



sash

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sash
SOUTH AFRICAN STUDENT ASSOCIATION

Cover note:

Our cover design draws together the two main themes of this issue. It illustrates the vastly different worlds in which South Africans live – worlds that nevertheless have a profound impact on each other.

Resistance in the townships has burst upon South Africa's suburban consciousness, reinforcing deep-seated insecurities beneath the surface of ordered and compartmentalised lives.

And the response to this threat, symbolised by the Casspir, illustrates the many ways in which an existing order effectively defends its interests.

There are other responses we can choose. This issue touches on some of them.

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SASH magazine

SASH magazine is the official organ of the Black Sash. While editorials and editorial policy adhere broadly to the policies of the Black Sash, the views and opinions expressed in other material do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Black Sash.

The contents of this magazine have been restricted in terms of the Emergency regulations. All political comment in this issue, except where otherwise stated, is by H Zille, 5 Long Street, Mowbray 7700.

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editorial

This issue focuses on two topical themes of concern to the Black Sash:

- ★ the changing face of repression and
- ★ new initiatives to increase support for a non-racial democracy among white South Africans.

These themes may appear to have little in common. They are, in fact, closely related.

During the past two years, under the umbrella of two States of Emergency, the government has developed and refined new forms of repression, underscoring the truism that a repressive regime is remarkably resilient if it is ruthless enough. The article beginning on the opposite page examines some dimensions of this resilience.

These developments have transformed the political terrain within which extra-parliamentary organisations work. As a result, most have been through a period of intense introspection, re-evaluating their circumstances, and re-defining achievable goals and appropriate strategies.

Out of this process has come a growing understanding of the urgent need for political work to enable more white South Africans to become willing partners in a negotiated transformation of their society. For, as long as the great majority of whites continue actively to resist this process, there is little chance of liberation for anyone in the foreseeable future.

Working to change perceptions within this constituency is among the most challenging of political tasks, as the Black Sash has long been aware. The government has succeeded extraordinarily well in fanning fears evoked by the escalating resistance struggle and particularly by excesses committed in its name. And during the past few years opposition movements have allowed their potential strength to be dissipated by divisions and conflict around divergent strategies.

Against this background, the Five Freedoms Forum Conference in Johannesburg in late September was a welcome development. Essentially an extra-parliamentary initiative, its major contribution was to take the first tentative steps towards bridging the schism between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary opposition forces. Work is currently underway throughout the country to spread the conference's central message: that the common commitment to a non-racial democracy shared by various opposition parties and organisations is more important at present than the points on which they differ. This issue of SASH includes the conference's highlights.

In taking forward this work, we remember those far-sighted women who laid the foundations on which we build. On page 37 we begin a series in tribute to our pioneers. To them we say: You may be finding it difficult to accept some of the perceptions that newer members are bringing to the Black Sash. We understand what it must mean to have some of the organisation's original beliefs and assumptions challenged. We stress the importance of your continuing to offer your insights and experience, as the Black Sash attempts to respond appropriately to South Africa's crises in the late 1980s. Despite the differences that do — and should — exist, the past three decades have more than justified your conviction, expressed in the Black Sash's dedication, that history and your children will defend you.

internal destabilisation

The South African government's regional destabilisation strategy is well-known. But its internal dimensions are less well understood ...

The belated admission by Minister of Defence, Magnus Malan, that South African troops have been once again actively involved in southern Angola since late September — in what he described as 'limited support for Unita' — has rekindled international interest in South Africa's role in the destabilisation of the subcontinent.

But while external destabilisation is widely recognised as a major part of the government's regional offensive, it is less generally understood that a similar strategy is being implemented inside the country as well. The parallel emerges clearly if one examines the development of repression over the past two years.

Until recently, the government relied predominantly on its traditional strategy of detention to disrupt organisations operating outside government-sanctioned structures. While detentions have continued unabated — there have been an estimated minimum of 25 000 during the States of Emergency (of whom at least 1 000 remain in detention) — an analysis of recent events shows that detention has been supplemented by another disruptive strategy: the use of surrogate forces to exacerbate divisions within communities, to annihilate government opponents and to advance government interests.

In the sub-continent this strategy has become quite clear: Unita in Angola and Renamo in Mozambique, supported and at times actively assisted by South African forces, have played an important role in bringing regimes hostile to the South African government to their knees.

Inside South Africa, particularly within the townships, hidden from white view and obscured from history by media censorship, the art of destabilisation has reached new levels of refinement. Vigilantes — operating openly while police turn a blind eye — are waging concerted campaigns against individuals and organisations. Assassina-

tions, jungle justice and even mass killings have become features of attempts to repress political resistance.

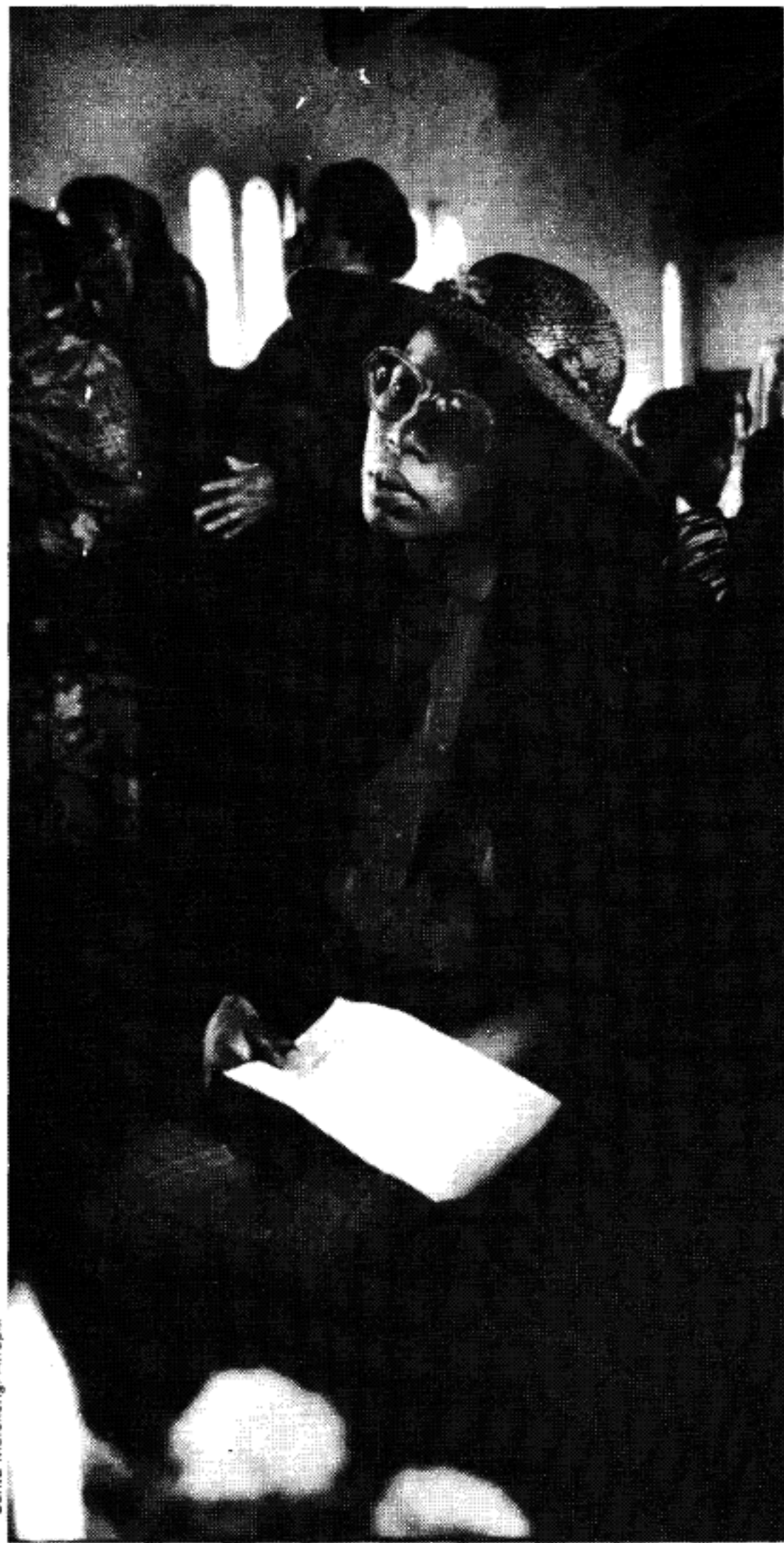
The wild-fire spread of vigilantes has been followed by what appears, in some parts of the country, to be their formalisation: the establishment of various police units which have replaced the SADF and the SAP in many townships.

