

THE AFL-CIO AND THE TRADE UNIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

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'It is clear that whatever shape the future South Africa will take, the labour movement has a crucial role to play...'

— Irving Brown, founder of the African-American Labour Centre (AALC)².

'At the highest level, [Central Intelligence] Agency labour operations are effected through George Meany, President of the AFL, Jay Lovestone, Foreign Affairs chief of the AFL and Irving Brown, AFL representative in Europe — all of whom are effective and witting collaborators'

— Philip Agee, CIA operative in South and Central America³

'Using money and, where necessary, the CIA, the US labour aristocracy began to carve out a sphere of influence for itself on African soil that would later be embodied in the African-American Labour Centre (AALC), administered by the notorious Irving Brown from his office in New York'

— The official history of the South African Congress of Trade Unions⁴

'Washington's interest in the SA labour scene is very high'

— Charles Daris, labour attache at the US consulate, Johannesburg, 1982; previously special assistant to the US ambassador in Vietnam in the late 1960s

The Cold War System in the Unions

The cold war is dead, but the trade unions in South Africa — the strongest in the continent — remain the repository of its ghostly presence.

Like the living dead of Gothic horror, Stalinism has thrived in the unions in South Africa in the past few years in proportion as its international control centre has disintegrated. The paradox may be summed up in the person of Chris Dlamini, vice-president of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), who is also a member of the internal leadership group of the now legal South African Communist Party (SACP). Eight years ago, as president of the then Federation of South African Trade Unions (Fosatu), Dlamini made a visit to Zimbabwe after which he stated that although some people in the country were liberated, workers were not. 'Worker liberation', he stated, 'can only be achieved by a strong, well organized worker movement'. (MacShane et al, p125)

This suggested a critique of the logic of nationalist politics in southern Africa. In the phrase 'worker liberation' and its suggestion of the need for an end to capitalist society, Dlamini expressed similar sentiments to Fosatu's general secretary, Joe Foster. In April 1982, in one of the nodal points in the development of the trade union movement, Foster called for a 'society controlled by workers', and for a 'political presence for worker organization' in which workers would 'play a major political role as workers' (ibid, Appendix 1).

There was an implied critique here of the adequacy of nationalist organizations such as the African National Congress to represent the working class, and of the SACP – with its two-stage theory of revolution – for confining itself to the purely bourgeois programme of the ANC.

From exile, the SACP interpreted Foster's speech as a political attack upon itself, and launched an assault against his presumption – endorsed by Fosatu as policy – that a working class political organisation be formed out of the unions separate from and by implication critical of and even hostile to the SACP. This was a threat to the SACP, which then had a negligible presence in the trade unions or anywhere else within South Africa. Foster stated in the same speech that workers in eastern Europe did not 'control their own destiny' and needed to establish 'more democratic worker control'. For the SACP, receiving funds and resources from these same states, this was an open declaration of war. Leaders of Fosatu were perceived as engaged in a general syndicalist attack on Stalinist politics.

The Stalinist states of eastern Europe are now overturned, Foster has disappeared into political oblivion, while Dlamini is celebrated by the SACP as a jewel in its crown. He plays an intriguing role. On 25 June, barely a month before he identified himself as a leader of the SACP at its legal launch in Soweto on 29 July, Dlamini was welcomed as an honoured guest in the US by the American Federation of Labour–Congress of Industrial Organisations (AFL–CIO), the most important organisation of cold war politics aimed to undermine Soviet influence in the trade unions and tame workers everywhere. Lane Kirkland, president of the AFL–CIO and the leading US official at the reception, had been co-chairman of the Committee on the Present Danger, which ideologically prepared the Reagan administration for its arms build-up against the Soviet Union. For a leader of the SACP, such a reception was as if Mephistopheles had been greeted at the gates of heaven.

The reception, on 25 June, was to honour Nelson Mandela, and with him Dlamini, during Mandela's triumphal US visit. The reception was held at the Washington headquarters of the AFL–CIO's sub-department on Africa, the African–American Labor Centre (AALC), a body previously denounced by the SACP as a front for the CIA.

The spectacle of a leading representative of the most important Stalinist party in Africa being received by the AFL–CIO in Washington marks the end of an epoch in the trade unions internationally. This whole period was one of exceptional difficulties for independent organization of trade unions. In the USSR there was no body to defend working class rights. In the west the workers were caught between the Stalinists, whose aim was to attach the unions to the World Federation of Trade Unions and by so doing convert them into an arm of the Soviet state, or the so-called 'free' trade unions which would operate as an arm of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The AFL, prior to its merger with the CIO, defined its policy in 1944:

Free trade unions are independent organizations controlling their own terms and conditions of membership, deciding their own rules and discipline of membership, able to make a contract with assurance of

fulfilment. Free trade unions are not state controlled nor are they auxiliaries of the state dominant party, or any employer or employers' organizations. Free trade unions are not subject to any political party nor do they serve as party tools. Power of deciding policies and the course of the organization is lodged with the union membership (quoted in Peterson, p 42, n 10).

Through its own politics, and greatly promoted by the character of the Stalinist regimes in eastern Europe in the immediate postwar period, the AFL betrayed its conception of the freedom of the unions through its relation to the US state. Through most of the following decades, a perverse co-determination of politics in the unions internationally was exercised in tandem by the secret security agencies of the USSR and the US, as joint actors in the cold war system, mutually operated to control the workers. Postwar world conditions placed tremendous obstacles in the way of any project of workers' liberation through an independent workers' movement, which is what Dlamini and Foster had appeared to be advocating in the early 1980s. The metamorphosis of Dlamini from 'workerist' leader of Fosatu to leader of the SACP, and of the SACP from an arm of the 'evil empire' to honoured guest of the AFL-CIO, is thus expressive of profound movements in world and South African politics.

A Brief History of the AFL

The AFL-CIO's present role in international politics began with Jay Lovestone, former general secretary of the US Communist Party. Lovestone led one of two factions that supported the programme of Stalin and Bukharin and in 1928 was 'in the vanguard of the fight against Trotskyism' (Cannon, p 43) helping to secure their expulsion. He broke with Stalin the following year but remained loyal to the Comintern until Bukharin's execution. After the Stalin-Hitler pact and the conquest of Poland, Lovestone disbanded his small political grouping and ceased to consider himself a Marxist. Together with David Dubinsky, president of the New York-based International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), William Green, then president of the AFL, and George Meany, then secretary-treasurer of the AFL, Lovestone set out during the war years to combat the influence of the Communist Parties in the world trade union movement, above all in Europe. From their Free Trade Union Committee, set up mainly with ILGWU funds, and with Lovestone as executive secretary, the international political operations of the AFL took shape in the 1940s with the specific purpose of combating the grip of the Stalinist parties on the unions, albeit from the reformist and pro-capitalist right.

