they think are essential for South Africa today, but the reforms they will be pushing through will be the ones THEY think are needed, which will by no means necessarily be the reforms which most of South Africa wants. To get this last kind of reform you need a Cabinet not appointed to suit the Prime Minister's book but one elected to reflect the aspirations of everybody.

Does the President's Council suggest a step in this direction? Hardly! Its members don't represent anyone. A fair proportion of them are unknown outside their immediate domestic circle. Some people who have agreed to serve say they will resign if black Africans are not appointed to it soon. Other people say they won't serve on it until they are. What prospect is there of this happening when it is not the President's Council which decides on changes in its composition, but the Nationalist Party caucus? When every single Nationalist Party Congress this year, including the Cape Congress, which the Prime Minister is supposed to be able to persuade to do almost anything he would like it to do, has come out firmly against it? Or what if the miracle were to happen and some Africans were to be appointed? Maybe they wouldn't represent

anyone either? What then? Or if the homelands agreed to join and urban Africans didn't, except through the kind of people who cannot raise 10 per cent of the vote in an Urban Council election?

Perhaps for Nationalists to sit down in a statutory assembly and talk about constitutional matters with members of the Indian, Coloured, Chinese and non-Nationalist white communities is an important psychological advance for them and that, as all those people seem to think, it means that real change is coming. Or perhaps it just means that the Prime Minister has decided that there are some changes he can now safely make without threatening his Party's position, which in fact might strengthen that position, because other people will benefit from them too, and so be drawn more closely to him. Meanwhile, control will stay firmly in his hands, and the future prospects of most of us will be at the disposal of people over whom we have no control whatsoever.

Is this second assessment just the cynic's view? There are two things which suggest not.

The first is the Prime Minister's continuing insistence that everything he is doing and planning is within the framework of apartheid. This means there is no place for Africans in planning the future of anything but the homelands. As we said earlier there hasn't been a Nationalist

Congress this year at which this standpoint hasn't been re-emphasised.

The second is the Prime Minister's refusal to have anything to do with the Buthelezi Commission. Here at least was a chance to talk about ways other than the separate development way out of our morass.

Mr Botha almost certainly boycotted the Commission for that reason. He is not prepared to talk outside the limits of apartheid and he is not prepared to take part in any discussions which are not under his control and which might reach conclusions he doesn't like. Control, his control, is basic to any change he might talk about.

Consultation, which is what the President's Council is about, leaves control firmly in the hands of those who have power. Negotiation implies that the moment has come to share it. Unless the President's Council becomes something it was never intended to be - a representative negotiating body working out a future for us based on the consent and support of most of our people - it will have nothing of substance to contribute to that future.

A total black boycott of it from the start might have forced the Prime Minister to turn it into that much sooner than is now likely to be the case.□

## 2. PARAMOUNT CHIEF SABATHA

At the beginning of August the Transkei Government deposed Paramount Chief Sabatha Dalindyebo from his position as head of the Tembu nation.

In announcing this step the Prime Minister of the Transkei, Chief George Matanzima, said it had been taken because Paramount Chief Sabatha had never shown any respect for his brother, Chief Kaizer Matanzima, as Transkei's Head of State.

If this was indeed Chief Sabatha's position it was one he shared with most of the rest of the world.

At the beginning of September Chief Bambilanga Mtirara, a half-brother of Sabatha, was installed as his successor. According to press reports the succession issue was decided behind closed doors at a meeting of members of the Dalindyebo and Matanzima families from which Sabatha's supporters were excluded. The press was also excluded, but members of the security police were not.

After this meeting the secretary of the Dalindyebo Regional Authority made it very clear that Chief Bambilanga

had not been appointed to act as regent for Sabatha's 14 year old son. He was now the new head of the Tembu nation in his own right and not acting for anyone.

So ends another episode in the long-drawn-out feud between Paramount Chief Sabatha and the Matanzima brothers. This feud stems partly from the fact that Sabatha's senior position to the Matanzimas in the Tembu hierarchy has always been a matter of bitter resentment to them; and it stems partly from the fact that Sabatha's vision of South Africa is a far more comprehensive one than the narrow tribalism of the Matanzimas. Unlike them, he was never an apartheid man.

Perhaps with the appointment of Chief Bambilanga the Matanzimas think that their troubles with the Dalindyebo family are over. We doubt it. For quite apart from any tribal ructions which may follow Chief Sabatha's deposing, his broad vision of a non-racial South Africa with equal rights enjoyed by everyone is likely to survive long after the restricted parochialism of the Transkei's present rulers has been thankfully forgotten.□

# HOTEL INTERNATIONAL

by J. W. Macquarrie.

It was clearly the black American's round and manfully he took up the white man's burden. His accent was Yankee but his idiom was impeccably South African.

"Three Castles, two cold and one off the shelf."

"Excuse me, sir, but are you a resident?"

"Say, barman, what's all this about? Why the sudden interest in my private life? Look, I've already had two drinks on my friends. Now it's up to me."

"Yes, sir, but they stood the drinks. So, you see, you were a boney feedy guest under government regulations. So that was okey-doke. But now you're in the chair, you're not a guest, and I can't serve you unless you're a boney Fido resident at this hotel."

The American looked somewhat dazed.

"I see," he said at last. "Well, boys, I guess that this is a cheap round for me."

"Oh, but wait a minute, sir. Maybe you're attending this Chamber of Industries do in our Conference Hall or the ladies' wear buyers in the Pink Salon? In that case, of course....."

"No dice. I'm just a poor college professor. Never been in industry or ladies' wear in my life."

The barman scratched his head.

"I've got it. Maybe you're staying for dinner?"

"O.K. you bar-steward. Put me down as staying for dinner but don't count on it. Don't get shirty or put yourself in clink if I change my mind."

The barman beamed. A tricky situation, he felt, had been adroitly handled. Go on like this and he'd be a head barman in no time. He hastened to execute the order.

Enter the assistant manager.

"Who's this lot for?" he spluttered.

"The gentlemen in the corner, sir."

"But, good God man, are you blind? Can't you see that one of them is a ....."

"Yes, sir, the American gentleman." The barman spoke soothingly as to a froward child. "It's actually his round but don't worry, sir. It's all boney Fido. No breach of national security. He's staying for dinner."

"You damned idiot, do you want us to lose our licence? Do you want to lose your job and me mine? Don't you know that this is a public bar, a men's bar, and that blacks can't drink in a men's bar. Not even in a hotel like this."

The assistant manager wrung his hands in anguish.

"I suppose, you clot, you've served them quite a few drinks already. What am I going to do?" He moaned feebly, then roused himself. "For heaven's sake, get them out of here."

"All three of them, sir."

"Yes, all three of them."

"Where to, sir?"

"I don't give a damn where. Just get them to hell and gone out of here. No! No! Wait! Let me think. Shove them in the Ladies' Bar."

"It's pretty full, sir. Standing room only and not much of that. And Mrs. What's-her-Name's there. You remember, the one who made such a fuss last time about that dark gentleman from Mozambique."

"All right! All right! Put them in the old cloakroom.

But for God's sake get them out of here on the dot or I'll have your guts for garters."

The barman discreetly shepherded the lepers from the men's bar. The assistant manager tottered to his den, with trembling hand, poured himself a triple Glenfiddich with the merest splash of soda. In drinking on duty he was breaking one of his most inflexible rules. In drinking alone, in choosing an expensive malt rather than a blended whisky, in making it a triple, in not diluting it generously with water, he was compounding the fracture. But what a day it had been.

This morning there had been the swimming pool. That dusky ambassador from Where's - the - Place, a boney Fido resident, liked his regular morning swim. Nothing illegal about it. Some of the customers didn't like it and made things quite sticky but there it was ..... This morning, however, the ambassador brought a pal, a black pal, and Mr. Schlebusch couldn't be expected to stand for that. Well, one word had led to another. The ambassador had given notice. Another black, or at least non-white, mark for the hotel and the Republic and the assistant manager. It was all very difficult.

Then in the afternoon, first was that raspberry from Pretoria about the black pop-singers who performed last month. The Liquor Board was not at all happy about their permits. Had he exercised the necessary supervision? Had he satisfied himself that.....? Would he kindly inform the Liquor Board as to what steps .....? Would he hell? Then there had been the The Dansant in the Blue Room this evening. Soft lights, soft music, everything going hotsy-totsy. Until that same blasted ambassador had ambled in with his even duskier wife. Looking for trouble, the So-and-So. Still, things might have been alright if they had just danced with each other, or better still not danced at all, or best of all, beat it while the going was good.

But then that white man, that foreign chap, asks the woman for a dance, and the ambassador asks the white chap's wife ..... Well, what option had an assistant manager? Clear out the dancers or clear out the ambassador? There wasn't any choice, was there? But the dreadful things that black man and his wife said about Alwyn and Pik and PW -- not to mention yours truly.