Best known are the kitskonstabels, who with minimal training have been deployed in townships throughout the country since September 1986. They fall under the control of the Department of Law and Order.

There are also the municipal police, a force established in 1982. They are sometimes called community guards, and fall under black local authorities, and ultimately under the Department of Constitutional Development and Planning. Both these forces have developed a bad name and in some parts of the country, the opprobrium of local communities. They are variously known as 'kitsies', 'blue flies', 'green flies', or 'green beans'.

The vigilante groups — and their uniformed cousins — show uncomfortable similarities to the growth of 'rebel' movements in Angola and Mozambique. And the strategy is clearly not a home-grown one. The superpowers have long perfected the use of surrogate forces to wage their wars in various parts of the world. This strategy also has a long history inside South Africa, where the government has traditionally recruited agents of repression and control from within the ranks of oppressed communities themselves. The homelands policy remains the classic example of this strategy.

Similarly, internal destabilisation has become a fact of South African life in recent years, reaching its most horrific and violent peak with the destruction of the homes and shelters of an estimated 70 000 black Capetonians in May and June last year, through the agency of a vigilante group known as 'wit-



Santu Mofokeng/Afrapix

Fabian Ribeiro's daughter, Barbara, at her father's funeral.

doeke' (because of the white bands worn around their heads and arms). Part of the witdoeke's acknowledged purpose was to destroy squatter settlements whose leaders were regarded as politically sympathetic to the activist youth known as 'the comrades'. Eyewitness accounts of the destruction alleged explicit collusion between the witdoeke and the security forces. These accounts were related by over 100 residents and a large number of priests, politicians and journalists. Repeated attempts to have allegations of direct police and SADF involvement in the

atrocities heard in court are only now coming to fruition in a marathon Supreme Court damages hearing. The Crossroads inferno, in which at least 100 people died, was merely the most dramatic example of 'internal destabilisation' that has emerged in recent times.

But if one draws together the various strands of information that have emerged, it is possible to perceive a pattern, albeit a limited and partial one, obscured by the numerous restrictions on the flow of information.

Statistics given in response to questions in parliament provide a glimpse of the extent of the way the kitskonstabels and municipal police have abused their power. There are 9 270 special township constables in South Africa: 6 317 in the Transvaal, 1 962 in the Cape Province, 1 023 in the Orange Free State and 148 in Natal. Between September 1986 and September 1987 at least 12 murders had been committed with firearms issued to them. During the same period, members of these forces committed 95 crimes in the Transvaal and the Cape. (No statistics were available for the OFS and Natal.) The Transvaal offences included 69 firearm offences: 11 murders, 23 attempted murders, three robberies and 32 cases of aiming a weapon. There were 26 firearm offences in the Cape including one murder, two culpable homicides, four attempted murders, four armed robberies, two assaults, five cases of aiming a firearm, one case of unauthorised use of a firearm and the loss of seven firearms. Overall the officially recorded rate of serious crimes committed by the kitskonstabels and municipal police is at least five times higher than that of the conventional police force.

It is also important to remember that these statistics and the cases brought to court reveal only the tip of the iceberg. They do not reflect the cases in which victims are too frightened of intimidation to lay charges or complaints — or where the police refuse to accept charges. And even when complaints are laid, few culminate in court cases. Nor do the statistics tell us anything about the actions that are accepted as part of the various police forces' 'execution of duty'.

When people feel safe to lodge complaints the statistics rocket — as evidenced by complaints in Duncan Village, a very small community near East London, whose residents have laid 63 out of the 195 complaints made against the municipal police throughout the Cape. Black Sash members in the Border Region, who have been actively involved in exposing the brutality of municipal police, report that many Duncan Village residents would lay complaints or charges against members of this force only in the presence of a Black Sash member, for fear of intimidation. (See article on page 48.)

Side-by-side with the rise of the special constable forces have developed 'freelance' vigilante groups such as the Ama-Afrika group in the Eastern Cape — who pay lip service to the philosophy of black consciousness. There are also gangs which are said to be loosely linked to Inkatha in Natal, groups of 'elders' in innumerable rural communities throughout the country and the more sinister bantustan police with their unenviable reputation for brutality, particularly in Venda, KwaNdebele and Ciskei.

Most sinister and disturbing of all are the nameless and faceless freelance assassins who appear to be roaming the subcontinent, conducting hit-and-run operations reminiscent of the operations of the Rhodesian Selous Scouts. It is becoming almost commonplace for political activists inside and outside the borders of South Africa simply to be hunted down.

Although political assassinations are nothing new in South Africa, the present scale of killings can be said to have begun in 1985. During that year political activists were killed by unknown assailants, or simply went missing without trace on an unprecedented scale. The United Democratic Front lost 11 of its leading figures, who either disappeared or were found murdered. These included William Kratshi, an executive member of the UDF's rural committee, who was shot dead in January. In August three leading members of the UDF-affiliated Port Elizabeth Black Civil Organisation (PEBCO) disappeared and have not been heard of since. The murders of Matthew Goniwe, Fort Calata, Sicela Mhlawuli and Sparrow Mkonto in June were

a political tragedy comparable to the death in detention of Steve Biko. In August, Mrs Victoria Mxenge, an attorney and a Natal regional executive member of the UDF was killed by unknown assailants. In October two UDF activists, Ngwako Ramalepe from the Northern Transvaal and Batandwa Nondo from Transkei, were killed by unknown assailants.

1986 saw a continuation of this trend. In January, Chief Ampie Mayisa, a member of the UDF's executive in Leandra, Eastern Transvaal, was murdered by local vigilantes. Mrs Joyce Mabhudafasi, northern Transvaal branch secretary of the UDF, was seriously injured in a petrol-bomb attack on her home outside the University of the North. The UDF's offices in Durban were gutted by fire, causing R50 000 worth of damage.