The AFL had historically represented the craft elite of the American workers. Founded in the depression years of the 1880s under the leadership of Samuel Gompers, it had an ingrained hostility to what its leaders regarded as 'political trade unionism', to the politics of class struggle and to socialism of any kind. Its aristocratic disdain for the mass of industrial workers in the factories and mines led to the formation of the rival CIO out of great strike battles in the

1930s, in order to represent this much wider and more oppressed stratum of workers. After World War two, the CIO helped to form the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), which included Stalinist-controlled unions in Europe. The leaders of the CIO – partisans of class struggle through the unions, with views not very different from those of Foster and Dlamini in the early 1980s – hoped that the wartime alliance of capitalist US and Stalinist USSR could continue as an alliance of workers through a single world trade union federation. Members of the small US Communist Party in the CIO strongly supported this conception.

By contrast, the AFL warned that Stalinist parties would attempt to usurp the organization by force and guile, and boycotted the WFTU. The AFL was proved correct. As postwar conditions tore the wartime alliance apart, the hopes of the syndicalists of the CIO were disabused. In the early cold war period the WFTU split, and passed into Stalinist hands. In 1948 the CIO withdrew, and took the lead with the AFL in forming the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) in opposition to the WFTU. In 1955 the two bodies merged.

Between the defeat of nazism and the beginning of the war in Korea, the cold war created conditions simultaneously for the birth of the CIA (founded in its present shape in 1947) and for the international political outreach of the AFL-CIO, operating both independently and through the ICFTU. An ice age of secret political control, centred on Washington and Moscow, and to a smaller degree the Catholic Church, settled over the unions. In Italy and France, the Communist Parties had won great prestige through their role in the partisan resistance and emerged from the war with the leading place in the unions. Germany, with Soviet troops positioned as far west as Berlin, had had one of the biggest Communist Parties in the world at the time of Hitler's coming to power. Under these circumstances, the politics of the workers in these three countries would decide the future of Europe and thus the global fate of the United States. At the highest level, and in great secrecy, the US bourgeoisie through a series of stages refashioned its wartime intelligence and sabotage operations for political warfare against the influence of the Communist Parties in these three countries in particular.

Money was a mighty weapon for the salvation of men's souls in ruined postwar Europe, and money for CIA operations – flowing from the cornucopia of US surplus value – was not lacking. What was needed, however, were people with the right credentials and the knowhow to fight the political war within the west European working class. It was here that the Lovestone-Meany operation came into its own, grounded in Lovestone's inner knowledge of the dirty tricks of Stalinist politics, and funded from the seemingly bottomless treasure chest of the US state. In this way, a trade union bureaucracy resting on a minority of generally depoliticized workers in the US determined the fate of the much more highly politicized workers of western Europe, especially in France and Italy where mass Communist Parties initially had a place in the postwar governments⁶.

Lovestone himself later boasted that 'If it had not been for the AFL, the communists would have taken over in Europe'. (quoted in Wintour, 1979)

There is no reason to doubt his correctness. The same thinking has guided AFL-CIO strategy towards southern Africa. Shortly before the setting up of the AALC, a previously secret US State Department policy document posed the question whether 'in order to oppose a Communist threat' in southern Africa, the US would have to choose between 'cooperating with the South African Government against an African group or permitting a Communist haven to be developed which might threaten much of the continent' (Department of State, p 21). Given the very close long-range identity between US state interests internationally and those of the AFL leadership, the principal task of the AALC was to prevent this situation from arising.

An American-trained labour adviser attached to a South African company, who asked not to be named, was interviewed by a South African student journal. His remarks carry the ring of truth. The AFL-CIO, he said:

[takes] an interest in African countries in a time of transition to African rule.

The notion is to immunize the working class movement against more radical influences and to steer it in directions considered desirable by the American government.

I think there is also an important role for the AALC in the post-independence phase and that is essentially acting as a tool of American foreign policy. In the economic field one obviously wants a working class that will not create a climate that is inhospitable to American business and in the political field one has a tool of action which can be used against governments, as is witnessed by the intervention of American-trained trade unionists in the Brazilian coup of 1964 and the Chilean coup of 1973. (quoted in *Saspu National*, October 1982)

Even before the coup in Chile, a US Senate hearing in 1968 found that in addition to Brazil, elected governments had been overturned in Guyana, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic through the assistance of trade unionists trained ultimately under the direction of the AFL-CIO (Thomson). Latin America was the main field of action in which the AFL's European experience in the 1940s came later into play, and afterwards provided the model for its operations in Africa.

An American Abroad: Irving Brown

Alongside Lovestone and Meany, the third man in the American triarchy fighting the holy war in European labour politics in the 1940s was Irving Brown, a political ally of Lovestone since the 1930s and like him a man well steeped in the skulduggery of the left. During the war, according to Winslow Peck, a former intelligence analyst for both the US Air Force Security Service and the National Security Agency, Lovestone was 'instrumental in placing several Lovestonites and other anti-Communists in the OSS Labor Branch' (quoted in Allen). The Office of Strategic Services (OSS) was the main US wartime international secret operations body out of which the postwar CIA developed.

During the war, Brown directed the Labor and Manpower Division of the US government's Foreign Economic Administration in Europe. He then became the AFL's front-fighter in the European theatre of cold war. He is accredited with having engineered a major split in the French trade unions in the 1940s, denying the CPF a position of overall control by forming the rival *Force Ouvriere*; he set up Free Trade Union Committees in Germany to shut the CP out of the unions in advance of the Berlin airlift; he won a beachhead in the unions in Greece in the civil war under the shield of military dictatorship; and helped flood starving Italy with life-giving dollars, in the period of the massive CIA operation which successfully prevented the CP winning the 1948 elections when an estimated '\$75 million in covert financial aid was channelled to anti-communist parties and politicians'. (Bledowska and Bloch, p 20)

In this crucial period, Brown supplied European unions 'with money, typewriters, technical help and encouragement to resist Communist takeovers' and also 'arranged for the use of strongarm men to meet the strongarm efforts of the Communists to prevent the unloading of ships crammed with Marshall Plan goods' (Kurzman, 1965). Sidney Lens, leader of an AFL building workers local in Chicago for over twenty years, said Brown claimed, when interviewed in 1965, that in twenty years he had donated about \$100,000 to foreign unions. Other commentators said that Brown and the Lovestonites spent a multiple many times higher than that up to the early 1950s (Lens, 1965). Writing in the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1967 under the title 'Why I am glad the CIA plays dirty', Thomas Braden, former head of the CIA's international organizations division, claimed that he had personally given CIA funds to Brown to help in clandestine labour operations.