The assistant manager groped blindly for the bottle of Glenfiddich like a drowning man clutching at a straw. International hotels? You could have them. As for him, back to the bottle store business where a man knew where he stood.□

# LABOUR UNREST IN PORT ELIZABETH AND UITENHAGE

by M. Roux

Modern Capitalist society is characterized by an apparent separation of the economic and the political. The effect of this is that it has made possible the fragmentation of class conflict into industrial and political conflict. Giddens argues that the institutional separation of class conflict in the industrial and political spheres is the form which class conflict takes in Capitalist Society. He says "The separation of industrial and political conflict once the incorporation of the working class has proceeded a considerable way, is merely symptomatic of the generic character of Capitalist Society as predicated upon a fundamental separation of economy and polity".<sup>1</sup> It is only when the separation of the economic and the political has therefore become recognized not merely as a formal principle, but as an institutional reality that class conflict takes this form. However, in a society in which the active incorporation of the working class within the citizenship state is resisted, worker organisations will be closely integrated with a political movement.

In South Africa the black trade union movement has struggled for over 60 years for existence against employers and the state. In a recent publication based on a project undertaken by four Wits. students<sup>2</sup> it is suggested that the movement has involved three major thrusts of activity: the Industrial Commercial Workers' Union which in its peak in the late 20's had 100,000 members; the Congress of non-European Trade Unions which by 1944 had a membership of 158,000 in 119 trade unions; and in the late 50's and early 60's the South African Congress of Trade Unions and the Federation of Free African Trade Unions with a combined total of approximately 90,000 members. However, legislation which sought to exclude black workers from the collective bargaining process and suppress the activities of black unionists prevented each of these movements from crystallising into permanent organisations. Repressive legislation had the effect of "leaving black workers voiceless and with no means of protecting what limited rights they had."<sup>13</sup> Under these conditions it was inevitable that eventually there would be widespread support for black national movements.

Against a background of industrial development the 50's and early 60's was a period of intense African National activity. The issues that were given prominence by the Congress Alliance were political rather than economic. The struggle was perceived in racial or national terms and with black trade unions weak, any attempt to emphasize the class content was doomed to be a failure.

According to Webster there was in the course of the 50's a general drop in wages. This gave rise to a range of popular resistance, but SACTU was not organised enough to channel or direct the resistance apart from utilizing its limited factory organisation during stayaways. The stay-away was used as a key tactic, focussing around political issues with the emphasis on general rather than industrial, disabilities.<sup>4</sup> However, the clampdown on political resistance which came in the early 60's changed the direction of the struggle.

From 1972 onwards there was a rapid rise in the rate of inflation, resulting in a drop in real wages and the rate of growth of employment in manufacturing declined. This gave an impetus to what was now commonly called the struggle at both the economic and political levels. In February 1973 in Durban between 60,000 and 100,000 black workers went on strike. Bonner and Webster point out that "as a sign of their growing political maturity black workers chose, instead of a boycott, to strike at their workplace, winning wage increases and suffering hardly any dismissals or prosecutions."<sup>5</sup>

It is argued that this strike gave rise to a new wave of African trade unionism out of which five distinct trade union groups emerged. However, with less than 100,000 members, many of whom belong to non-militant parallel unions, Nicol claims that both in terms of numbers and organisation the African Trade Union movement is weak. According to him "the militant struggle of the dominated classes since 1973 have in each case been characterised by spontaneity. Leadership of these struggles has not been taken up by the workers and their representative organisations, but by the black petty bourgeoisie".<sup>6</sup>

To a large extent African Trade Unionism has during this period seen itself largely in economic terms, thereby giving recognition to the economic and political as separate areas of bargaining encounters. In part this may be accounted for in terms of the close security surveillance under which black trade union organisations are kept. Some trade union officials in Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage contend that it is only possible for black trade unions to survive in South Africa if they stay away from political issues. "This is the lesson black trade unionists have learnt from the experiences of their predecessors", said one of them.

On the whole union officials in the Port Elizabeth area showed an orientation towards economism. They were of the opinion

that trade unions should focus on the industrial disabilities to which black workers are subjected. They must address themselves to the bargaining process and as far as possible attempt to redress the imbalance in market power between workers and employers. Few, however, mentioned that this would not be possible without changing the subordinate position of black workers. To achieve this involves not only an economic but also a political struggle.

Nevertheless, the bulk of industrial conflict during this period has been confined to economism, thereby obscuring the connections between political power as such and the broader political subordination of the working class within the economic order.

In this period when black consciousness grew there was little connection between the two movements. This clearly reflected the separation of the economic and the political. The 1976 revolt was political rather than economic. The target of mass action was seen to be the State and the institutions representing it, such as Bantu Education and the Bantu Affairs Administration Boards. One of the possible reasons why it failed was lack of economic anchorage among the proletariat.

The last two years have seen interesting changes in the direction which struggles have taken. There has been a tendency among the working-class to perceive a tie-up between the work-place and the community. Work-place issues are no longer seen in isolation but as part of a larger pattern. This trend was evidenced in the recent Fattis and Moni's, Ford and Meat workers' disputes. If it continues it will present a serious threat to the institutional separation of economic and political conflict.

Research in Port Elizabeth suggests that divisions within the trade union movement reflect the differences in ideology between workers who no longer accept the economic, political dichotomy and the leadership who continues to define the role of trade unions in narrowly economic terms. During the Ford dispute the black union leadership was challenged by the highly politicised workers on strike. Attempts to replace the executive with persons of their own choice have failed and the rift continues. The feeling among certain workers is that these leaders have abdicated any role in 'the struggle'.

Nicol is probably correct when he argues that the State is not concerned about the African Trade Union movement as it has existed throughout most of the 70's. He points out that the task of the Wiehahn legislation is to forestall the development of a democratic trade union movement which is either controlled democratically by the working class or led by radical elements of the petty-bourgeoisie. One of the central functions this legislation performs is to "seek to entrench reformist political practices in the African trade union movement. It attempts to draw them into an industrial relations system which pre-disposes unions to become bureaucratic and hence allows a petty bourgeoisie leadership to remove control over the Union's affairs from the working class".<sup>7</sup> Such bureaucratically organised unions which focus on narrow short-term ameliorative demands are co-optable and do not threaten the status-quo.

The State has responded to the deepening of economic and political action among the growing African urban population in a number of ways. It is firstly trying to co-opt a section of the black population into support for the limited changes envisaged. This section includes the black middle-class and the skilled sector of the working-class. The home ownership schemes, the setting up of community councils and the granting of municipal status to black urban communities

are aimed at these groups. One of the objectives of legislation is to divide the working class, and if successful will also exclude alliances and contact with other classes, thereby restricting working-class conflict to the industrial sphere and preventing it from spreading to other sectors in the community. The new approach attempts to prevent future class struggles under the hegemony of the manual working class; hence the necessity of creating new skills and ideological symbols.

Secondly, the State through institutionalizing industrial conflict among the permanent black working-class seeks to narrow down conflict to economism, thereby reinforcing the economic, political dichotomy.

In recent months the State has speeded up the process of the registration of black unions and has even urged negotiations with some unions before registration has been gazetted. The Minister of Manpower Utilization warned employers against refusing to deal with representative unions. "Management should deal with whatever leadership group holds credibility among the workers. To impose a group favoured by management but not by those they are supposed to represent will lead to disaster".<sup>8</sup> In this way the State wants to defuse industrial confrontation with its possible extension to the political sphere especially in the prevailing atmosphere of mistrust.

It is against this background that the Port Elizabeth—Uitenhage workers struggles should be reviewed.

#### PORT ELIZABETH AND UITENHAGE: THE INDUSTRIAL SETTING

As one of the major industrial complexes in South Africa and an important centre for the motor manufacturing, wool, textile and footwear industries, the Port Elizabeth — Uitenhage region is today an essential part of the manufacturing sector in this country. The rapid growth in the region since the 50's is attributable mainly to the motor manufacturing and allied industries. Not only has the motor manufacturing industry attracted component manufacturers, but traditional industries such as tanneries and textile firms also provide many of the materials required for the finishing of vehicles, thereby resulting in their further expansion. However, the Port Elizabeth — Uitenhage area is dominated by multi-national secondary industries and as such it sets the pattern for industrial development in South Africa. This area Whisson argues "is rapidly outgrowing its demand for unorganised migrant labour."<sup>9</sup> In other words it requires a stable resident workforce.

For obvious reasons the unions given the most prominence in this area are those concerned with the motor manufacturing and allied industries. The origins of the National Union of Motor Assembly and Rubber Workers of South Africa (NUMARWOSA) dates back to 1967. By March 1968 the Union had received registration and was given representation on the Industrial Council in September 1970. It is for Coloured workers only.

Since the early 70's NUMARWOSA, under the auspices of the International Metal Workers' Federation has concerned itself with the organisation of African workers in the motor manufacturing and affiliated industries, into trade unions. After lengthy deliberations with members of African workers' committees in the various plants, it was decided to call a joint meeting in the Port Elizabeth — Uitenhage areas with the purpose of establishing a union for African workers in the motor assembly industry.

In September 1973 the United Rubber and Allied Workers' Union (UAW) for African workers, was formed and has since established branches in the other centres. In August 1980 the UAW had members at 10 companies in Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage. Ford, General Motors, Volkswagen, S.K.F., Goodyear Tyres, Borg Warner and Willard Batteries have an agreement with the UAW, whereby union dues are deducted from the wages of its members. In the remaining companies agreements are still to be negotiated. It would appear that the Union does not represent 50% of the workforce in these companies but is still recruiting.