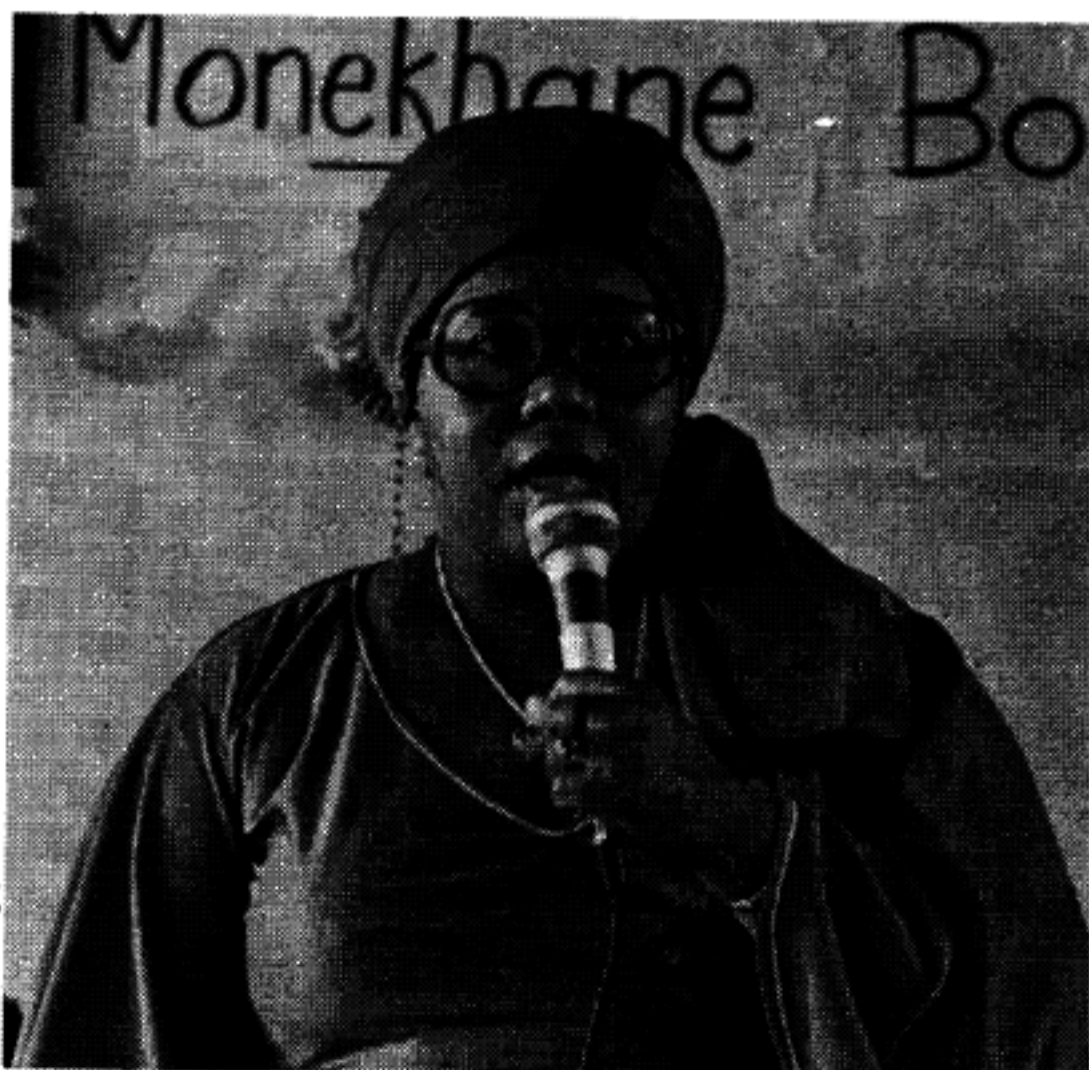
December 1986 also saw the assassination of the community physician, Fabian Ribeiro, in Mamelodi. Although Dr Ribeiro's political roots were in the Pan Africanist tradition, he was best known for his mediation between rival political groups and was a highly respected community leader.

The fact that those responsible for these actions have not been caught is curious, to say the least, given the South African Police's high success rate in solving comparable crimes. Because no one has been brought to book, it is impossible to say with any certainty whether such assassinations and other violent acts against government opponents are committed by agents of the state, or by surrogate forces, or by members of rival organisations to whose actions the police conveniently turn a blind eye.

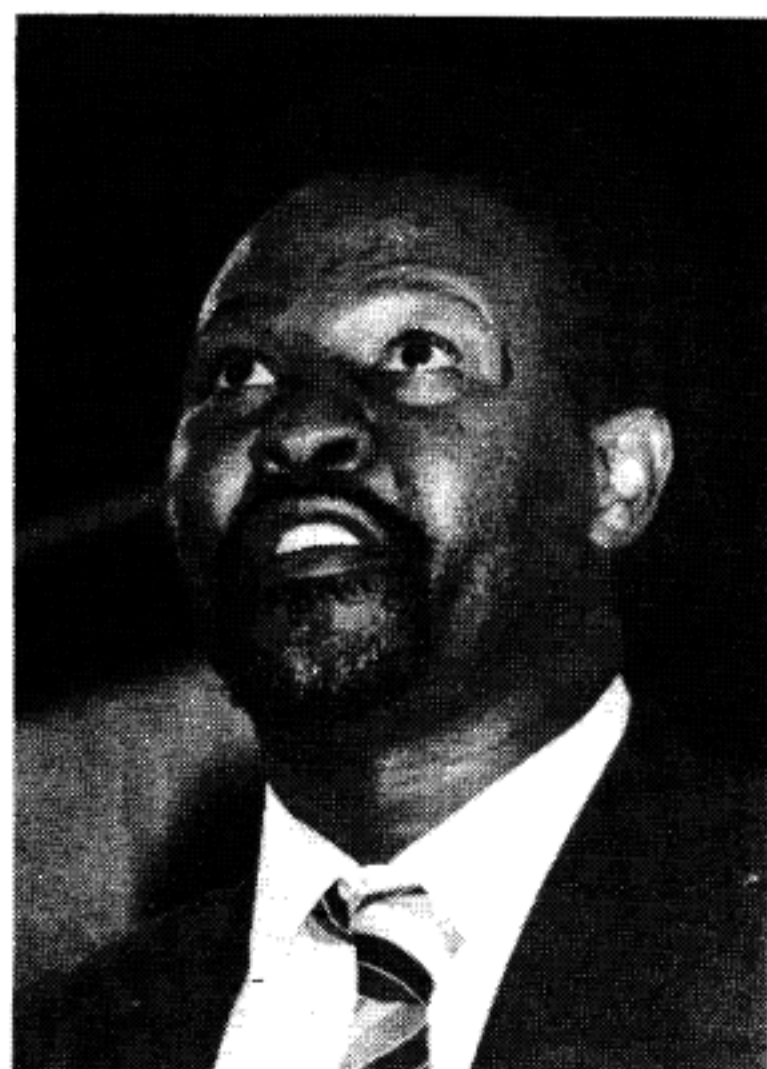
But it would also be inaccurate to claim

BELOW LEFT:
Victoria Mxenge speaking at a memorial service for a friend shortly before she herself was assassinated.

BELOW RIGHT:
Eric Mntonga died in circumstances thinly disguised as a robbery.