It was my idea to give \$15,000 to Irving Brown. He needed it to pay off his strong arm squads in Mediterranean ports, so that American supplies could be unloaded against the opposition of Communist dock workers...Thus began the secret funding of trade unions. (quoted in *Work in Progress*, No 24, 1982)

A similar account of Brown's use of criminal gangs, including the Italian Mafia, was later given by Victor Reuther, former International Affairs director for the United Auto Workers Union (UAW) in the US, who was then in Europe as representative of the CIO. Reuther and his brother Walter (also a leader of the UAW) had had first-hand experience of the 'Machiavellian' methods of Lovestone and Brown during the 1930s (Allen).

Brown played a leading part in the formation of the ICFTU in 1948, and directed its office at the UN from 1962 to 1964. CIA operative Philip Agee described him in 1975 as the 'principal CIA agent for control of the [ICFTU]' (p 603). As director of the ICFTU at the UN, Brown played a leading role in founding the AALC in 1964. He was its first executive director until 1973, before returning to Paris to head the AFL-CIO's European operation in advance of a period of major instability in the underbelly of Europe, preceding the overthrow of the dictatorship in Portugal.

Brown clearly retained a major first-hand connection with events in southern Africa. He died in February 1989. The spectre of this quintessential 'ugly

American' must surely have hovered over Mandela and Dlamini as they shook hands in Washington with his successors at the AALC – the victors of the cold war in the world's trade unions.

The CIA in the Unions

Allegations about the role of the CIA in the AFL-CIO appear to be substantial. Investigations by the House of Representatives Banking Committee in 1964 revealed that several US unions had taken CIA money (*Business Week*, 4 November 1985). The 1979 report of the Select Committee on Assassinations of the US Congress, looking into the Kennedy assassination, uncovered a connection between the CIA as well as the Mafia and the largest union in the United States, the Teamsters: a sinister reappearance of relationships forged by Brown on the waterfront in the Mediterranean in the 1940s, and 'Operation Underworld' conducted jointly by the US Navy and the Luciano wing of the Mafia for control of the unions on the New York docks during the war. Under these circumstances, it would be historically inconsistent if the CIA had not funded Brown's European operations in the 1940s. In military terms, Brown's work in the unions was worth several divisions of troops.

The nature of the AALC under Brown, and subsequently under his successor, Patrick J O'Farrell (an ex-Marine), can best be understood from the picture presented by Agee of its counterpart operating in South and Central America, the American Institute for Free Labour Development (AIFLD), a regional sub-division of the AFL-CIO working alongside the Inter-American Regional Labour Organization of the ICFTU (ORIT). Formed in 1961, the AIFLD is the model on which the AALC was founded. (The third of the AFL-CIO's regional organizations, the Asian-American Free Labour Institute, operates in over thirty countries in Asia and the Middle East, focusing particularly on the Philippines. The Free Trade Union Institute and the AFL-CIO International Affairs Department relate to Europe.)

Agee, then working as a CIA agent in Ecuador, gives a diary entry for June 1962 describing the conditions under which the AIFLD was set up, on account of the 'ineffectiveness' of ORIT. The problem for the CIA, he writes, was:

how to accelerate expansion of labour-organizing activities in Latin America in order to deny workers to labour unions dominated by the extreme left and to reverse communist and Castroite penetration. This new programme is the result of several years' study and planning and is to be channelled through the [AIFLD], founded last year in Washington for training in trade unionism.

The reason for setting up this new institution was that labour programmes immediately subordinate to the US state through its Agency for International Development (AID) were 'limited because of their direct dependence' on the US government. They served poorly for the 'dirty struggles that characterize labour organizing and jurisdictional battles'.

The AIFLD was headed by Serafino Romualdi, a 'long-time agent' of 10 Division of the CIA who resigned as the inter-American representative of the AFL-CIO to become the new body's executive director (the post occupied first by Brown, then by O'Farrell in the AALC). 'Principal headquarters' collaborators' on the AIFLD board of directors involved first of all George Meany, who until his resignation as president of the AFL-CIO in 1979 was also president and chairman of the board of the AALC. (Meany's successor as president of the AFL-CIO and of the AALC was Kirkland, who hosted the reception for Mandela and Dlamini.) Agee refers elsewhere to Meany as the '[principal] CIA agent/collaborator in US trade union movement for purpose of the CIA international labour operations' (p 615).

A Model of Political Control

The AIFLD, according to Agee, was modelled on the training school of the Communications Workers of America at Front Royal, Virginia, used by the CIA to control an international trade secretariat of post and telegraph workers, the PTTI. Leaders of union affiliates of the PTTI in South and Central America were brought for training to the CWA school. Day to day control of the AIFLD by the CIA was exercised by Romualdi and William Doherty, 'considered to be one of our more effective labour agents. (Agee, p 302). Doherty was the former inter-American representative of the PTTI and subsequently AIFLD social projects director.

The main purpose of AIFLD, according to Agee, was to

organize anti-communist labour unions in Latin America. However, the ostensible purpose, since union organizing is rather sensitive for AID to finance, even indirectly, will be 'adult education' and social projects such as workers' housing, credit unions and cooperatives. First priority is to establish in all Latin American countries training institutes which will take over and expand the courses already being given in many countries by AID. Although these training institutes will nominally and administratively be controlled by AIFLD in Washington, it is planned that as many as possible will be headed by salaried CIA agents with operational control exercised by the stations. In most cases, it is hoped, these AIFLD agents will be US citizens with some background in trade unionism although...foreign nationals may have to be used.

The AIFLD was also to begin 'advanced training courses' in Washington. 'Spotting and assessment of potential agents for labour operations will be a continuing function of the Agency-controlled staff members both in the training courses in Latin America and in the Washington courses'. (Agee, pp 243-45) These courses in Washington are the type provided through the late 1970s and 1980s by the AALC to South African, as well as some Namibian, trade unionists. The same picture emerges during Agee's assignments in Ecuador, Uruguay and Mexico. The chief purpose of these trade union operations was to strengthen not the workers in these regions but the ruling minorities through which US capital dominated the hemisphere (p 566).