As an unregistered union the UAW has no negotiating rights on the Industrial Council. There is, however, close co-operation between the registered NUMARWOSA which is party to the Industrial Council, and the UAW. No decisions are made unless they are acceptable to both these organisations. They share offices, in some cases they share organisers and both unions have members in the same industries. According to Maree the UAW can be classified as an independent parallel union of the registered NUMARWOSA.<sup>10</sup> At the request of the black Union the General Secretary of NUMARWOSA also serves as technical advisor to the UAW. This is resented by some of the black workers, who feel that the UAW is controlled by the Coloured Union. One of them commented that the UAW was dominated by coloured leadership.

Both NUMARWOSA and the UAW belong to the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU). In contrast to the policy followed by most of the FOSATU unions, the UAW has until recently worked through liaison committees. They have elected their own members onto these committees, in this way attempting to take over and bring them under their control. In most cases workers' representatives on liaison committees are also members of the relevant plant's Union Branch Executive and nominated by the Union.

During the 1979 dispute at Ford, workers ignored the liaison committee and the Company was unable to use it in any meaningful way. The workers regarded the committee as being non-representative and management orientated.

At Ford a shop stewards' committee is to be formed in each of the plants. This is to replace the liaison committee which disintegrated during the strike. In addition to these committees there are to be full-time shop stewards. NUMARWOSA supported by the UAW proposed and Ford agreed to the appointment of these officials their salaries to be paid by the Company. They will be selected by union members and will be ex-officio members of the BEC. It was recently announced that Ford is to employ 5 full-time and 15 part-time shop stewards. These shop stewards who were to take up their positions on Monday, 8th September would be paid at the rate for the job they were doing before they were elected to these positions. This was suggested by the unions as it was felt that shop stewards should retain their status as hourly paid workers. This would ensure that they maintain satisfactory identifications with workers' interests and do not aspire to become company men.

The Director of Industrial Relations said "their employment will, we hope, go a long way to resolving any labour problems that might arise".<sup>11</sup>

The Ford works' committee which was formed during the Ford unrest when the union was by-passed and arose from the Port Elizabeth Black Peoples' Civic Organisation (Pebco), claims that the workers were not sufficiently consulted on this proposal to have shop stewards devoting their whole time to labour relations and being relieved of all productive work, though still on the firm's payroll.

The Committee does not accept the scheme as it would appear the Union negotiated the plan with management before consulting the mass of members and thrashing out with them the implications of such an innovation. They are fully aware of the role conflicts to which these officials will be subjected with divided loyalties and further see the plan as a move by management to increase its influence. These strains are felt by personnel officers who are wholly company employees but nevertheless are supposed to present workers' viewpoints. How much more strain will there be on these new shop stewards, employees of the company but definitely union men.?

It seems the lack of prior consultation is delaying introduction of the scheme and at the same time giving the works' committee another fact for reinforcing the split from the UAW.

This split, which as mentioned above, came from the workers with the claim that the Union did not consult, nor was it in touch, with workers especially in the Cortina plant. While the Union saw its role as being confined to work conditions, pay issues and limited welfare, the Committee claiming to represent workers, saw the role of the Union calling for involvement in far wider issues and therefore expecting the unions to take up issues such as those raised by Pebco. This would mean full support of Pebco in their fight for wider social changes involving participation in decision making at local and national levels; full South African national citizenship and the rescinding of legal discrimination based on race.

These two viewpoints highlight two differing orientations to trade unions. The UAW confines its activities to economic issues, even though workers claim they have not been active enough in this sphere; the Works' Committee sees the economic and political as being inseparable although of late there has been a shift towards emphasizing workplace issues.

As a result of the workers claim that the union was ineffective even in the work context, at a meeting in February, they passed a vote of no confidence in the Union. By this time there was no Cortina representation on the BEC, the representatives having lost their seats due to absences from meetings. These absences demonstrate the lack of confidence in the Union.

The workers at the February meeting inspired by the Works' Committee voted in a new Union branch executive. The incumbent Union officials, because of the by-passing of required procedure, declared the election invalid.

At this time, September 1980, there exists a position of stale-mate. Calls have been made by the Works' Committee for a members' meeting, and new elections. The UAW have not responded to any of these calls, nor has it called any meeting since the February one, which it declared unconstitutional. This supports the workers' claims of neglect of their interests.

The Ford Cortina plant was established in 1973 and drew 700 new black workers who in attitude differed considerably from that of the workers in the adjoining Engine plant. Compared with the Engine plant, workers at Cortina are on average younger and better educated. Many of these workers come directly from schools where they have been exposed to the bitter struggles against the system of Bantu Education which emerged during the 70's and has been, and continues to be, particularly intense in the Eastern Cape. These already highly politicized workers were ready to reject any union they perceived not to be involved in the struggle.

Favis points out<sup>12</sup> the UAW was aware that there were differences between the respective experiences of trade union struggles at Engine plant and Cortina plant. On entering the factory Cortina workers found in existence a union already established through a long process of shop-floor struggle involving mainly Engine plant workers and focussing mainly on industrial matters. Cortina workers joining the union had obviously a wider concept of the functions of a union.

From the start Cortina plant workers were thoroughly opposed to the liaison committee and made a "mockery of the elections".<sup>13</sup> Only the weakest and the most inactive workers were prepared to serve on this Committee. Not only were these incumbents not representative of the Cortina workers, but they were also unable to stand up to management. Research in September 1977 showed rank and file members to be totally apathetic in their attitudes towards the UAW. Some of the workers expressed the viewpoint that they could see no benefits in belonging to the union. At the time of the strike there was a lack of an active and democratically organised union. The Works' Committee met the requirement.

The Works' Committee has since its inception, continued to draw support from the Cortina plant workers. To a lesser extent there is also according to the Works' Committee representatives, some support for the Committee from the Engine plant.

The Works' Committee presented a list of grievances so wide as to blur major issues. The grievances ranged from petty issues to serious charges of victimisation and unfair practices on the part of management.<sup>14</sup> This was also evidenced in their statement on the implementations of the Sullivan Codes to be submitted to the S.A.C.C. and other concerned bodies.

It would appear that the leadership has up to date been unable to articulate short-term demands within an adequate understanding of the overall system of industrial relations. Unrealistic wage demands may well encourage employers to lessen their dependence on the labour force, through increased technology. This also enables employers to dismiss employees they see as redundant and unco-operative. In the long term this could well contribute to the process of marginalization. Their demand for a minimum wage of R2,50 per hour was such an unrealistic request at this time.

This Works' Committee now transformed into the Motor Assembly Components Union of South Africa (MACUSA) has begun to organize workers at Ford and General Motors. Representatives claim that there is wide-spread support for this union not only at Ford, but also at General Motors. The UAW leadership at G.M. is weak. Union members serve on the liaison committee and it would appear that no success has been achieved with regard to the establishment of a Factory B.E.C. Of the 15 members on the P.E. Branch Executive only two are from G.M. Even though the black workforce at G.M. is considerably smaller than at Ford, research suggests that union leaders have not kept in close touch with workers in the factory.

The new union MACUSA claims to concern itself with the totality of workers' lives and stresses that one cannot separate work from the non-work sphere, particularly in South Africa, where blacks occupy a subordinate position in all spheres of life. Representatives from this Committee for example, felt that the Union should have taken a stand on the school boycotts. One of them claimed "The worker is a parent and as such directly involved. These issues can-

not be divorced from one another". Discussions with workers also revealed that they were clearly aware of their inferior education and their consequent inferior position in the economic sphere. However, it would appear that the leadership is not fully aware that the dispersion of energy over too wide a field can be counter-productive.

In contrast to the gulf between Union and workers in Port Elizabeth, in Uitenhage the Union hierarchy and workers were closely connected and thus events have taken a different road. Union leadership reflected the workers' feelings and forcefully presented the workers' demands at Volkswagen negotiations. The General Secretary of NUMARWOSA and technical adviser to the UAW, considers Uitenhage has "possibly the most powerful group in our whole Union".<sup>15</sup>

At Uitenhage the Union is far more democratically orientated which accounts for its close involvement with the mass of workers. In addition to the liaison committee, there are factory committees sometimes called factory B.E.C.'s. These committees are elected by union members on the shop-floor and cover both black and coloured workers.

The Uitenhage leadership responds to democratic requests for meetings, workers are consulted and there has, therefore, been no need for any breakaway leadership such as the P.E. Ford Works' Committee, which arose from the authoritarian distancing of the P.E. Union leadership from the mass of workers.

The very structure of the Union leadership in P.E. has led to the confusion of the very necessary national bureaucratic organisation with the day-to-day Union business. In addition in P.E. there is coloured/black antagonism under the surface.

The National Secretary of NUMARWOSA is in P.E., he is also technical adviser to the UAW and ex-officio a member of the local Branch Executive of NUMARWOSA. National affairs absorb a great deal of his time and this possibly contributes to the lack of involvement with local issues.