Jeeva Ratgopaul



Steve Hilton Barber / Afrapix

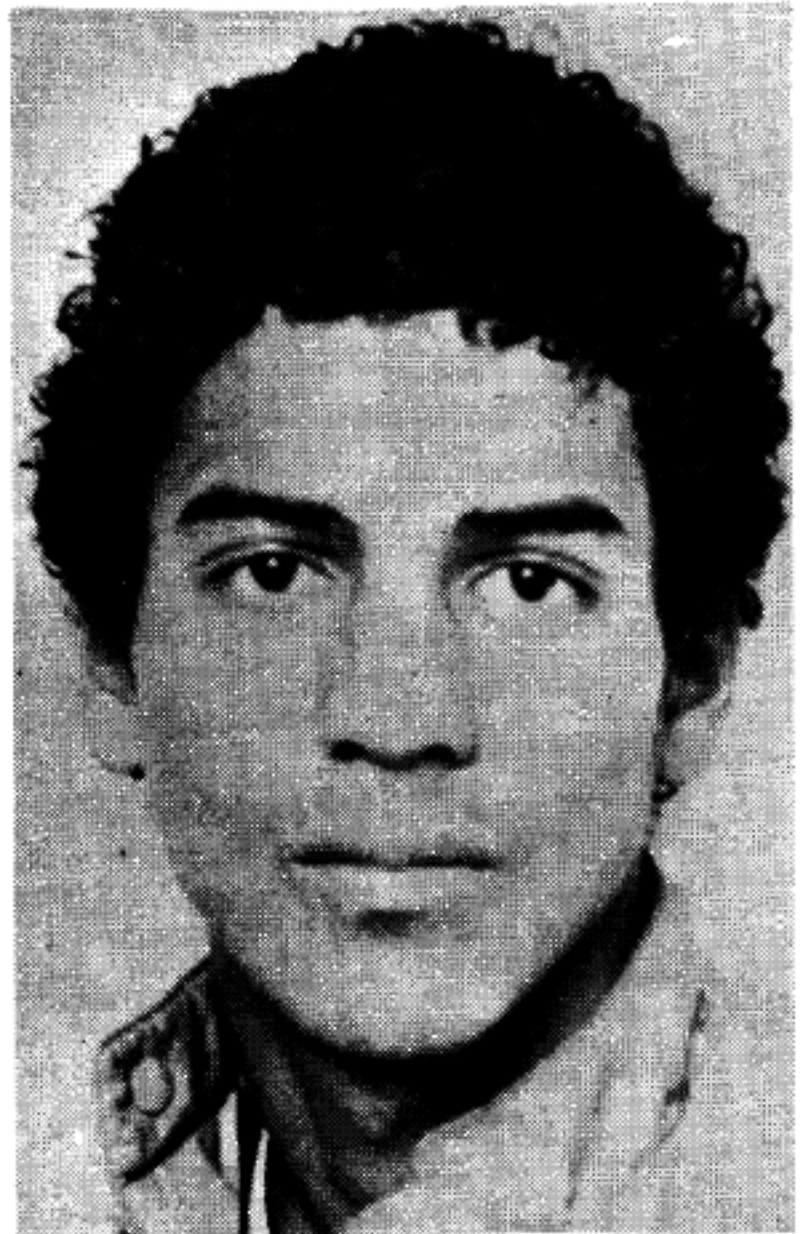
that all conflict between rival resistance movements is simply attributable to outside intervention. Tensions between different resistance organisations do exist — and these too have resulted in a mutual meting out of jungle justice during recent years.

It is usually extremely difficult to get to the root of such cases of escalating violence, as the localised civil war in Pietermaritzburg's townships has shown. Old scores pile on new ones, and the boundaries between self-defence and renewed aggression are easily blurred. Nevertheless, in this as in most other instances of violent rivalry between political organisations, evidence has emerged of outside intervention to protect and promote the interests of one group at the expense of the other, in ways that include the promotion of violence.

Similarly, the AZAPO/UDF conflict has at times taken on extremely serious dimensions. In 1986, the newly elected AZAPO president, Patrick Mosala, said that during the course of the year, 30 AZAPO members had been killed and 100 injured and that 30 houses belonging to members of the organisation had been burnt down as a result of rivalry between 'competing activist groups'. The UDF also suffered as a result of this conflict.

While such friction cannot be attributed entirely to external manipulation, there is little doubt that where conflict does exist, it is actively encouraged by outside agencies. The numerous examples of tension-fanning media, fraudulently purporting to be issued by particular organisations, is one of the more common methods of exacerbating conflict. During 1986, for example, a pamphlet on a UDF letterhead was circulated in Soweto labelling AZAPO as a 'reactionary third force' and calling for every AZAPO member to be 'hunted down'. It severely strained relations between the organisations. The UDF categorically denied any knowledge of the leaflet. Given these facts, it is difficult to distinguish between tensions which arise spontaneously between organisations and those which are actively instigated and encouraged by third parties, for reasons that can only be left to speculation. Those actively involved in township politics say the fact of such intervention is indisputable.

In the escalating spiral of civil conflict, the police have also suffered losses. And civilians accused of being 'traitors' or 'enemies of the people' — sometimes on the basis of untested suspicion — have on occasion become the victims of the most gruesome and brutal retribution meted out in the name of 'the struggle'. Many youthful executioners have been charged and given highly controversial sentences, not for their leniency as in the case of some police trials, but for their harshness. There are 32 people currently on death row



Cape Times

● Mr Alpheus Ndude, husband of UDF Western Cape press officer, Mrs Hilda Ndude, has disappeared after he was abducted from the Adult Learning Project in Mowbray by men in a car.

Another newspaper 'filler' ... This story appeared in a column of small news items on page 3 of a local newspaper. Not only does this illustrate the type of action being taken against political activists, but also the way newspapers are now treating these stories.

awaiting execution for politically-related crimes. The death penalty, highly controversial at any time, is particularly so in these cases.

A brief glance at the high-profile events in 1987 gives us some indication of the way in which the 'internal destabilisation' is developing. And some events indicate a new trend: the overlapping of the internal and external destabilisation strategies.

Between January and October at least 12 ANC operatives were assassinated in Swaziland, including Cassius Make, an ANC executive member and Paul Dlikeledi, an Umkhonto we Sizwe commander. At least two were kidnapped from Swaziland during the same period. ANC official Ebrahim Ebrahim went on trial for treason in the northern Transvaal town of Piet Retief after allegedly being abducted from Swaziland by South African agents.

As the year progressed details began to emerge of an elaborate plot to assassinate and/or kidnap leading members of the ANC. There is evidence of high-level complicity between South African security agencies, British and American intelligence and 'freelance' operators in a bid to neutralise the ANC leadership.

Inside South Africa, some major events occurred as follows:

21 January: Twelve people, including seven children, are gunned down in Kwa-Makhuta near Amanzimtoti. The gunmen — carrying AK 47 rifles — missed their intended



Gill de Vlieg/Afrapix

OPPOSITE PAGE: Ashley Kriel. There are divergent accounts of his death at the hands of the police.

ABOVE: Matthew Goniwe. His death was not only a human tragedy, but a political one as well.

target, Victor Ntuli, member of the UDF-affiliated KwaMakhuta Youth League. No arrests have been made.

28 February: Three members of the UDF-affiliated Hammarsdale youth congress are killed when gunmen open fire on them after a youth meeting. No arrests have been made.

15 March: Vusi Maduna, president of the Hammarsdale Youth Congress is stabbed to death by alleged Inkatha supporters. No arrests have been made.

17 March: Seven members of the UDF-affiliated KwaMashu Youth League are stabbed to death and their bodies dumped in a shallow grave. No arrests have been made.

7 May: A massive bomb blast rocks Cosatu House in Johannesburg causing damage in excess of R1-million and rendering the building unsafe for use. No arrests have been made.

3 July: A pre-dawn bomb blast extensively damages the Wilgespruit Fellowship Centre near Roodepoort, causing at least R135 000 in damage. Wilgespruit is widely used by the SACC and affiliates as a conference and training centre. No arrests have been made.

9 July: A Bonteheuwel student, Ashley Kriel, is shot dead in a 'scuffle' with police. He is acknowledged by family and organisational sources to be an ANC member. Post mortem reports and eye-witness accounts of his death cloud the circumstances and strong hints are made that he was 'eliminated'.

22 July: SAP 'by mistake' confirm that

they have in detention Lucas 'September' Seme, who was kidnapped from Swazi police cells in August 1986. It is alleged that after extensive incarceration, Seme 'cracks' and tells all on the ANC's network.

24 July: IDASA official, Eric Mntonga, is brutally killed near East London in an attack which is thinly disguised as a robbery.

24 August: Student leader Caiphus Nyoka is shot dead in his house during a struggle with police. The SAP strongly deny that he was shot dead with a silenced pistol, as alleged by three eye-witnesses and family members.

29 August: A powerful bomb blast rips through Community House in Salt River, Cape Town, home to a number of progressive organisations, causing extensive damage. Police vehemently deny any involvement in the blast. No arrests have been made.

10 September: The National Union of Mineworkers offices in Welkom are petrol bombed. Two workers are injured. No arrests have been made.

So the spiral continues. And, as South Africa slides deeper into a seemingly bottomless pit of violence and counter-violence, where death squads stalk the land, it is those people who wish to build a non-racial democracy who are the ultimate losers. They are the ones who will have to reconstruct our society from the ashes of shattered faith, racial hatred and the bitter legacy of apartheid. □

capturing the spirit in the quotes

The Five Freedoms Forum Conference, held on the last weekend of September, was an important political milestone. In its focus on 'Whites in a changing South Africa', the conference underscored the urgency of political work to enable white South Africans to become willing partners in the transformation of their society.