Despite the many revelations, AALC officials such as Meany, Brown, Kirkland and O'Farrell continuously denied any connection with the CIA. Significantly, they appear never to have taken such allegations to court, despite massive funds available for libel action against adversaries possessing few resources. A connection with US intelligence is signaled in other ways. When Jerry Funk, O'Farrell's deputy executive director, resigned from the AALC in November 1978, the *AALC Reporter* (Nov-Dec) which noted this neglected to inform its readers that he had been recruited to the National Security Agency by its then director, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and was immediately sent on a fact-finding tour of southern Africa (*Africa Confidential*, 31 Jan 1979).

Direct, detailed, factual knowledge of a relation of the CIA to the trade unions in South Africa would by its nature be extremely difficult to obtain. In a sense, it is unnecessary, since it is publicly acknowledged that 90 per cent of the AALC budget comes not in any way from workers but from the budget of the US state, principally through the AID. Even under the best construction, the AALC operates only nominally as an organ of the working class: it is an instrument of state, acting on behalf of the prime global power of capital. At the same time there is no reason to doubt AALC officials when they deny running courses of indoctrination and when they insist that their programmes are developed in response to union requests. The AFL-CIO has decades of experience and its international operations are sophisticated, assured and well-funded. Nothing could provide a better culture for intelligence operations than an effective and respected trade union training programme.

The Reagan administration increased state funding to the AALC during the early 1980s, when it identified southern Africa as a region requiring immediate increased intervention. Publicly acknowledged state funds to the AALC rose from \$27,000 in 1981 to \$875,000 in 1984, an increase of more than 3,000 per cent (*African Business*, Jan 1986). Between 1983 and 1984 alone, US state funding to the AALC increased fivefold. In 1982 the CIA director, William Casey, made a covert visit to South Africa and later that year an influential member of the US Senate's Appropriations Committee, Paul Laxalt, apologized in Durban because South Africa had not previously been given the attention it deserved by US foreign policy makers (*Financial Mail*, 29 Oct 1982). He became chairman of Reagan's election campaign in 1984. It was during this period that the National Endowment for Democracy was set up by the Reagan administration, endorsed by Congress and funded from the US budget, to promote such interventions in countries like South Africa.

The Enlistment of Nana Mahomo

What is striking about the AALC programme on southern Africa during the 1980s is the total silence in its official publication, *AALC Reporter*, on the role of the SACP in the ANC and the unions, through Sactu. The AALC was very careful to avoid open polemics, quite unlike the confrontational politics of Brown in the European trade unions in the 1940s. But Sactu was non-operational in South Africa after the repression of the early 1960s: that was the complaint of left-wing dissidents in the ANC (Rob Peterson, Martin Legas-

sick and others), leading to their expulsion in 1985. Yet even when the influence of the SACP and the ANC revived within the unions, the AALC retained its scrupulous reserve. A different period, and a different continent, required a different 'strategy'. At the same time, the AALC oriented itself towards currents in the unions not directly sympathetic to the ANC, the SACP and Sactu, and through these it developed its first foothold in South Africa.

Just as the massive increase in funding from the Reagan administration got under way in the early 1980s, the AALC appointed Nana Mahomo, a former leader of the Pan Africanist Congress from the late 1950s and early 1960s, as coordinator of the AFL-CIO's Program of Action in Support of Black Trade Unions in South Africa, established in 1981. He resigned in 1987, when it was clear the AALC would have to reorient its politics towards the ANC and the SACP, which by then had become dominant in the unions through the inner circle in Cosatu. An effective relation of the AALC to Cosatu was impossible so long as Mahomo headed its South Africa programme.

The rapid expansion in the AALC presence in South Africa, with its immensely expanded scope for corruption – both political and personal – is the fruit of the 'Mahomo years'. When he resigned, the AALC paid tribute to him for having been 'instrumental in helping to establish the AFL-CIO's policy towards South Africa and its program of action in support of black workers' (*AALC Reporter*, Vol 22, No 2, 1987). Yet when appointed in 1981 it was known that he had been expelled from the PAC. It is not my intention to list the many accusations levelled against Mahomo after his appointment to the AALC, by his former organization or by the press. Some of the allegations must await further research and firm documentation. However it seems that Brown's relationship with South African politics over a quarter of a century, was principally through Mahomo. According to *Work in Progress*, 1982, No.24, Brown had established a relation with Mahomo by 1963

when [he] helped Mahomo airlift PAC refugees from Bechuanaland and, later that year, financed the establishment of a training camp in the Congo – now Zaire – under the joint command of Mahomo and Holden Roberto, later to head the FNLA in Angola.

Roberto was a long-time asset of the CIA, according to Stockwell, in his account of the Angolan war in 1975–76., while Mahomo's relation to the AFL-CIO from 1963 onwards includes his role in sending PAC members for military training to the camp at Kinkuzu, near Leopoldville, run by the FNLA – 'another recipient of AFL-CIO generosity', Lodge comments laconically (1983, p 307). After his suspension by the PAC in August 1964, the AFL-CIO 'continued to provide funding for Mahomo's projects' (p 309). In 1966 the PAC accused Mahomo of introducing PAC dissidents to Brown at an anti-apartheid meeting in Latin America (*Work in Progress*, No 24).

Whatever the truth of these allegations, some inspired by intra-party in-fighting, and despite having been expelled from the PAC, Mahomo was able to do the AFL-CIO a major service in the 1980s by assisting it towards the more Africanist current in the newly developing unions in South Africa, especially towards the leaders of the National Council of Trade Unions (Nactu). Hos-

tility to the Soviet Union initially prevented the AALC from developing close relations with trade union leaders who proved more influential in the period of formation of Cosatu, but through Mahomo it did acquire many important contacts and a much deeper familiarity with South African conditions. The end of the Brezhnev era and the collapse of the Soviet Union as a superpower now permit the AALC to approach the central forces in the trade union movement in South Africa in a direct, less oblique manner.

During Mahomo's period, the AALC developed a very much more 'political' stance towards events in South Africa. As it moved towards the golden moment of the tripartite handshake between Kirkland, O'Farrell and Nelson Mandela, headlines regularly appeared in *AALC Reporter* to the effect that 'American unions battle apartheid', 'AFL-CIO calls for more sanctions', 'AFL-CIO rallies assail apartheid', 'American labour protests arrests in S.A', 'Black unions are key to ending apartheid', and so on. This was a major change from its isolation from radical black politics during the 1960s and early 1970s. The AALC now moved closer towards the mainstream of South African nationalist opinion.