Being involved with National Affairs means much closer contact with employers with the inevitable accusations from workers that their secretary is too employer orientated. Separation of the two roles of National Secretary and local organizer would avoid this.

The offices of National President of the UAW and local shop-steward and membership on the B.E.C. are held by one individual, contributing to a seemingly authoritarian control — especially if meetings of workers are not held regularly, as has been the case in P.E. In any organisation the holding of too many portfolios lead to authoritarian leadership. Workers are fully aware of this.

In Uitenhage the workers feel that the Union is local and theirs and that they are in control. There is no confusion with National Officials.

A contrast between coloured and black relationships in Uitenhage and P.E. has been drawn. It should be noted that at Volkswagen coloured and black workers are incorporated into one factory, whereas at Ford they are separated in different plants. This may well contribute to the differences described in the two areas.

## THE POLITICAL SETTING

According to Whisson the political heart-land of black South Africa lies in the Eastern Cape. "There political skills were learned the hard way in the Frontier Wars and the negotia-



tions which punctuated them. There rose the educational institutions of Lovedale, Healdtown and Fort Hare in which many leaders of liberation struggles learned the essential techniques of communication".<sup>16</sup> In the 60's there was active support in the Eastern Cape for the A.N.C. Approximately 2,000 alleged supporters were tried and sentenced in this area for belonging to this banned organisation. In the 70's the black consciousness movement with its headquarters in the Eastern Cape arose out of the ashes of the A.N.C. This movement fed into and provided ideological and organisational inputs for the urban centres in this area. Evans points out that this area witnessed some of the most violent repression in the post-June 16, 1976 unrest which unlike the "rest of the country continued in P.E. well into 1978."<sup>17</sup>

Following the banning of leaders in the Black Consciousness movement in 1977 there was as Evans stated a lack of effective leadership in P.E. "It was into this vacuum that the Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organisation (Pebco) stepped".<sup>18</sup>

Pebco has its roots in community organisation and arose out of the dissatisfaction of the residents of Zwide and Kwazakhele Townships over a new system of water metering which they felt was making people pay exorbitant sums for water services over and above already excessive rentals. During that period the rentals had risen from approximately R14,00 to R36,00. The tackling of these problems led to a link-up with residents' associations in New Brighton, Kwazakhele and Thembaletha which were dealing with similar problems, and in Walmer where the residents had repeatedly been threatened with removals to Zwide, 22km away.

As a result of these linkages, Pebco was formed on the 10th October 1977. The main objectives of this organisation as outlined in its constitution are to fight for equal civil rights for all people of Port Elizabeth, and to oppose all legislation at the local and government levels, perceived to be discriminatory. It also seeks for participation in decision-making on all matters affecting the people of South Africa, the right for blacks to buy land in any place of their choice and finally, to resist any attempts to deprive blacks of their South African citizenship.

Pebco refuses to negotiate with the P.E. Community Council which it sees as a tool of E.C.A.B. It sees itself as providing an alternative to the Council for dealing with civic matters which pertain to blacks in P.E. Evans argues that this focus essentially limited Pebco to the organisation of those with Section 10(1) (a) or (b) rights. However, this does include the overwhelming majority of P.E.'s approximately 350,000 blacks.<sup>19</sup>

Under the charismatic leadership of Mr Thozamile Botha the movement could at the time be described as populist in that it had widespread support among black workers.

The leadership was and still is, dominated by professionals and others not from the factory floors. Supporters of the UAW have accused Pebco of having no workers on its executive. However, the strong radical confrontationist approach adopted by the leadership generated support among all sectors of the black population.<sup>20</sup>

The strike at the Ford Cortina plant on the 31st October 1979 was political in the sense that strikers were responding as workers to what they perceived to be the victimization of their leader because of his involvement in the community. This is not to deny that economic grievances existed at Ford.<sup>21</sup> They, amongst others, centered on the short working week and the consequent low wages.<sup>22</sup>

This strike is significant in that workers recognize that civic and work issues are inseparable, both having a political

aspect. They stress the importance of close working relationships between work and civic organisations. Thozamile Botha as leader of the civic organisation felt that it was his duty to keep in close touch with the workers, and that the problems of individuals as workers and residents cannot be divorced.

However, at no stage did Pebco want to usurp the rôle of a trade union. It recognized the practical necessity of separating work-place and community struggles, even though these are connected. The UAW by focussing almost totally on narrowly defined work-place issues largely negated this connection. This was as previously noted, one of the reasons why the workers rejected the Union. Instead they elected their own committee to handle the dispute. The Works' Committee functioned as an independent committee although affiliated to Pebco. This point is succinctly made by Evans when he argues that Pebco merely lent "moral support to propagate the dispute and to help raise funds for the workers."<sup>23</sup> It also generated support within the community as a whole "as the solidarity which emerged made it extremely difficult for Ford to employ any scab labour from the black township".<sup>24</sup>

This identification of economic and political issues makes the repressive State action which followed explicable.

The banning of the more radical leadership of Pebco in February 1980 has dealt this organisation a heavy blow and since then it has become relatively inactive.

In retrospect it would appear that Pebco over-extended itself.<sup>25</sup> At one time it planned six forms of protest which it was unable to carry out. This suggests that the issues of short-term goals within the framework of an overall progressive policy were not carefully thought out. As a result, Pebco was also unable to successfully overcome the difficulties of creating an alliance between its middle-class leadership and the working-class. This was particularly the case after leading members of the original executive were banned. The importance attached to home ownership to the extent of including this as a major objective in the constitution, clearly reflects the class interests of the leaderships. This is something that many of its working-class members are aware of as their chances of owning a house are very slim.

It would seem that the more moderate leadership has increasingly come to be alienated from the bulk of the working-class. The new Union plans to act as an autonomous body until such time as the Pebco leadership becomes more worker orientated. This will, among other issues, necessitate the inclusion of members more closely connected with the working-class on the executive.

In recent times the leadership has been severely challenged. Attempts to unseat the president have been successful. Complaints directed at the leaders are that they have violated the Pebco policy by negotiating with local authorities such as the E.C.A.B. and the Community Council; that they have also failed to act during the school boycott and over the rent issue.

With the removal of restrictions on mass meetings it is probable that there will be a revival of interest in this organisation. However, the leadership faces a difficult task. To gain renewed support requires clearly defined objectives and this necessitates not only involved leadership but a clear understanding on their part of the parameters within which short-term goals are realizable without, at the same time, bringing down the wrath of the State.

The Ford dispute cannot be described as a victory in material terms. The workers sacrificed three months wages and had

to involve themselves in a hard struggle to obtain the bonuses which they lost last year. However, the workers have come to recognize the value of community support in their workplace struggle. This community support and consequent absence of scab labour has made management aware of the difficulties of replacing a skilled work-force both in bargaining and in skills.

The continuing splitting in Unions can only be to the detriment of collective bargaining. MACUSA requires the administrative and procedural experience which the UAW leadership possess, whereas the UAW needs to democratize its structures possibly as suggested by the separation of rôles.

In Uitenhage an organisation focussing on community struggles, the Uitenhage Black Peoples' Organisation (Ubco) came into being two weeks after Pebco was formed. Ubco in its constitution subscribes to the same aims as Pebco. Like Pebco it emerged from the residents associations. The townships linked through Ubco are Kwanobuhla, Mc Naughton and Kabah.

Unlike Pebco the leadership is also working-class. Close and amicable linkages exist between the UAW and Ubco with executives serving on both committees. The UAW also had very close community support during the 1980 June – July unrest, without the inter-organisational strife so evident in P.E.

Ubco has, over the past year, experienced a steady growth and has at present over 2,000 members. To qualify for membership a person must occupy a rented house. In effect this means that those who do not have section 10(1) (a) and (b) rights are excluded. This restriction could well reinforce divisions between the permanent and migrant workforce thereby unwittingly promoting the aims of the Riekert recommendations.

Like Pebco, Ubco takes a stance of non-negotiation with bodies such as the E.C.A.B. and the Community Council. Ubco also deals with issues such as rent and service charge increases.

The residents of Kabal Township have in recent times been threatened with removals to a new extension in Kwanobuhla. Families moving to this new area will be expected to pay much higher rents. Ubco has legally contested both the removals and this rise in rent from approximately R15 to R35. The E.C.A.B. are now to employ a means test whereby rents will be determined according to income; the range of variation is to be between R25 and R41 per month. Ubco is not prepared to accept this decision and a meeting is to be called in the Kabal Township.

The leaders of Ubco are fully aware of the process of marginalization taking place in this area. They argue that many workers are insecure in their jobs. "This week a man may be taking home R50, but next week he may be without a job. So how can you make him pay a rent based on his present wage". These leaders have clearly made the connections between these basic civic problems and the broader economic ones. They involve struggles which cannot be divorced from the wider political issues.

Ubco was initially not involved in the Schools' boycott. In August 1980 a Parents' Committee was established. This committee is, however, not recognized by the authorities.