It is always temptingly easy to romanticise such events in retrospect, particularly when they appeal to a deep-seated need to feel needed. That is not our intention.

We have drawn out these quotes because they capture the spirit that pervaded the conference, despite some deep differences that emerged. These words, from important political actors, reflect a real appreciation of the awesome uncertainties whites face as they move into the unknown, with no guarantees for the future except a conviction that what they do now will help to shape it.



Rapu Molekane, president, Soweto Youth Congress; general secretary, South African Youth Congress:

'Many [white South Africans] reject apartheid and want to work for democracy. But many of them also find our organisations too militant. That does not mean we write them off. They have an enormous amount to contribute and we want to encourage them to stay and contribute and become involved.'

Eric Molobi, executive member, National Education Crisis Committee:

'We ask that you speak the truth to the white community. Tell them that there is no peace in our country and there will never be so long as our people are denied the right to determine their own future. Tell them what our people are striving for. But most of all tell them that we have no desire to perpetrate on them the injustices which we have suffered through apartheid all these years.'



Frank Chikane, general secretary, SACC:

'You people have legal space — you can hold this type of conference. But it could not happen in Soweto. Such privileges put a heavy responsibility on you. If you do not use it you will also take responsibility for the deaths that happen in the townships.'

Sheena Duncan, vice president, South African Council of Churches; past national president, Black Sash:

'Many people are on the defensive, seeking to avoid the unavoidable. We don't want them to be pushed flat on their backs so that we can walk over them. We are not seeking victories. We are seeking solutions in which all South Africans have a place.'



Sidney Mafumadi, Assistant General Secretary of COSATU:

'If by any chance you should happen to be a white worker, we would be quite happy to welcome you as a member of our organisation.'

Azhar Chachalia, national executive member, United Democratic Front:

'[We] call on all whites who are thinking of emigrating, to stay and contribute. This is the country from which you have benefitted and your commitment to this country will turn it into a secure and just place for all.'



ditching one-upmanship

Hitting the nail on the head, Frederick van Zyl Slabbert poses five key questions that apartheid's opponents need to address if they wish to stop working against each other.

During the last few years, since 1983, two opposing political goals have painfully crystallised for our country.

The first is a multi-racial autocracy based on racially/ethnically defined group participation and depending on patronage and coercion for stability. Its major proponent is the present government.

The second is the goal of a non-racial democracy based on individual participation and depending on consent and voluntary association, which is supported by a variety of opposition organisations.

The first option — multi-racial autocracy — is strong on organisation and weak on legitimacy.

The option of a non-racial democracy has high legitimacy but is weak on organisation.

Part of the reason for the organisational weakness of those of us who want to work for a non-racial democracy has to do with problems outside of our control — particularly the repressive and propagandist actions of the state. Part of it has to do with ourselves — our own diversity of strategies and resources to contribute in working towards a non-racial democracy.

There are times when we must take stock of ourselves and in particular consider whether it is possible to broaden and consolidate the base of a democratic opposition in South Africa. If this is to be so, I believe it is going to depend on how we respond to a few key questions:

1 Are the one or more goals we share in common more important than those on which we differ?

This question helps us to identify whether there is an objective of such transcending importance that we are prepared to tolerate differences among ourselves in pursuing it. Let me give an example of an approach that has failed to address this question. Imagine a politicised black activist saying to a second-year University of Pretoria student, 'OK, so you have abandoned apartheid and want a democratic solution for South Africa. You can become part of the democratic struggle if

you join the people's war, support sanctions and boycott all participation in apartheid structures.' This youngster is going to suffer from third-degree political burns for quite a while before he knows what hit him.

An example of an equally counter-productive approach would be for a PFP member of parliament to say to a black activist, 'You can broaden the democratic struggle only if you are prepared to put up posters for us in the forthcoming tricameral elections.'

Both approaches have a lot in common: they express a concern with democracy but define it in strategically exclusive terms. We must ask ourselves whether it is possible to be more flexible on strategy and still strengthen our commitment to a common goal.

2 Are our differences debatable?

This question has to do with the whole issue of means and ends. Sometimes a dogmatic commitment to a particular agenda for change is transferred on to a particular strategy, elevating it to a principle on the grounds of which others are excommunicated from 'the struggle'. Statements like 'Nobody who is a true democrat and wants economic justice will oppose sanctions' or 'To fight against sanctions is the only way to save democracy for South Africa' both define commitment to democracy on an exclusive basis, providing yardsticks of excommunication.

But that does not mean that differences must be suppressed or ignored. To the extent that we refuse to come clean on our differences and/or debate them, we begin to treat each other as 'useful idiots' or as undisclosed issues on hidden agendas.

3 Is it possible to agree on interim strategic objectives?

Can we, despite our differences, be given our common commitment to non-racial democracy, set some common objectives which can mobilise our collective resources? Any organisation depending on public

support does this from time to time. This means many organisations co-operating with each other, pooling their resources and mobilising a large number of people. Ideas could be something like:

- Five million South Africans sign in support for democracy in one day.
- A thousand workshops in June to discuss the concept of a non-racial democracy.
- 'Operation Suburbia' to win support from white South Africans for a non-racial democracy.

Such strategic objectives deepen organisational experience, generate leadership, show up strengths and weaknesses and have many other spin-off effects. But this can be successful only if we have resolved the first two questions.

4 Do we agree on or understand what we are up against?

We must not confuse loss of legitimacy with lack of control. The technology of domination has become highly sophisticated in this century, with telecommunications, media and propaganda, infiltration and disinformation reaching new levels of sophistication.

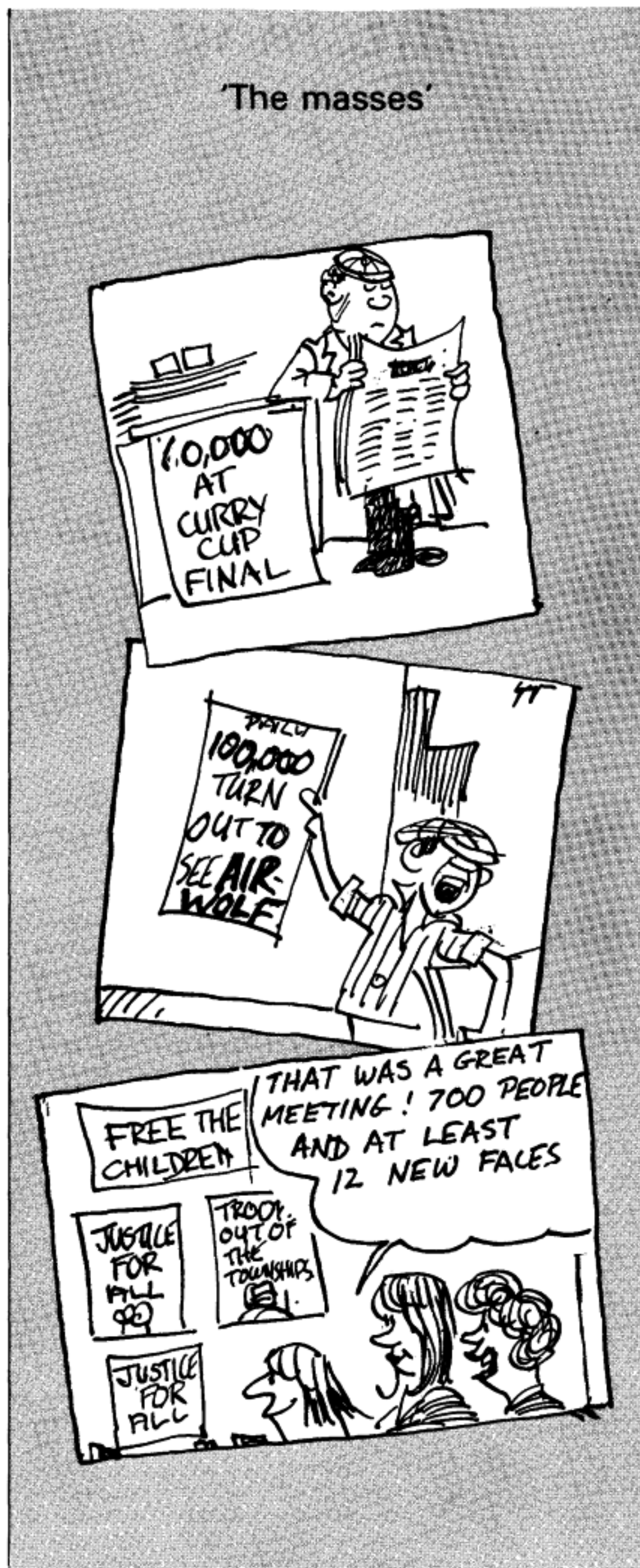
It is not only stupid to underestimate what you are up against — it is a waste of time and resources. A sense of moral revulsion and repugnance, however sincere, does not guarantee success or make you any stronger.