With Mandela in Washington

From the published account of the AFL-CIO reception for Mandela and Dlamini, not a word was uttered on either side about the decades of antagonism between the two groupings. No mention by Mandela and Dlamini, of the record of the AFL-CIO as the most resolute organizer against Soviet influences in the trade unions, its role as an auxiliary arm of the US state in international labour affairs and allegations of alliance between it and the CIA.

On the part of Kirkland and O'Farrell, no mention either of the long history of vituperation against the AFL-CIO by the SACP, the ANC and their former trade union arm, Sactu. Questions from members of the AFL-CIO executive board were directed largely towards securing assurances from Mandela and Dlamini for substantive freedom for capital in the future South Africa. These they received. Mandela, who had already given such assurances to a gathering of leading representatives of capital, gave an explicit undertaking:

State participation will not be an option if there are better options. We are having discussions with businessmen in our country. We have had numerous meetings. The point is that even when we will be taking a decision for state participation in any industry, this will be done with the cooperation of the business people themselves... There would be the most careful negotiations and consultation with the business sector (verbatim account, *AALC Reporter*, Vol 25, No 3, 1990).

Such harmony between the ANC, the SACP and the AFL-CIO was a far cry from October 1978, when the AALC organized the first formal meeting between black South African trade unionists and leaders of unions affiliated to the Organization of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU) in Gaborone, Botswana when the AALC's major drive into the South African trade unions

began. Its launch-pad was the operation in Botswana, where trade unions were 'virtually non-existent' before the arrival of the AFL-CIO (*The Sun*, Washington, 26 Jan 1983). By 1983, three cabinet ministers in Botswana had been trained by the AALC, the headquarters of the Botswana Federation of Trade Unions had been built with its funds and a resident official from the US directed AALC activities there. Among the trade union leaders from the OATUU at the Gaborone conference were persons who had for years been trained, funded and feted by the AALC, one of them a Kenyan cabinet minister. These traded unionists, working closely with the AALC in one-party (or rather no-party) states such as Zaire, Kenya and Togo, had defied a decision by the OATUU secretariat that its affiliates should not attend.

The South Africans were from trade unions affiliated to the Reef-based Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions, which took shape in September 1980 as the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA). During the early 1980s, CUSA, with its ideology of black consciousness, was both the largest federal body of black South African trade unionists and the one with which the AALC had closest ties. CUSA's general secretary, Phiroshaw Camay, who attended sessions at the AALC headquarters in Washington on a number of occasions, later in 1985 identified himself more directly with foreign policy aims of the AALC and the US government in expressing support for Solidarnosc in Poland against the Soviet-type regime of General Jaruzelski, in which he saw 'similarities' with conditions in South Africa (interview in *Free Labour World*, 24 January 1985). During this period Fosatu, with Dlamini as president, had very much slighter relations with the AALC.

Between ICFTU and WFTU

The Gaborone conference had first been suggested in 1977 at the annual convention of the AFL-CIO at Bal Harbor, Florida, in the United States, when black South African delegates later to emerge in CUSA objected to a resolution endorsing Sactu as the only representative of South African workers. Though previously the most important federal body of black trade unionists in South Africa, Sactu had been crippled by arrests, killings and banning orders in the repression of the early 1960s. Many of its officials, usually members of the SACP, had been channelled into Umkhonto we Sizwe, with a disastrous effect on its ability to represent the workers as its basic cadre force, went into prison, or into exile, or to the gallows (as in the case of Sactu's Port Elizabeth organizer and executive member, Vuyisile Mini, and his colleagues Zinakile Mkaba and Wilson Khayinga, hanged in 1964).

This diversion of personnel from the trade unions to guerrillaism was a strategic policy decision for which the SACP paid heavily in terms of influence in the unions in the twelve years from the Durban strikes of 1973 to the formation of Cosatu in 1985. In the late 1970s Sactu had a negligible presence in unions within South Africa, while its leadership in exile - weak, morbidly suspicious and in essence the SACP - was very hostile to any development within South Africa not controlled by itself. The anti-Sactu delegates at the AFL-CIO convention pointed out, correctly, that the proposed resolution

excluded other union groupings with substantial backing within South Africa and they suggested the conference with the OATUU, which the AFL-CIO agreed to set up through the AALC. (*Financial Mail*, 27 Oct 1978)

For decades Sactu representatives such as the SACP leader, Ray Alexander (R E Simons), writing from exile in the SACP journal *African Communist* under the pseudonym R E Braverman, had attacked the role of the AFL-CIO in Africa as an extension of imperialist politics channelled through the CIA. Alexander's criticism was aimed against the 'CIA-directed and subsidized strategy of the Meany leadership of the American AFL-CIO', a strategy 'directed against the national liberatory and socialist forces the world over' (*African Communist*, No 29, 1967). This was coupled with SACP denunciation of the class interests served by the AFL-CIO in its relation to 'American monopoly-capitalist mining and other concerns' in South Africa, further strengthening the 'stranglehold of Big Business monopoly capitalism'. (editorial, *African Communist*, No 15, Oct-Dec 1963.)

A persistent source of SACP criticism was that in the 1960s and early 1970s, the AFL-CIO supported the segregated, mainly white and *de facto* racist unions grouped in the Trade Union Council of South Africa (Tuca), as well as individual black trade unionists hostile to Sactu, such as Lucy Mvubelo of the Garment Workers Union of African Women - later the National Union of Clothing Workers (NUCW). The NUCW, with only a small fraction of Tuca's total membership, was its sole significant black affiliate. Tuca had excluded black unions in 1954 under government pressure, and was affiliated to the ICFTU. Sactu had been formed out of the black unions as a non-racial federation and was affiliated to the Prague based WFTU.

Lucy Mvubelo, a founder member of Sactu, had moved its affiliation to the WFTU at its inaugural conference in 1955, but broke with Sactu in 1957. In 1959 she helped set up a marginal body, the Federation of Free African Trade Unions (Fofatusa) with funds from the ICFTU after its representatives had failed to separate Sactu from the ANC (and the WFTU).

There are no published documents that tell the full story, but the Pan Africanist Congress needed a trade union centre and Fofatusa was originally meant to be the PAC's industrial arm. Its chairman, J D Nyaose of the African Bakers Industrial Union, was 'Minister of Labour' in the PAC and central to the formation of Fofatusa. The aim was for Fofatusa to bring the workers out in conjunction with the PAC's Anti-Pass Campaign of 1960, but it failed to do so. Through the intervention of the ICFTU it was very much a cold war creation, though it did not see itself as such - rather as part of the black consciousness current (before the phrase was coined). It failed to supplant, or even seriously challenge, the predominant influence of the SACP in the black unions grouped in Sactu: that function was reserved to the state. Fofatusa was dissolved in 1966, with some of its bigger sections (together with Mvubelo) entering Tuca on a segregated basis.