The approach which this committee adopted was that scholars should return to school with obtainable short-term demands about better facilities, the shortage of teachers, free text books, etc. These short-term demands should not be regarded as ends in themselves but as means towards the

realization of the long-term goal of equal education and one department only covering education. It is, however, recognized that this goal cannot be achieved overnight. This approach suggests that there are close links between the Parents' Committee and the Uitenhage Student Committee and through the latter with the Congress of South African Students (C.O.S.A.S.)

Since the schools in P.E. and Uitenhage have been closed by the authorities, the Parents' Committee has adopted a more aggressive stance. It has appealed to parents to refuse to have their children re-registered, thereby challenging the directives of the educational authorities.

It is clear that Ubco has developed in a different direction to Pebco. While Ubco has maintained a low profile it continues to be a dynamic organisation intensely involved in community issues. Even though its membership is almost exclusively working-class, it sees the necessity of obtaining support from students and other groups. Ubco thus acts as a unifying channel for the expression of the aims of these groups, all seeking the liberation of those suffering under discrimination.

Ubco now faces the problems involved of obtaining wider support. It would like to have the support of those professional and small businessmen who also favour an end to discrimination, but the leadership wants control to remain in working-class hands. The leadership of Ubco is very conscious of the extent to which the Pebco leadership has, since the bannings in February, become isolated from the workers and wants to avoid a similar situation from arising in Uitenhage. They are also aware of the difficulties of overcoming differences in class interests; hence their caution with regard to establishing alliances with other groupings.

The leadership is also considering extending to the coloured community, but here they are faced with similar problems. In addition, there is a status problem, and consequently there is always the danger of this group assuming a position of domination within the organisation and defining goals at the expense of black working-class interests.

On the 7th of May 1980 there was a wildcat strike of drivers at Volkswagen over wages. At the request of the Union they went back to work as the Industrial Council was sitting to consider a new wage agreement. In June a Sunday meeting was called, for the Union to report to the workers the result of their negotiation at the Industrial Council meeting. Two days before the scheduled meeting the proclamation banning all gatherings was promulgated. This provoked the workers still further and added to their dissatisfaction at what they had heard was the level of wages agreed to by their Union representatives. With no opportunity to discuss their feelings, they reported for work on the Monday morning, June 16th, and at 8 a.m. downed tools. This involved 3,500 coloured and black workers. A demand was made for a minimum wage of R2 an hour and R2,60 for drivers. The Union had agreed to R1,40 an hour at the industrial council. This was not acceptable and local union officials conveyed the demands to management. Eventually R1,45 as a minimum plus an attendance bonus was accepted by the workers and they returned to work on Monday the 7th of July.

Ubco gave full support to the Union and workers during the strike but made no attempt to intervene in negotiations.

The Volkswagen strike triggered off strikes in a number of other factories involving approximately 4,000 other workers some more organised than others. In the companies for

example, S.K.F. and Borg Warner where the Union was well established and recognized, negotiations came to a rapid and satisfactory conclusion. This was not the case in other factories where they were not well unionized; demands were unrealistic and employers antagonistic. Even in these cases Ubco did not intervene though continuing to give community support.

The history of the Uitenhage unrest clearly demonstrated to the workers the value of functionally separated organisations: closely linked but fully aware of their own fields of activity. According to Ubco and Union representatives the strikes at

other factories were primarily in support of the Volkswagen strikes, thereby indicating the solidarity created by community organisation.

What the P.E. and Uitenhage experiences have shown is that excessive intervention of political controls in the economic sphere are making workers aware of the connection between economic and political issues. As a result they welcome organisations such as Pebco and Ubco alongside their Unions. Rising skills and increasing solidarity have resulted in a more sophisticated black urban industrial work-force who will continue to combine economic and political struggles in a society which denies them equal participation in all spheres. □

- 1 Anthony Giddens; *The Class Structure of Advanced Societies*; 203
- 2 R. Barge, N. Coleman, E. Emdon, and A. van Heerden; *The Case for African Unions*.
- 3 Ibid : 5
- 4 E. Webster: "Stayaways and the Black Class Since the Second World War. The evaluation of a strategy". Unpublished paper; 13
- 5 P. Bonner and E. Webster; "Background" Focus of Wiehahn. S.A.L.B. Vol. 5, No. 2 August 1977; 5
- 6 M. Nicol; "Legislation, Registration, Emasculation". S.A.L.B. Vol. 5, No. 687, March 1980; 50
- 7 Ibid : 51
- 8 Eastern Province Herald : Thursday, 18th September 1980.
- 9 M. Whisson, "Port Elizabeth — the Future is here" Reality — May 1980 : 13
- 10 J. Maree "The UAW and the 1979 P.E. Strikes. S.A.L.B. Vol. 6, No. 283 September 1980 : 13
- 11 Eastern Province Herald : 5th September 1980
- 12 Merle Favis: "The Ford Workers' Committee and Shop Flawed Victory" Working for Ford S.A.L.B. Vol. 6, Nos. 2, 8, 3. September 1980 : 39.
- 13 Ibid : 39
- 14 See Favis : 41
- 15 S.A.L.B. Vol. 6, Nos. 2, 8, 3. September 1980 : 56.
- 16 M. Whisson : Op. Cit : 13
- 17 M. Evans : "The Emergence and Decline of a Community Organisation: An Assessment of Pebco". Working for Ford. S.A.L.B. Vol. 6, Nos. 2, & 3, September 1980 : 46.
- 18 Ibid : 46
- 19 Ibid : 46
- 20 Ibid : 47
- 21 Ibid : 48
- 22 See M. Whisson (et al) *The Sullivan Principles at Ford*.
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- 24 Ibid : 49
- 25 Ibid : 50

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# TWO POEMS

by

Chris Mann

## A JOHANNESBURG LADY AND THE XHOSA PRIEST

(Ntsikana c.1760-1820, revered diviner and praise-poet  
and one of the first Xhosa Christians)

She sat quite still in a wicker-work chair,  
her light-brown shoulders and negligent arms  
jostling with dapple from a budded tree.  
Beneath her fingertips, against a page  
a leaf like an empty stained-glass window:-

“Whereupon the prophet Ntsikana shivered  
and wrapping himself in his father’s kaross  
declared that the moment was nigh.  
Indeed, a whirlwind blew in the byre  
and sand was hurled in the eyes of the dancers  
and the dancing ceased. So Ntsikana arose  
and discoursed in silence amongst the elders,  
who issued from out the crust of the kraal,  
and stood about him like columns of air.  
They murmured thus till the crags went red,  
till the hooves of the beasts began to shine,  
when off he thrust his kaross and exclaimed,  
“Let me hear more of the religion of God!  
And the dancers came forth, and resumed the dance.”

The filter hummed beside the pool,  
a tap below the terraces dripped.

“He is holy!” she thought, “holy!”

Everything was different

Burnt-orange daisies, and yellow and white  
tipped up their chins in the dried-out rockery  
and took the late-spring sunshine like a drink.

Everything was different,  
nothing had changed.

## AN ELDERLY SHADE TO A POLITICAL REVOLUTIONARY

Because we have to die,  
because we suffer the diseases of affluence,  
the ulcers, coronaries, the insomnia and guilt,  
or limp round the factories of poverty  
with rickets, resentments, and self-disteem,  
life is busy enough for most of us.

But sometimes an extra burden is given,  
sometimes History imposes itself on individuals,  
who never sought History,  
and do all they can to keep it out.  
They want to go on in the ordinary way  
courting, childing, devouring their beer,  
but History keeps on nudging at them,  
whispering round them, “Change! Adapt! Bend!  
Or else BE changed; adapted; broken.”

And because we have to die,  
because we are trapped in affluence  
or narrowed by our poverty,  
we have little energy to cope with History,  
and keep it out until it takes us in,  
when veins rupture, blood falls

before we go on in the usual way,  
courting, childing, devouring our beer,  
having known ourselves a little better for a while.

# EQUITABLE PARTITION IN SOUTH AFRICA?

“TRANSKEI’S HALF LOAF (RACE SEPARATION IN SOUTH AFRICA)” by NEWELL M. STULTZ

(Published in South Africa by David Philip, in association with Yale University Press, New Haven and London.)

A Review by John Passmore

The blurb on the back cover of this book says that “Stultz’s conclusions are unlikely to please either anti-apartheid or dogmatic supporters of the South African government . . .”.

The reason for this is quite understandable. Stultz (a professor of political science at Brown University, U.S.A.) offers the relatively unexplored theory that Transkeian independence may be the first step towards a genuine and equitable partition of South Africa’s land and resources — a partition that would ensure the social and economic well-being of all South Africa’s people without leading to a “tyranny of the majority”.

Stultz’s book is an attempt to explore a middle-of-the-road approach as regards the Transkei. The liberal-left view is essentially a unitary state which must, (after the end of the Pretoria regime) to all intents and purposes, be treated as one.

The right-wing approach is to use the Transkei and its sister homelands as a device designed to strip blacks of their rights to full South African citizenship and at the same time maintain a massive reservoir of cheap labour for white industry and agriculture.

“Transkei’s Half Loaf” rejects both views; the latter for its explicit racism and exploitation; the former because it runs contrary to general African development. Africa, it must be remembered, is comprised of 50 states despite the fact that it constitutes only 22% of the world’s total land surface and 10% of its population. South Africa is a microcosm of these numerous and diverse ethno-economic African groupings.