We have to understand the structure of the state's policy and the power of patronage. We have to understand the extent to which coercion is working.

5 Do we trust one another?

This is not a rhetorical question. We come from different histories, backgrounds and experiences. In a cleft society such as ours, deep prejudices and suspicions are easily formed and maintained. This leads to suspicion-mongering, backstabbing, mau-mauing, moral outbidding and one-upmanship. Sometimes enormous amounts of time and energy are spent in defining thresholds of commitment and purity without any progress being made towards the objectives.

I believe if we take these questions seriously, if we do not rush into 'quick fixes' but patiently build on our resources, we can become part of a much more organised and broad-based democratic movement. I sense that after a period of intense and massive mobilisation for democratic goals in which many have suffered and learnt, we are on the threshold of the next, perhaps more difficult stage: how practically to organise democratic structures in response to an increasingly undemocratic situation. □



whose 'false consciousness'?

Tony Grogan takes a lighter look at political work in the white constituency, focussing on ...

'The workers'



getting our act together

michael evans

The Black Sash's membership has long reflected many of the tensions and divisions that often immobilise opposition politics. So it was with a sense of deep relief that some of us heard Michael Evans, whose roots are firmly in the extra-parliamentary tradition, urge an inclusive approach, drawing together all those who are prepared to work for a non-racial democracy. This article is an edited version of his speech, one of the highlights of the recent Five Freedoms Forum conference in Johannesburg.

Examining the potential of political work aimed at transforming the perceptions of the white community in a changing South Africa is a difficult task. It is difficult, firstly, because any discussion of a strategy for the future throws one into the realms of the unknown and often into heated and intense debate. But it is also difficult because, at first impression, there would seem to be very little positive role for whites in a changing South Africa.

If we examine the way white South Africans have responded to the South African crisis of the 1980s we are left with a rather gloomy picture. There have been three predominant responses:

- growth of the extreme right-wing
- extensive support for the government
- a dramatic increase in emigration.

These are all very logical responses, consistent with the social and economic background of white South Africans, but they are responses which do not make the terrain any easier for those of us who are working to change perceptions within the white community.

Fortunately, these three responses do not present the complete picture. We also know that there are enough progressive white actors on the South African political stage to have a meaningful impact on South Africa's future.



Why, one might ask, this confident assertion? To answer this question, we must go back to the crisis and, more specifically, its effects. For, while the failure of the government's 'reform' process and the resort to naked force has elicited these negative responses from the white community, there have also been at least two positive effects.

Firstly, the crisis of the past decade has spurred a growing conviction that apartheid can and will be destroyed — an optimism that was absent through the 1960s and 1970s. Nor is it the euphoric optimism that has, at times in our past, led to bitter disillusionment. It is rather a measured optimism that does not underestimate the work that must still be done, that accepts the inevitable set-backs, but is nevertheless confident that the demise of apartheid is inevitable.

Secondly, and more importantly, the crisis has eroded confidence among white South Africans in the permanent survival of racist rule. This, in turn, has triggered off fragmentations, defections, in-fighting and other symptoms of the disintegration of a previously monolithic entity.

In short, there has been growing polarisation — and one side of that polarisation has witnessed growing numbers of whites becoming aware that, in the long run, defence of the status quo is not feasible and will lead to sharper and more violent conflict.

We need only look at organisations working primarily in the white community over the past five years to see the effects of that polarisation. When I left university, seven years ago, I was faced with very few organisational possibilities. There were essentially three major, nationally based anti-apartheid organisations in the white community: the Black Sash, NUSAS and the Progressive Federal Party. Now we have the End Conscription Campaign, the United Democratic Front affiliates, alliances such as the Five Freedoms Forum, professional bodies and, perhaps most significantly, the steady emergence of resistance to apartheid within the Afrikaans-speaking community. But while these organisations have offered a real and important home to many progressive-minded whites, there is still a far larger number who have been left without an organisational home — people for whom organisations such as the UDF or the End Conscription Campaign may appear too radical or too narrow in their focus, but for whom the possibility of working within parliamentary structures appears too sterile and cut off from the political momentum developing outside these structures.

There are a growing number of whites — both Afrikaans-speaking and English-speaking — who are organisationally homeless, between the extra-parliamentary democratic movement on the one hand, and the parliamentary organisations on the other. Robin Carlisle of the PFP has pointed to research showing that an estimated 40 percent of whites accept the inevitability of a non-racial future. Many do not have any organisational base, or at most vote once every five years and do little in the interim to involve themselves in the processes that are

shaping their future.

Many of these whites, as Peter Gastrow has pointed out, accept that the major impetus for change is coming from organisations outside parliament and no longer feel committed to work tirelessly to oppose apartheid within the confines of a system that, in isolation, has lost the initiative.

This brings us to the question of how to take forward the obviously necessary broad-based work in the white community. And here, I believe, we must learn the lessons of the past. I suggest that if we examine the broad spectrum of anti-apartheid white organisation, there have been two broad approaches, each having made a fundamental error in its approach to political organisation:

The 'third way' approach

It has become fashionable among some academics and journalists to propound a 'third way' to South Africa's future. In summary, it goes as follows. The government and the ANC are at loggerheads. There is no way out of this deadlock, which will ultimately destroy us all if it is not resolved. South Africans must get together to find an alternative high-road formula. This approach has much to commend it:

- the assertion of a democratic future
- the recognition of the ANC as a real factor in South Africa's future
- most importantly, the belief in a negotiated resolution of our conflict.

Yet this approach has one major failing: its attitude to the extra-parliamentary democratic movement. For its starting point is not only that the government and the ANC are at loggerheads, but that both are equally to blame for South Africa's crisis. It thus tends to ignore, or at least to de-emphasise, the fact that it is the government and not the ANC that is refusing to negotiate a democratic future. As has been stressed again and again in the course of this conference, conflict cannot be looked at in an ahistorical and uncontextualised way.

The aloofness of this 'third way' approach and its failure properly to engage the broad extra-parliamentary democratic movement will remain a crucial stumbling block.

The extra-parliamentary approach

Many extra-parliamentary organisations have, I believe, been bedevilled by a self-imposed stumbling block in the path of broad-based work. This stumbling block has been the issue of pre-conditions, especially the pre-condition of non-participation in party politics.

'The crisis of the past decade has spurred a growing conviction that apartheid can and will be destroyed'

'... the issues should not form the basis of exclusion.'

If we are honest, we must admit that white extra-parliamentary organisations are still extraordinarily small and, with a few exceptions, are not really accessible to the majority of white South Africans.