Until the late 1970s, when the trade union struggle of the black workers in South Africa became irrepressible, the AFL-CIO and the ICFTU worked principally with Tuca. In this period the AFL-CIO and the ICFTU, effectively endorsed the racist principles on which Tuca was organized. Like

Tucsa, it opposed sanctions and favoured abstention from the overwhelming political issues of the time. In 1973, after the Durban strikes, a shift in emphasis became noticeable when Brown attended the Tucsa congress in South Africa, offering it large funds if proper unions for black workers were established. The class concerns of the AALC were apparent. 'Unless responsible black leadership is encouraged', it declared:

the next series of strikes could be disastrous. If the government does not permit blacks to form and run responsible trade unions, industrial chaos and the resulting explosion may in the end destroy the very fabric of South African society. (*AALC Reporter*, June 1973).

When Mvubelo attended the annual conference of the AFL-CIO in Florida the same year together with the Tucsa secretary Arthur Grobbelaar, Ray Alexander described her as the 'star collaborator' for having secured deletion from a resolution of a clause declaring full support for Sactu. (Mvubelo also urged US capital to continue investing in South Africa.) The ICFTU, its affiliates and associates in South Africa, wrote Alexander:

adopt 'economist trade unionism', a reformist approach, insist on gradual, 'responsible' change, and are determined to act constitutionally. They attempt to conceal from the oppressed workers the inseparable relationship they have with the national liberation movement in South Africa. They want to alienate the exploited, oppressed South Africans from the socialist world led by the Soviet Union. (*African Communist*, Jan-Mar 1975)

By the time of the Gaborone conference in October 1978, SACP concern at the turn of the AFL-CIO towards the new unionism in South Africa had sharply intensified. In the first half of 1978, the *African Communist* had articles critical of the AALC in two consecutive issues. In 1981 the journal had another article on the same theme, headed 'Fight US Subversion of Trade Union Movement in Africa!' naming 21 leaders of the black unions in South Africa who had already attended AALC study courses in the US. The article was starkly adversarial, in accord with the global confrontation between the Brezhnev regime and the US over Afghanistan, nuclear weapons, central America and the conflicts in Angola, Mozambique and Ethiopia. The tone reflected the relatively weak position of the SACP in the increasingly powerful unions. In the view of the author, writing under the name R S Nyameko:

The United States conspiracy against the labour movement in Africa and particularly in South Africa has been inspired by three US organizations – the anti-Communist trade union federation AFL-CIO, the African-American Labour Centre established by the AFL-CIO, and the CIA...Every African patriot, every dedicated freedom fighter should become aware of the plotting by the AFL-CIO = AALC [*sic*] to disrupt, corrupt and ensnare African trade union leaders. The AALC, this CIA agency, has established itself all over Africa. At present there are only

three African countries in which they are not operating—Angola, Ethiopia and Mozambique.

The article continued:

The AFL-CIO have not organized the American workers, have not solved the problems of unemployment, poverty and slums in America, but they come to Africa to corrupt leaders and disrupt our unions. Their main interests are to preserve the investment profits for American companies...Their work in Zaire particularly has been advertised as a success story. Indeed it is a success for the multinational companies and imperialism in the citadel of reaction on the African continent. Zaire is notorious as the CIA's most important base in Africa.

It concluded with an appeal to 'our American friends' to help 'clear the international blacklegs out of our ranks and build real international working class solidarity' (*African Communist*, Oct-Dec 1981).

Sactu Revivified

Six years later, following the merger of most of the South African unions into Cosatu in 1985 and its adoption of the Freedom Charter the following year, Nyameko was jubilant. The tone of panic so striking in the article of 1981 had given way to confidence about the restored place of the ANC and the SACP in the trade unions. Cosatu, declared the writer, in an article headed 'Great Advances on the Trade Union Front,' was now 'centre stage in the liberation struggle' (*African Communist*, Oct-Dec 1987).

Under the impact of the rise of the black unions, Tucsa dissolved itself in December 1986. The ANC and the SACP, working through a very small number of key officials in Cosatu's central bureaucracy, had secured a position of overwhelming strength in the leadership of the country's biggest federation. From these heights, the writer condemned the black conscious grouping CUSA—which had since merged into Nactu, refusing to take part in the formation of Cosatu—as a 'divisive force' (*ibid*). The relative strengths of the Stalinist and black consciousness currents in the unions were now reversed, following Sactu's humiliation in the 1970s. It remains an open question how far CUSA's refusal to merge in Cosatu was approved, assisted or promoted by the AALC. If so, it marked a serious failure of strategy on the part of the AALC, since in the following years CUSA and its successor Nactu dwindled to a negligible force while the SACP and Sactu won back the position of political hegemony they had lost—in a much smaller trade union movement—during the repression of the 1960s.

Instead of the previous open attack on the AFL-CIO, and by implication on trade unionists associated with CUSA, far more attention was given by the *African Communist* in 1987 to the United Workers Union of South Africa (Uwusa), the trade union arm of the Zulu nationalist organization, Inkatha, founded at an Inkatha rally in Durban on 1 May 1986. Uwusa was described

as having been formed as a 'deliberate and calculated response by sections of the state (Buthelezi and Inkatha) and capital – both international and local'.

The relation between the AFL-CIO and South African political and trade union currents is again complex here. In 1982 a top-level AFL-CIO delegation visited South Africa, including Brown and O'Farrell. In the same year, the AFL-CIO made its second-ever presentation of its George Meany Human Rights Award to 'two champions of black rights in South Africa' (*AALC Reporter*, Vol.17, No.6, Nov-Dec,1982). The award was made posthumously to the Transvaal regional organizer of the African Food and Canning Workers Union, Dr Neil Aggett, found hanged in his cell in police headquarters in Johannesburg in February 1982 after having been tortured, and to Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi, chief minister of KwaZulu and head of Inkatha.

The award to Buthelezi is interesting, since he was described by the AALC as having 'led relentless opposition to the practice of apartheid' (*ibid*). Presenting the award in Washington, Kirkland praised Buthelezi for having been the 'single most potent force in resisting the onward rush of apartheid.' This was because of Buthelezi's refusal as chief minister of KwaZulu, which he ruled by virtue of the place of the Buthelezi clan in traditional Zulu culture, to request 'independence' for his mini-statelet. Inkatha was described in the AALC journal as the 'largest black liberation movement in South Africa, which includes many black trade unionists' and as a 'potentially powerful national political base.'