Stultz, writing from a personal position he describes as “conservative, or at least on the conservative side of centre” believes that separation could lead to a reduction of race conflict in southern Africa. He bases his theory on three premises, viz. (1) that a “successful revolution”, while possible, is neither inevitable nor perhaps even likely, (2) that the response of the South African regime to pressures placed upon it will be “higher levels of official coercion” leading to measures “separatist in character”, and (3) that separatist measures could in time open the way for “lower levels of official coercion and more democracy in general”.

## ECONOMIC VIABILITY

A partitioning of land based on tribal ethnicity, Stultz concedes, can only be justified if that state is “capable of subsisting without the aid of whites”. The alternative is a federation of states.

Stultz points out the obvious, viz. Transkei fulfils none of the long-term requirements as regards partition or federation. He realises that, in the first place, Matanzima has succeeded in gaining INTERNAL Transkeian majority support via a campaign which culminated in the effective neutralization of all serious opposition. Secondly, Transkei relies heavily on financial aid from Pretoria and the injection of private sector white capital has simply led to an entrenched and relatively wealthy elite of chiefs, bureaucrats and petty capitalists.

As regards federation — Matanzima has made some federal noises but his actions suggest a belief in a type of “independence” tailored to his own desires of semi-monarchial aggrandizement.

Despite the facts Stultz is strongly convinced that the West should not ignore the possibilities that have arisen as a consequence of Transkeian “independence”. He treats an extract from a Matanzima speech with sympathy—

“today the British Government and all its henchmen pretend to be protectors of the black people in South Africa, while they recognize the sovereignty of the minority of Whites over the Blacks in this country and while they are trading partners in South Africa.”

Stultz dismisses the idea that Matanzima is nothing but a puppet and indirectly cites this speech as an example. He regards Matanzima as an embattled black nationalist conservative fighting to resolve the meaninglessness of Transkeian independence by hedging to accept the white governments decree that all Transkeian orientated workers in South Africa are citizens of the “independent” homeland. Stultz clearly recognizes how badly Transkei’s independence falls short of a genuine partition with federalist possibilities— “it (Transkeian independence) does not lessen the reality of white privilege and the political supremacy of whites within the region. Nor does it introduce a radical departure from past practice in the allocation of resources in southern Africa . . .”.

## STATE DEPARTMENT

However, despite these crippling disadvantages, Stultz envisages great possibilities arising from the independence of the Transkei —

“What if Transkei were to join with the neighbouring Ciskei, which is also Xhosa speaking, and the intervening port city, East London, and white farmlands were

to be included? Would not the resulting "Greater Xhosa-land" be a far more credible nation-state and thereby be more likely to elicit broader African interest and support?"

Such an occurrence would, in Stultz's opinion, lead to a situation whereby a powerful partitioned state could extract greater concessions from Pretoria.

Stultz's theory of partition based on partial acceptance of homeland independence poses a fascinating question. Is this type of thinking increasingly prevalent among officials of the United States State Department?

As Johnson points out in "How Long will South Africa survive" —

"South Africa is too important to the West (economically) . . . to be allowed to go the way of the Congo, Mozambique or Angola . . ."

Stultz's book clearly favours an equitable distribution of resources among a powerful grouping of middle class South African ethnic elites. Such a federal system would obviously ally itself with the conservative pro-capitalist West and prevent an economically powerful and strategically vital country from aligning itself to the Eastern bloc. Stultz's — and his fellow academic conservatives' — increasing pre-occupation with South Africa reflects the fact that the Third World (southern Africa in particular) is clearly moving to the top of the U.S. State Department's list of priorities — a trend clearly hinted at by ex-Secretary of State Cyrus Vance in his recent address to students at Harvard University. □

#### An organiser for Diakonia's Church and industry programme.

Diakonia, the Durban-based ecumenical organisation, is about to set up a *Church and Industry Programme* and is looking for a person to fill the post of Organiser in this field.

The new Programme arises out of the difficulties ministers of religion have in drawing workers into parish life, difficulties which arise in part from the uncertainties the priests themselves experience about how they should respond to the problems created by unemployment, shift work, poor wages and working conditions. Priests and ministers also need help in trying to clarify their responsibilities to management and the issues they face. The aim is eventually to set up small groups of adult workers

and separate groups of managers in each congregation, with a view to enlisting their active engagement in the task of transforming society in the direction of a Christian model of social relations.

The person Diakonia is looking for as its organiser in this field should be a committed Christian with experience in worker movements. The post will clearly be one of great challenge.

Anyone interested in further details should contact Paddy Kearney at P.O. Box 1879, Durban, 4000. □

#### YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS

published by the S A Catholic Bishops' Conference  
P.O. Box 941, Pretoria 0001.

This booklet, published in Afrikaans, English, Sotho and Zulu sets out in simple terms a person's rights in relation to the police and the courts. It deals with those rights as they relate to questioning, searches, arrest, legal assistance, the making of statements, appearances in court, and detention.

Obtainable at the above address at 10c a copy or 12 copies for R1,00. □

# THE CAPE TOWN MEAT STRIKE

contributed by the Western Province General Workers' Union

The year 1980 has shown an upsurge in factory based worker action generally, in South Africa: the Frametex strike in Natal, the PUTCO strike in the Transvaal, the strike by Johannesburg City Council workers and the industry-wide strike by meat workers in Cape Town. It is the intention of this article to give a brief overview of the strike of the Cape Town meat workers, who are members of the Western Province General Workers Union.

## THE BACKGROUND TO THE MEAT STRIKE

The W.P.G.W.U. is an unregistered trade union which has been operating in the Western Cape since 1973. The membership of the union is predominantly African, but there is a growing number of coloured members in the union. The union as a GENERAL workers' union is organised across industrial lines, with membership in factories in other industries besides the meat industry. It includes textile workers, engineering workers, building and allied workers, dockworkers, etc.

In all of the 18 meat factories in which the union was organised at the outset of the strike, the union enjoyed majority membership. In most of these factories there was 100% support, and in no factory less than 70% support. The union had committees in all but 3 of the 18 meat firms: Table Bay Cold Storage Company, National Meat Suppliers and Braams. In a minority of firms works committees had initially been established when these firms had first been organised in 1975 and 1976. Even at this early stage, however, the constitutions of these committees had been drawn up by the workers themselves under the auspices of the union, and did not approximate those drawn up by the Department of Manpower Utilisation. In most of these firms the registration of these committees had lapsed and they had continued as unregistered committees. In the majority of the meat firms, initial and continuing organisation had been through unregistered and non-racial workers' committees.

The union's objective is to establish a strong democratic factory-based worker organisation. The issue around which the meat workers went on strike was part of a struggle to achieve this.

## THE STRIKE AT TABLE BAY COLD STORAGE

In April 1979, the workers in the 3 meat factories which did not as yet have committees to represent them, asked the union to write to their respective managements asking for recognition of unregistered workers committees. The workers at these factories were members of the union. The response of the Braams management was to agree almost immediately to their request. The response of the Table Bay management was to deny the right of the workers to

democratic organisation of their choice, and instead to offer the workers a liaison committee (a committee onto which half the members are appointed by management, and the manager acts as chairman of the committee) and to demand that the workers resign from their union, the W.P.G.W.U. The Table Bay workers attempted over a period of two weeks to negotiate with the management over this issue, urging consideration of their eminently reasonable demands. They ultimately resorted to strike action on the 7th May, having been faced with absolute intransigence on the part of the Table Bay management in meeting this demand.

The National Meat Suppliers (NMS) management's response was at first to adopt a 'wait and see' attitude at the beginning of the dispute at Table Bay Cold Storage. They later agreed to recognise an unregistered committee, but insisted that it represent African workers only.

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDUSTRY-WIDE STRIKE OF CAPE TOWN'S MEAT WORKERS

The workers at other meat factories in Cape Town were concerned at the plight of their fellow workers at Table Bay Cold Storage. Between the 7th and 19th May, they attempted to negotiate with their own managements to put pressure on the Table Bay management to recognise the Table Bay workers' committee. The meat bosses' reaction was to refuse to discuss this issue with the workers, and to publicly express their support for the stand of the Table Bay management. The workers in the meat industry saw this as a challenge put out not only to the Table Bay workers, but to all the workers in the meat industry. They saw this as part of a general attempt on the part of the meat bosses to prevent further organisation and to begin undermining existing organisation. It was after attempts to resolve this issue peaceably had failed, that the Cape Town meat workers staged a 1-day sympathy strike in support of the Table Bay workers, on Monday 19th May.

On returning to work on Tuesday 20th May, the workers found all the firms surrounded by police and they were turned away. No attempts were made then or subsequently by the managements to discuss the issue with workers.

The workers decided to remain on strike until 3 demands were met:

- (1) the unconditional reinstatement of all 800 striking meat workers,
- (2) the recognition of an unregistered workers committee at Table Bay Cold Storage,
- (3) the recognition of an unregistered workers committee at NMS.

Workers called upon the community at large for support in 3 areas:

- (1) a boycott of red meat
- (2) financial support
- (3) persuading other workers not to 'scab'.