The question we must ask ourselves is this: are we so small because there is something inherently wrong with our community, or does the problem lie with our style of organisation? My own organisation, the ECC, is a good example. It is with shame and embarrassment that I record that in a number of ECC regions the question of PFP youth affiliation was a hotly-debated issue a few years back. This should not have been an issue for debate at all. As a group opposed to conscription into the SADF, they should have been accepted unconditionally.

It is important for us to keep coming back to Van Zyl Slabbert's key question at the start of this conference: are the one or more goals we share more important than those on which we differ?

In this regard we perhaps have something to learn from the French Independence Movement, where right-wing Gaullists and communists united to confront the immediate enemy of fascism. Or the USA and USSR alliance to oppose Nazism during the Second World War. These were both situations where the shared objectives outweighed any differences between the opposing parties.

These then are the two major stumbling blocks to effective work:

- the failure on the part of the parliamentary and other more liberal organisations effectively to reach out to the broad democratic movement
- the establishment by the extra-parliamentary movement of pre-conditions to joint work.

But this conference, I believe, has effectively challenged these stumbling blocks — perhaps not removed them altogether — but at least effectively chiselled at them.

The main theme that has arisen in the course of this conference, and that has assisted in providing some direction for the future, is the need for a broad-based initiative directed primarily at the white community, to enable them to become part of the transition to a democratic society. It was a consistent theme, addressed in all the major speeches.

I believe that consensus has been reached on the single pre-condition for participation in the movement: opposition to apartheid and a commitment to a non-racial democratic future. If this is accepted as the only factor that defines inclusion or exclusion, then all else can and must be debated within the four walls of this initiative. Debate must occur:

- on the question of the rights of individuals and their legislative protection

- on the question of the post-apartheid economic structure
- on the question of the precise shape of the democratic institutions which will replace the apartheid tyranny
- on the question of the need to safeguard the diverse cultural and linguistic heritages which make up our nation
- on the question of the tactic of violence
- on the question of whether to use parliament as a vehicle for change.

These issues must be debated and individuals must be challenged, but the issues should not form the basis of exclusion. As Robin Carlisle so rightly said: 'We must stop quibbling about strategies and elevating strategies to the level of principle ... but that does not mean we have to give up the specific principles we believe in.'

I believe that there has been a measure of consensus on the goal of the initiative: to work towards a negotiated solution to South Africa's problems.

Virtually every struggle in the post-war period has reached its climax at the negotiating table. Ours will be no exception. And the task of our initiative will be to hasten the process of negotiation. As Azhar Cachalia, national treasurer of the UDF said: 'If we can convince whites not to turn to their rifles, the path to negotiation will be shorter.'

The government is not yet weak enough to negotiate; it believes it can still dictate the terms to us all. Our task is to make the politics of negotiation a reality by convincing enough whites that this alone can draw us closer to a resolution of our conflict.

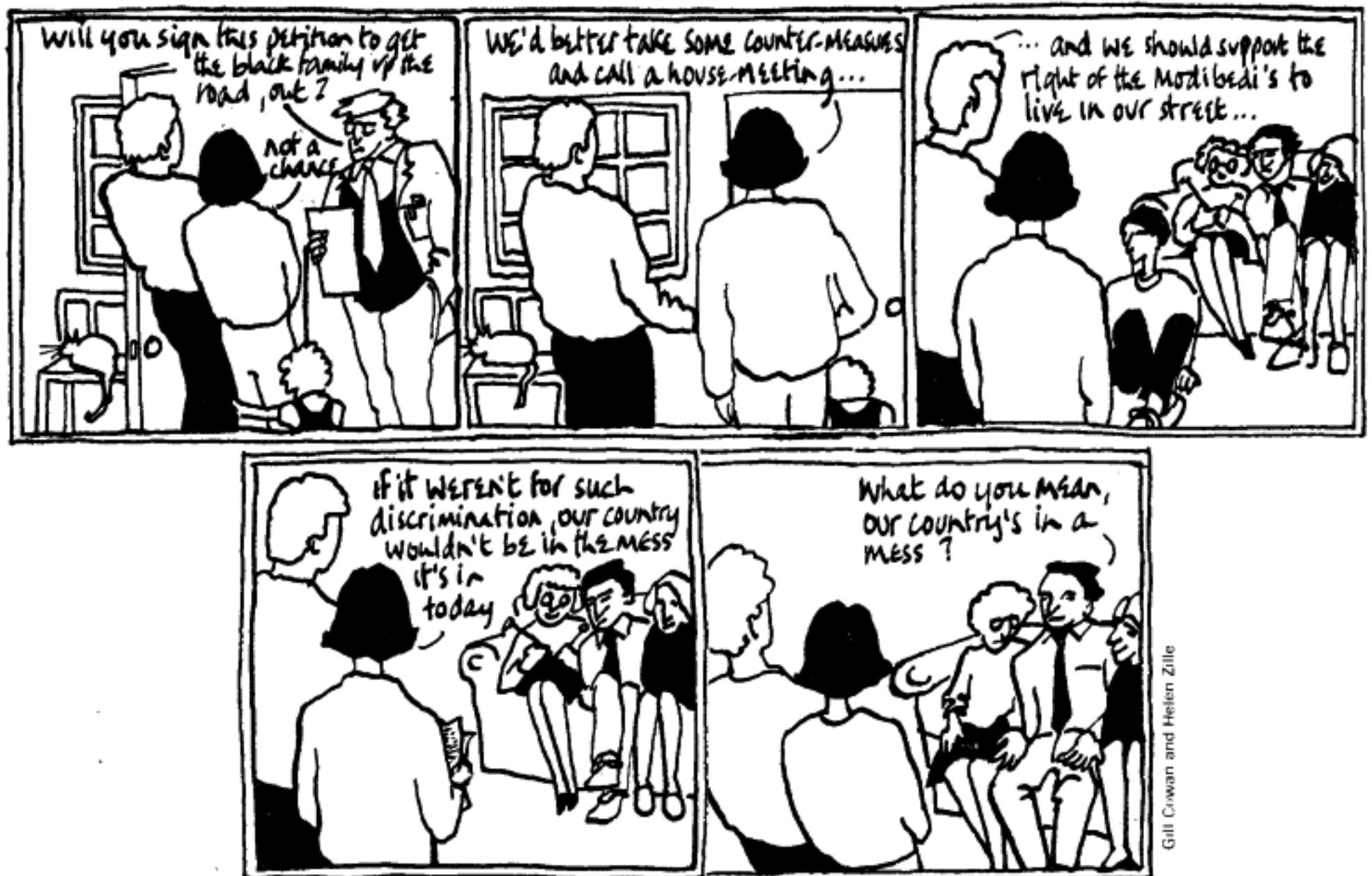
These then, are the points of consensus. Other issues must now be debated:

- What structure will best serve the overall goal?
- Will individual rather than organisational participation best assist the achievement of the goals?
- What sort of relationship should there be to other organisations?

Most importantly, we need to examine creatively the ways in which we can advance our goals. All of us carry the responsibility of examining ways in which we can oppose apartheid, for example, through our participation in professional groups, business organisations or student organisations.

A fluidity exists in white politics which allows opportunities for us never before available in South Africa's history. It is our historical duty — not only to ourselves but to non-racialism and to the millions of blacks who suffer under the yoke of apartheid — not to let a single opportunity slip to make use of this climate. □

what crisis?



signpost to the future



Ruth Sang, a Black Sash founder member and her son, John, were travelling 2 000 metres up in the mountains of California, when they came upon this sign in the snow.

'We were so happy to find it and wondered who had put in there,' Ruth wrote.

It doesn't take much to make a Black Sash member feel at home.

casualties of our courts

It is standard practice in our legal system (and many others) for a lawyer's cross-examination to turn into relentless grilling, aimed at drawing out the slightest inconsistency or weakness in a witness's evidence.

This practice is usually condoned as part of the process of getting to the truth and exposing false evidence. But it can also lead to grave abuses.