The AFL-CIO orientation first to Tucsua in the 1960s and early 1970s, then to CUSA in the late 1970s and early 1980s, followed by the shift in focus towards Inkatha needs examination. In a statement on the death of Aggett, the AFL-CIO executive council developed its conception of a political relation between events in Poland and in South Africa. 'As Solidarity provided the institutional vehicle for reform in Poland', it stated, 'the development of strong unions is the best hope for reform in South Africa'. (*AALC Reporter*, Vol.17, No 2, Mar-Apr 1982) The first recipient of the award, made in 1981, had been Solidarnosc in Poland. At this point it seems to have envisaged Buthelezi as a future Lech Walesa of South Africa.

By 1986 the AALC had modified this prognosis. The second largest of the trade union groupings of the previous period, Fosatu, some of whose leaders had attended AALC courses in Washington, had taken the lead in the formation of Cosatu, joined by the largest of the South African unions, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), which broke away from CUSA and some 'independent' unions close to the ANC politically. Cosatu emerged as by far the strongest grouping of black trade unionists. The black consciousness orientation of CUSA became marginal, as did the former 'workerist' or syndicalist politics – independent of the ANC and even hostile to the SACP – which had previously been dominant in Fosatu. Whatever trade union base Buthelezi could develop around Inkatha, it would clearly be no match for the hundreds of thousands of workers grouped in Cosatu under the political direction of the SACP and the ANC.

Once again, as in its previous support for Tucsa, the AFL-CIO had made a strategic error in political prognosis. When Simon Conco—the leader of Inkatha's trade union wing, Uwusa, and a KwaZulu entrepreneur—visited the AALC in Washington DC in April 1986 to plead for financial assistance, he was told by Brown and O'Farrell that individual affiliates should apply, rather than Uwusa itself. The AALC was already manoeuvring towards a future accommodation with Cosatu, which by this time had a membership of nearly half a million by comparison with only about 10,000 in Uwusa.

The Orientation of the AALC

On 6–17 September 1982, a delegation consisting of Brown, O'Farrell, Sol ('Chick') Chaikin, president of the ILGWU, and Frederick D O'Neal, secretary treasurer of the AALC and president of the Associated Actors and Artistes of America visited South Africa. The report is important for the way in which these forthright supporters of the capitalist system, with great experience in labour politics, viewed the rise of the new unions. Given Brown's role in Europe in the 1940s, the document carries weight for its understanding of South African conditions. The following is an extract.

1. The process of economic integration is the basis for most of the reforms in South African industrial relations. The demands of the economy can only be met by the recruitment of black workers since the supply of new white workers is shrinking. This has led not only to cosmetic but real changes and to the *de facto* elimination of job reservation for whites and the beginning of full integration of blacks into the economy.

2. This has led to an increase in union organizing and militancy among black workers which in turn led to the reform of labour legislation. This then has facilitated the recent upsurge of organization of black workers into multi-racial, non-racial or entirely black unions. Employers are being compelled, in various degrees, to deal and negotiate with trade unions. This process is under way in many different forms, with registered or non-registered unions, inside or outside the industrial council system, and through straight employer-employee negotiation starting on the shop level... No matter what form agreement takes, it is within the overall system of the presently state-controlled society in South Africa.

3. [T]he most important aspect of the recent developments is the rise of the black workers as a militant, organized force... The present focus of organization must be on the black workers because they are not only a majority but are the potential for continuing change in the political and social spheres, whether this change is totally peaceful or not.

4. Whether this process is reversible or irreversible can be and is debated... The fact is that the process and its potential exist at the moment. Therefore, one must proceed on the basis that this is an irreversible process or, [that is]... as if there is time to move towards real and permanent change in South Africa. This includes change in the social and political status of the black worker as well as work-related changes traditionally associated with trade union activity. This does not exclude the possibility that the final showdown may be bloody and revolutionary,

for it cannot be forgotten that no dictatorial power such as the present white South African regime will abdicate its power without resorting to every possible device to maintain it.

5. This is where we stand at present... Although many reforms have been undertaken and black workers and their unions have grown in importance, there are still the forces of the state, mainly its security system, which impede, harass, discourage and water down the process of change at every opportunity...

6. In spite of this... there is a booming trade union movement, even though it is divided and fragmented with no single, all-embracing national centre. There are currently over 200 unions with approximately 350,000 members. This reflects essentially the growth of union organization among the black workers... In effect, the trade unions... are going through the birth pangs of a labour movement which in South Africa signifies a virtual revolution in the economy. This must eventually result in political and social changes in the country. This economic change provides the material basis of hope for the eventual disappearance of Apartheid or, at least, the beginnings of a real change which goes beyond Prime Minister Botha's proposals for limited 'power-sharing' involving only the coloureds and Asians (*South Africa Labour News*, Jan-Feb 1983).

This was written before the township revolt, which began in the most heavily industrialized region of South Africa – the PWV (Pretoria–Witwatersrand–Vereeniging) area – a year after the visit of the Brown–O'Farrell delegation. Comments published at the end of 1982 by two trade unionists who had attended AALC courses at Cornell University confirm the primary role of the trade unions in this period, as seen by the AAL, which:

didn't want to have anything to do with the current political organizations, specifically the ANC. The PAC they regarded as more or less dead. A labour movement is what they think should bring about liberation independently of any other organization (Baskin, p 64).

A primary aim of the AALC over this period was to oppose the influence of the ANC and the SACP, seen as advancing the world interests of the Soviet Union. This aim fell away, both because the AALC was compelled to come to terms with the rise of the ANC and the SACP in the course of the 1984–86 township revolt and because of the abdication of the Soviet Union as a global power in the years that immediately followed.

One of the chief results of the 1984–86 revolt was to subordinate the trade unions to the political hegemony of the ANC and the SACP, arising from a social base not principally within the workplace but in the townships. Here the very long drawn-out schools boycott played a major role, releasing tens of thousands of teenagers permanently onto the streets while the workers worked. This force of declassed youth, mobilized most effectively by supporters of the ANC through local bodies affiliated to the United Democratic Front, overwhelmed and ousted the syndicalism of the previous period within the unions and harnessed them to the politics of the ANC. This was reflected

partially in the AALC report. The complex interrelations in this dynamic of political shifts require careful study on their own account.