## THE REACTION OF THE COMMUNITY

Support for the meat workers came from all sections of the black community: other workers, teachers, students, butchers, traders and many others. A support committee consisting of union representatives, representatives from sympathetic unions, community organisations and student organisations was formed to co-ordinate this support. Before the ban on meetings was introduced, several community meetings were addressed nightly by union organisers and meat workers. After the ban on meetings, support was sustained from within the community mainly on a door-to-door basis. There was also support from the more progressive sections of the white community.

(1) **RED MEAT BOYCOTT:** The boycott of red meat was endorsed by a large number of community organisations, schools, churches and fellow trade unions. The butchers in the African townships stopped selling red meat altogether for a period of 5 weeks. The workers' call to boycott meat nationally, was taken up in several other centres such as Durban, Pietermaritzburg and Johannesburg, where support committees were also formed.

(2) **FINANCIAL SUPPORT:** The Executive of the W.P.G.W.U. decided that the union should pay R15 per week relief payment to each meat worker, while the workers were out on strike. This was so that the workers would not be 'starved' back to work. This meant a weekly bill of about R12 000 for the union. By the end of the strike the total cost had been R159 765. Union members paid a voluntary R1,00 weekly contribution towards the meat workers, in excess of their subscriptions. But this bill could obviously not be met by the union alone. The amount collected from the community was overwhelming. R100 323,54 was donated by the public – from community organisations all over the Cape Flats, from schools and churches, from UCT and UWC, from fellow trade unions and sympathetic individuals. The vast bulk of the money was collected in individual donations of small but regular contributions. Donations were received not only from Cape Town, but also from Johannesburg, Durban, Pietermaritzburg and other towns of the Western Cape.

(3) **PREVENTION OF 'SCABBING':** Various attempts were made within the community to persuade other workers not to take the jobs of the meat workers. Meetings were held over this issue in the African and coloured communities. In the initial stages of the strike these appeals had some effect, and some workers who had taken jobs at the abattoirs since the strike left these jobs. In the long run, however, with the high rate of unemployment, total prevention of scabbing was impossible to implement. The abattoirs did manage to fill part of their labour requirements, albeit not altogether satisfactorily, as the new workers had not yet acquired the skills for the jobs.

(4) **ATTEMPTS AT MEDIATION:** Leading public figures and sections of the press continuously urged the management of the meat industry and the State, to heed the calls being made by the workers for democratic organisation, and to negotiate with the workers over their demands. Attempts to mediate in the dispute all failed. Attempts were made at the start of the strike by a number of black butchers belonging to WEPCOC and the Western Cape Traders Association. The South African Council of Church and representatives from other organisations including the Progressive Federal Party also attempted to mediate. However, the meat bosses' attitude was marked by a constant refusal to talk. In the words of one of the butchers, "the

meat bosses do not know the meaning of discussion and negotiation – they arrive at their own decisions and simply pass down orders."

## THE REACTIONS OF THE STATE

The direction of State involvement in the meat strike became clear fairly early on – it was clear connivance with the meat bosses to smash progressive trade unionism amongst workers. A spokesman of the Table Bay Cold Storage Company, where the dispute began, went so far as to state publicly on 4th July that negotiations of a settlement had been taken out of the firm's hands and were 'in the hands of the government. The State used its repressive apparatus to 'settle' the strike. Organisers of the W.P.G.W.U. were detained and harassed and the union offices were searched. The general ban on meetings included those at which strikes were discussed. The pass laws were used to endorse out 42 contract workers from Table Bay Cold Storage. The floor price of meat was raised on 2nd June – a clear attempt to cushion the effects of the meat strike and boycott of red meat products. As in the Frametex and Municipal workers' strikes, the State's manner of dealing with labour disputes was by direct intervention on the side of the bosses, discouraging negotiation. It was apparent that the State together with the meat bosses had taken a decision to use all means to prevent the workers from winning their demands in the strike. The manner in which the meat strike was dealt with by the bosses and the State has demonstrated the hollowness of the new labour dispensation, as a concession to worker rights. It showed quite clearly the contempt for true representativity based on worker support for these organisations.

## THE RESILIENCE OF THE MEAT WORKERS

The meat workers were out on strike for 12 weeks. Despite the hardships they were forced to endure by subsistence on R15 per week, their commitment remained unshaken. For the whole duration of the strike, only 13 workers out of a total of 800 applied for their jobs back. The degree of unity and their resilience are unquestionable. The decision to end the strike was taken in the face of the failure of 12 weeks' attempts to settle the strike, and of little remaining hope of resolving the issue through negotiation. The workers felt it would be better therefore to end the strike in an organised and united manner.

## CONCLUSIONS

The immediate aims of the meat workers were defeated primarily by the combined strength of the State and management. However some important issues have emerged as longer-term lessons from the meat strike.

The strike broke important ground in that meat factory workers came out on strike in SUPPORT of the demands of workers in one factory – i.e. in support of their fellow union members' demands for representation. This showed the depth of their unity as workers and union members.

The meat strike has also provided an indication of the depth of commitment to democratic organisation amongst workers. It has shown that the days of workers accepting racist undemocratic bodies forced upon them by management or the State as instruments of control, are over. In this, the workers and the community have demonstrated their unity. The meat workers' demand for democratic representation struck a chord within the black community as a whole. This was a demand being echoed also within other spheres of the community. This unity is no doubt an indication of future trends. □



# TOWARDS CHANGE?

A review of TOWARDS AN OPEN SOCIETY IN SOUTH AFRICA: the Role of Voluntary Organisations, edited by

Hendrik W. van der Merwe, Marian Nell, Kim Weichel and Jane Reid. David Philip, Publisher

by Colin Gardner

For those hoping for and trying to work for some real change in South Africa, 1980 has been a dreadful year. In the last months of 1979 it was possible to believe (though one was aware all the time that it might be no more than a dream) that P.W. Botha's Government, pushed perhaps by military people who sometimes have a greater sense of reality than politicians who have dedicated themselves to blind prejudice, might really try to dissolve from above some of the chains that hang so heavily and so elaborately on our society. But the early months of this year revealed what seems to be the present truth, and is perhaps the final truth, of the National Party: neither wisdom nor religion nor intelligent self-interest will prevail against the rock-like fort of fearful stubbornness and mad greed.

In decrying our rulers in these terms, I don't want to imply that non-Nationalist whites are innocent victims or bystanders. Almost all whites and some blacks are implicated deeply in the social arrangements which need to be drastically overhauled: whether we know it or not, whether we like it or not, we are benefiting from a socio-economic system which is unjust in almost every detail. But in October of last year – I think it must in honesty be said – a fair number of non-Nationalist whites, and even a sprinkling of Nationalists, were hoping that some changes would come about.

They didn't. Essentially nothing has altered. What now?

The ANC's response to the present state-of-affairs, as indeed to the whole situation since the early 1960's, is well known: the Pretoria regime must be weakened, then toppled by force. The ANC presence has become more noticeable, both inside and outside South Africa, in the last few years. It is clearly a power to be reckoned with.

But what options are open to those – both blacks and whites – who live in South Africa and who believe that change should be brought about if possible in a peaceful manner? Can one do anything significant?

TOWARDS AN OPEN SOCIETY IN SOUTH AFRICA: THE ROLE OF VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS is an optimistic title. The book is produced under the auspices of the Centre for Intergroup Studies and the Human Awareness Project, two organisations which believe in and are committed to the gradual transformation of attitudes and institutions. Whether one's initial mood is one of hopeful interest or merely one of gloomy scepticism, the book makes interesting and challenging reading.

Published a few months ago, it is made up largely of brief papers delivered at a workshop which was held in Cape

Town in February 1979. The papers, which describe the history, the work and the aims of various voluntary organisations, were (and are) grouped into six sections; and each section is preceded by an introduction and rounded off with a summary of the discussion that the papers aroused. The sections and the specific organisations chosen are as follows:

1. Religion (Church of the Province of S.A.; Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk; Afrikaans Calvinist Movement).
2. Cultural Organisations (Afrikaanse Skrywersgilde; Inkatha).
3. Recreation and Amenities (S.A. Council of Sport; National Professional Soccer League; Johannesburg Central Business District Association).
4. Service and Welfare (Rotary; Cape Town Child Welfare Society).
5. Development Organisations (Urban Foundation; Peninsular Youth Association).
6. Change-Promoting Organisations (Kontak; Committee of Ten; Black Sash). Amongst the speakers are Desmond Tutu, Esau Jacobs, Jan Rabie, Gibson Thula, Hassan Howa, Robin Lee, Ellen Kuzwayo and Mary Burton.

The variety of organisations and attitudes is almost bewildering, but this effect is perhaps deliberate: we are made aware of numerous groups approaching a complex common problem from many different angles. At the same time one is conscious of absences: there are all those organisations which were banned in October 1977, and the many others which were forced out of existence before that. Then, more surprisingly, there are no trade unions. The editors may have omitted trade unions because an earlier workshop, co-sponsored by the Centre for Intergroup Studies, dealt with organised labour and produced, in 1974, a 250-page book entitled LABOUR PERSPECTIVES ON SOUTH AFRICA (David Philip). The fact remains, however, that a good deal has happened in this field since 1974, and an important area of voluntary activity has been neglected.