Mandela on the unions

A guide to the thinking of the ANC in relation to the rise of the black workers in their trade unions—this ‘virtual revolution in the economy’, according to the AFL-CIO—can be gained from Mandela’s reply to a US union leader who asked him at the Washington meeting: ‘How else can we help you to achieve your just end in your struggle?’ Mandela replied:

That is an important question because what we seek from the international community, and in particular from the labour movement, is help in skills and expertise. The labour movement in the US is one of the strongest in the world.⁸ It has immense experience in the organization of trade unions, the methods of negotiation with employers on behalf of the workers, and the training of the workers themselves to be able to articulate their views on the factory floor and generally as an organization in the country.

You can help tremendously by making this experience, this expertise available to our own trade union movement. Cosatu has done exceptionally well. In fact, it has received praise from very unexpected quarters. They have received praise from an organization, from an individual, like Professor Wiehahn of the University of South Africa. He is a man who in the late 1970s was appointed by the government to investigate the possibility of the formation of black trade unions. It was mainly his recommendation that prompted the government to recognize the black trade unions. He was asked for his opinion sometime last year as to what he thought about the responsibility of black trade unions and what was referred to as the numerous and irresponsible strikes that have taken place since the black trade unions were established. He gave an answer that stunned white South Africa. He said that taking into account the problems facing black trade unions and their lack of experience, they had behaved responsibly throughout these years. He was also asked about the fact that black trade unions make no distinction between economic issues affecting workers and politics. He defended that position and said it is because black trade unions can never get their rights in full until the political question is settled.

The other quarter that was surprising in its positive attitude towards Cosatu and the workers was Dr P J van der Merwe, director general of the Department of Manpower. He also complimented the black trade unions for the way in which they have conducted themselves. That shows clearly how positive Cosatu has been. We feel that if Cosatu can get the assistance of the American trade unions or assistance in the fields I have ...identified, it would make an even greater impact than it is making now.

Mandela was followed by Dlamini, who said:

We would even go further and say that the AFL-CIO as a federation should try to encourage its affiliates to have a bilateral relation with their sister unions in South Africa, so that they are able to share ideas and put forward their request on whatever they would want to do in South Africa (*AALC Reporter*, Vol 25, No 3, 1990).

These assurances from Brothers Mandela and Dlamini, as they were fraternally described by Kirkland, show how 'positive' and 'responsible' is the present leadership in the South African trade unions. Mandela and Dlamini were even more conciliatory and respectful than the AALC delegation in South Africa in 1982. Especially Dlamini, given his position in the SACP. This was an acknowledgement of the subordination of the unions to the ANC and of the ANC to the system of capital. Dlamini entered the premises of the AFL-CIO as a mini-Gorbachev, in the wake of the Reagan-Gorbachev 'summit', with due deference to his hosts. For him and his party, all the previous fiery talk about the relation of the AFL-CIO to big capital and the CIA is a thing of the past, a memento of errant youth. This triumphal tour marked a political capitulation. For the assembled leaders of the AFL-CIO, despite the tones of veneration towards their most honoured guest, the reception bore the character of a political coup. Mandela came, he saw and was conquered.

After 45 years, the Stalinist side in the cold war politics of the 1950s has imploded. During this period, the working class was in the last resort manipulated against its own interests from two opposing centres, each with its own secret intelligence apparatus controlling the trade unions. Each essentially spoke the truth about the venal character of its antagonist, so as the more effectively to screen its own venality. The strongest political weapon on the side of Irving Brown and the AALC, aside from money and resources, was the lack of freedom in all operations associated with its Stalinist antagonist, which the representatives of the United States continuously (and correctly) pointed out. The ground has now disappeared from under the feet of this despotic straw man, though it retains reserved positions of strength in South Africa, especially in the unions.

Already towards the end of the 1984-86 revolt, the US government had a very major programme in place on South Africa. Apart from its \$1 million training programme for the unions, administered by the AALC, it operated a \$1 million human rights fund administered by the US embassy going to political, legal and relief causes, an annual \$8 million scholarship programme at university level, a \$2 million programme directed to high school students and a \$3 million programme directed to small black businesses, all with the specific aim of 'helping to develop black leadership', as stated in 1986 by US under secretary for political affairs, State Department, Michael H Armacost.

With the collapse of the cold war, the leaders of the unions in South Africa now have no political bearings other than towards a form of society unashamedly representing the rule of profit. The immediate future of southern Africa is an American future. The Stalinist apparatus in the SACP, the ANC, Umkhonto we Sizwe and Sactu (now dissolved into Cosatu, so as to control it more directly) is compelled to adapt to the uncontested political hegemony of the United States in the region, which was in any case the condition for

independence in Namibia and negotiations in South Africa. After the decades of intense politicization of every aspect of social and personal life, the aspirant black middle class will attend seriously to its own affairs in the hunt for qualifications, jobs and contacts. The Soviet Union has disappeared from view, like a dead sun. Mandela gives solid assurances to capital, while Dlamini is brought along to guarantee that the workers will be kept in line.

Disoriented, lacking their familiar compass points, workers will be compelled to discover a new politics if they are to defend their interests in the post-cold war world. It is a great advantage that South African workers enter this new period, in which all traditional reference points are down, on the same footing as the rest of the class internationally. As South Africa loses its 'exceptional' status in world capitalism, the possibility emerges of an end to the exceptionally rigid, insular, uncritical thinking of the past decades. A new period requires new thinking, a readiness to question the orthodoxies: new ideas to clear out the old. Mandela's reception at the AFL-CIO marks the end of an epoch of generalised bad faith in the unions, a reign of systematized dishonesty characterized by a false dichotomy. Its ending suggests the possibility, but not the promise, of a more honest future.

NOTES

1. Thanks to the contributor who referred me to the literature.
2. Irving Brown, 'Free Trade Union Campaign Against Apartheid'.
3. Agee, p 75.
4. Luckhardt and Wall, p 394.
5. Interview in the Financial Mail, Johannesburg, 26 February 1982.
6. Not least of the ironies in Dlamini's visit to Washington were secondary similarities between present conditions in South Africa and Europe in the mid-1940s. The SACP's record against the apartheid regime, its absorption to the unions through the bureaucratic apparatus in Cosatu but above all its role in the 'armed struggle'—no matter how largely rhetorical—would tend to give it a place in a future government including the ANC in South Africa, similar to that of the Stalinist parties in post-war Europe. A similar response by the US could also have been expected, had not the other leading player in the cold war system collapsed as a world power. The SACP, through no fault of its own, has ceased to be a representative of the Soviet state.
7. Meany played a leading role in securing AFL-CIO support for the US war in Vietnam and its invasion of the Dominican republic: an index of his concern for human rights.
8. Mandela was either misinformed or was excessively diplomatic. No more than 18 percent of the work force in the US is unionized (McKay, p 128).

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