Each of the organisations represented in the book puts forward its strategies, its problems and its hopes. The discussion-summaries which conclude each section are especially illuminating. Here the reader confronts some of the central difficulties and tensions which run through all the South African organisations which are hoping to promote change: Should blacks at the moment work only in black groups or should they participate also in non-racial ventures or projects? Which is the more effective approach – gradualism or confrontationalism? Are almost all organisations hamstrung by the fact that they are working "within the system"? What constitutes really meaningful change?

Clearly all those issues must be important to anyone who plans to continue to try to work for change. Besides, in

regarding South African society as something that is fluid and constantly capable of modification (despite the views of those who dictate policy), the book throws down a gauntlet to those who believe (as many people now do) that ultimate confrontation and some form of social chaos are inevitable.

The concluding discussion-summary seems to express the views not only of the participants in the workshop but of the editors of the book too. The last two paragraphs are worth quoting:

It was generally agreed that both approaches (the "hardline" and the pragmatic) had value. Organisations adopting one type of strategy should not necessarily condemn those adopting another strategy, but rather realise that both together could provide a multi-dimensional approach to change. The "pragmatists" often opened a door through which the "hardliners" could jump, which in turn enabled the pragmatists to walk faster. Each balanced the other, and the competition between the two could be beneficial in the long run. An open society involves tolerance of all groups and organisations.

In conclusion, certain suggestions emerged which could increase the effectiveness of all change-promoting organisations.

1. Organisations must be sure about what they want to achieve but also flexible as circumstances change (as in the case of the Black Sash).
2. They must recognise the limitations of their particular position in society and of the general South African situation.
3. "Mixed" membership is not necessary as an end in itself.
4. White groups must, in Ms Kuzwayo's words, "look with-in themselves" and examine their own behaviour and the whole political and economic situation in South Africa.
5. Organisations must soldier on even if objective results are limited: they must not be judged by visible results.
6. They must recognise that diversity is desirable in a plural society and that different strategies are appropriate for different organisations.
7. The worst failure is the failure to act at all. □

# ARMY PROPAGANDA "TOTAL STRATEGY" STYLE

by John Passmore

The phrase "winning the minds and hearts of the people" achieved a considerable measure of fame and/or notoriety during the Vietnam War. It signified a massive and costly attempt on the part of the American invaders to shut off the avenues of mutual co-operation which existed between village communities and Ho Chi Min's guerilla forces.

The 'hearts and minds' policy involved the setting up of communal health centres, education camps, food centres and information networks. In this way, General Westmoreland and the Pentagon top brass hoped to gain the support of the Vietnamese community or, at least, to neutralize that community as regards the war against the Vietcong.

The 'hearts and minds' policy never really got off the ground, but it's failure seems to have had little impact on the strategies pursued by the South African Defence Force.

The South African 'hearts and minds' policy is, like its American predecessor, the product of the military. As such, it forms an integral part of the overall "Total Strategy" policy the Botha/Magnus Malan/Big Business axis is trying so hard to incorporate. A disturbing off-shoot of the 'hearts and minds' policy is "The Warrior", an eight page monthly magazine put out by the S.A.D.F.'s "Command Information" centre in Pretoria.

"The Warrior" is a clear example of the symbiotic relationship that exists between the Botha administrative hierarchy and the S.A.D.F. The ostensible aim of "The Warrior" is to attract an increasing number of blacks into the S.A.D.F.' ranks. However, it goes much further than that. Most of the articles in the magazine give "details" which "indicate" how disastrous it would be FOR BLACKS if majority rule came into being. Here are some extracts from the editorial column:—

"The constant call that life for our blacks in this country is miserable should be carefully weighed against the facts and figures available for living standards for Blacks in the R.S.A."

"Many photo's and figures can be produced as evidence of even poorer whites in the R.S.A."

"It is high time this disease in our society of demands and then throwing childish tantrums if these demands are not met should stop." (Article written at the height of the school boycotts.)

"Start appreciating what you've got, then you will certainly get more."

The front page of "The Warrior" is devoted to a lengthy article entitled "Uhuru : But what then?". The article

describes how badly-off Zambia, Uganda and Angola are because they opted for "black rule".

"Africa can be mentioned as the most restless and unstable continent (politically) the last 30 years. Young inexperienced leaders in many cases were not able to handle the many national and international conflicts that arised." (sic!)

"The Warrior" goes on to assure its black readership that they are far better off as they are (as opposed to people in the rest of Africa).

"A typical Soweto home has four or five rooms, is soundly built and stands on its own plot of land. It rents for an average of about R18,00 a month, and this includes water supplies, sewerage and refuse removal."

Distortions such as these are relatively mild when compared to the sentiments expressed by the writer of a personal column called "Focus". This is how "Focus" feels:—

"Chief Buthelezi true to form, will not allow children to tell him what to do." (A highly significant approach adopted towards Chief Buthelezi here.)

"Somebody certainly showed his respect for the late terrorist Mahlangu when he put a Warthog head on the grave."

"The Lions will not be playing against the Zimbabwe team. (My copy of "The Warrior" is, unfortunately, an old one.) If the British who negotiated the peace is not welcome then who will be?"

"Whatever happened to Thozocmile Botha? Is he still trying to help his people. No without a farewell kiss to his beloved wife "he left to join his friends". (Botha's wife brought an injunction forward against the Port Elizabeth security police in an attempt to prevent them from molesting her.)

"Black Education in South Africa : The Facts", is, like the front page article, something of a masterpiece of distortion and omission. It lays a heavy emphasis on the 'educative reforms' instituted by the government as a result of the upheavals of 1976. A flood of statistics are printed in order to demonstrate what the government is doing for black education.

The rest of the magazine is devoted to the joys of black participation in Defence Force life (for example — "Swim-

ming Lesson" by Sgt E.T. Mabuza), sport, poems to "up-right citizens" in Soweto and to the community councils in the black townships.

There is a rather sinister exception though.

The second last page is given over to a cartoon which pictures various traumas of a black school-teacher named Betsy. Betsy is trying to counteract radical agitation in the classroom — agitation which has arisen as a result of the school boycotts. She tells her class not to listen to the trouble-makers.

"Not only do you jeopardise your privilege to attend this school, but also you will be wasting your parents hard-earned money."

Immediately after the class discussion the principal calls the staff in and tells them—

"Ladies and Gentlemen I want you to warn our students about the devious role of the banned A.N.C."

After that one of Betsy's students tells her that the "banned A.N.C." (in this cartoon the term used is always "the banned A.N.C.") is going to hold a meeting in an old church-hall. Betsy dissuades her pupil from attending the meeting and then delivers the pupil's information to the white 2.i.c. of the local military camp, etc., etc.

And there you have it. A magazine whose aim is to inform blacks of the "fact" that South Africa is a haven of security. If blacks realise this then they will play their part in maintaining the present status-quo. Despite the crudity of the propaganda "The Warrior" rather cunningly features a number of articles written by black officers and N.C.O.'s.

The impression created is, that blacks can now join formerly white preserves such as the S.A.D.F. officer corps. A small multi-racial middle class is hinted at here.

As regards distribution of the magazine — I haven't been able to find out just how wide its readership is. From what I've heard, the magazine is read by black S.A.D.F. personnel, members of the black community councils and a small number of black school teachers.

The issue of "The Warrior" discussed in this article is, No. 15, 31 May 1980. "The Warrior" proves that the 'hearts and minds' policy is, to all intents and purposes, a relatively long-established one.

I have quoted extracts from "The Warrior" without correcting the several misspellings. □

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# THE SMILE ON THE FACE OF THE BOTHA

(or: Why bother to read the small print?)

by VORTEX

1. We wish well to the black people.  
We are determined that there shall be no discrimination against them.  
(All that we intend, to safeguard our own position, is that they shall have no power whatsoever in the land of their birth.)
2. The President's Council is a sign of our good faith.  
It is a sincere attempt to resolve the problems of our country.  
(The only proviso, a small one, is that there shall be no black members and no discussion of the real problem.)
3. We are launching into remarkable reforms.  
We have modified petty apartheid; we have made concessions on removals; we are beginning to offer a new deal for migrant workers.  
(These changes have been made possible by our knowledge that other regulations, new and old, ensure that the status quo remains essentially unaltered. In several respects our concessions have distinctly tightened our grip on the blacks.)
4. We cannot understand why the international community doesn't recognise the independent homelands.  
What could be more generous than to carve up our country in order to allow blacks to be free?  
(Indeed the whole scheme is beautiful: the whites retain all the economic advantages while shedding responsibility for people whom our policies cause to starve.)
5. Our military position is obviously an honest one.  
We have a defensive army.  
(Admittedly we have invaded Angola, and various other countries; and we are determined not to leave Namibia, though SWAPO would win a free and fair election if we were willing to let one take place.)
6. The aims of our army are clear.  
We are fighting against the Russian-Communist threat from the North.  
(It is true that the men we shall actually fight against are black South Africans who are dispossessed and desperate; but that is a military secret.)