The commonly cited example is the rape victim who is further victimised in the witness box. But there are other areas of equal concern.

Here we publish accounts of two court cases, by Janet Small and Sbelagh Hurley, that exemplify the ordeal thousands of people face in their passage through our courts – even if they are not accused of any crime.

Black Sash court monitors regularly report on cases in which witnesses are at an extreme linguistic, cultural and social disadvantage, with little understanding of court procedure. In most cases, the present system seems incapable of taking their circumstances into account or tempering convention with compassion. This is probably one of the major reasons why our legal system is rapidly losing legitimacy. It also underscores the fact that a legal system cannot stand neutrally outside the arena of power relations in our society.

We will focus on this theme in depth in the next issue of SASH.



janet small's
account

Captain Gerrit Grobbelaar (right) who was recently acquitted on eight counts of assault, accompanies his advocate, Gideon Huisamen to court.

In August this year a police station commander, Captain Gerrit Grobbelaar of Fort Beaufort in the Eastern Cape, was acquitted of eight counts of assault. This judgement came after a two-year battle by black residents of the town to place checks on the seemingly unbridled power of the local police force.

Fort Beaufort is set in the heart of the Eastern Cape, 143 km east of East London and just a 3/4 hour's drive from Grahamstown. It is a small town with a total population of about 20 000 people. Of these, 15 000 are black and live in two main townships, Tinis and Dorrington. Although their's is a familiar story, the black residents of Fort Beaufort have suffered repeatedly severe attacks from various forces without, until recently, any outside support. The horror of uncontrollable vigilante violence has been well documented in Fink Haysom's *Mabangalala*.

Some of those vigilantes have been recruited into the municipal police force that is now responsible for the implementation of 'law and order'. When the news of Dr Wendy Orr's courageous stand against the police and prison authorities in Port Elizabeth in 1985 reached Fort Beaufort, a representative group from the townships decided to seek assistance in Port — Elizabeth. Lawyers from Johannesburg saw them and agreed to help. The Albany branch of the Black Sash was then approached to assist the lawyers in affidavit- and statement-taking in Fort Beaufort. During this process police presence and harassment were a constant reminder of the vulnerability of the people of Tinis and Dorrington.

Despite the hovering presence of the police, a comprehensive dossier of alleged assaults was compiled and sent to the Attorney-General for his attention. And his attention it did get. The police launched their own investigation and finally charged Captain Gerrit Grobbelaar with eight counts of assault, calling township residents as witnesses. A state prosecutor took over the case and the witnesses became his clients.

At the first appearance the case was postponed because the local magistrate, being too involved in the dynamics of the situation,

recused himself. Finally, in March 1987, two years after the alleged incidents, the case began.

Grobbelaar had engaged the services of an aggressive, experienced Port Elizabeth attorney, Gideon Huisamen, described by another lawyer as 'a real street-fighter'. This was no understatement. Huisamen used an array of clever tactics which seemed to have the effect of confusing the often unsophisticated witnesses. At times it was like watching a slaughter as Huisamen slowly and carefully shredded the witnesses' stories.

Freelance journalist *Sam Sole* had previously spent some time in the Fort Beaufort area and was present throughout the trial. The following extracts, from an article he has written for *Frontline*, vividly capture the atmosphere of the courtroom:

'At 2 p.m. the court rises for magistrate Nelson. The witnesses' supporters are squeezed into 'their' side of the gallery. A woman from the Black Sash in Grahamstown takes her place among them — a solitary white face amidst the rows of black ones. With smiles of welcome they squash up to make room ...

The trial begins. Grobbelaar is allowed to leave the stand and sit next to his lawyer.

Sixty-five year old Mrs Eunice Nyakatya gives evidence:

She was awakened in the small hours by the sound of voices outside her window. Two men were arguing about whether or not to "shoot". She assumed they meant her. Next thing she became aware of a figure standing at the end of her bed. She got up and switched on the lights, recognising Captain Grobbelaar from a previous visit to the police station when she had been arrested.

He pushed her back onto a couch and beat her, shouting, "Waar's Temba!" (her son) "Waar's Temba!" Her daughter Tembisa was brought to the room and witnessed the assault. Other policemen then brought in Temba and Captain Grobbelaar assaulted him. Thereafter they left, taking Temba with them.

The assaults were carried out with a black object — neither sjambok nor baton — none of the

other policemen had carried such a weapon.

Before requesting an adjournment until the following day, Mr Huisamen asks just one question, "How long was Temba in detention after his arrest?"

"Six months," replies Mrs Nyakatya.

Huisamen leaves the answer to take root in the mind of the magistrate overnight

From the start, Huisamen dominates. One complainant testifies, wearing the green garb of a prisoner. Concluding his cross-examination, Huisamen asks:

"Why are you in jail?"

"Because I was shot," the man replies.

"They don't put people in jail for being shot. You were jailed for public violence, weren't you?"

"Yes"

"The court didn't accept your evidence, did they?"

"No"

"Let me put it to you: firstly, you made up your story; secondly, you are a liar; thirdly, you are a weak liar; fourthly, you have clearly lied to a court before."

Huisamen is a big man, bigger than Grobbelaar. It was striking to see the police captain — nobody's lackey — carrying the lawyer's cape and briefcase for him on one occasion.

He would stand skew to the witness, leaning on a lectern, taking his time, marshalling the twists of his questioning. Then one foot on a chair and an elbow on the lectern as he turns head on to direct his question, sometimes using the whole frame of his body to make a point, to give the word physical weight. And using his voice: with sarcasm, menace, anger, ridicule, to immense effect ...

Siphiwo Rangule testifies that he had spent two weeks in hospital and still suffered epileptic attacks after an assault at which Grobbelaar had been present.

Huisamen reads Rangule his statement, asking him to confirm each paragraph. In the middle, he substitutes a paragraph of his own to the effect that Grobbelaar had not witnessed the assault. Rangule confirms as for each previous item. Suddenly his testimony lies in ruins. A corroborating witness is asked to identify the accused. He points to

where Grobbelaar is sitting, his back turned. "Did Captain Grobbelaar look exactly like this the day of the alleged assault, was his face exactly the same?"

Grobbelaar turns and stares hard at the witness for a few seconds.

That stare! I found it almost unbearable — carrying with it all the weight of cell, sjambok and shotgun, of Emergency and detainment without trial. And he had taken off his glasses.'

Captain Grobbelaar was trans-

ferred to Cradock as district officer when the investigation was launched, where he continued to do active duty. He was later acquitted on all eight charges of assault, and has since moved.

We do not know of his movements since his acquittal. □

shelagh hurley's account

In October 1986, Temba Grootboom was shot dead by Mxolisi Yantola, a municipal policeman in the Bricksfield township near Jansenville, Eastern Cape. Shelagh Hurley, who attended the inquest, reports that Temba was playing soccer with his children in a churchyard when he was shot. And the tragedy continued in the courtroom

The hearing was conducted in Afrikaans with no interpreter. Apparently there isn't a permanent interpreter and the municipal police are sometimes used as such — but people object to using them.

It was the first time I have attended anything like this and it was interesting to see how Mr Jooste, the attorney representing the municipal police, operated.

All six witnesses said similar things, and three of them were actual eye-witnesses to the murder. All three eye-witnesses were definite about who had a gun in his hand and who fired the gun and who shot Temba in the head from approximately six paces away. What they were uncertain about were some of the details, which Jooste pounced on. He would go on and on if he found a minor difference in the statements of the witnesses. He would say for instance: 'So and so said this and you say that. *Who* is telling me the truth? Come on — you said you wanted to tell the truth.'

These people are all very poor, and you can see that all their lives they have had to agree with what their 'Baas' and 'Miesies' say to them. Now here is an obviously well-educated 'baas' dressed in a black gown behaving in an



Judy Chalmers

A photograph of Nellie Magee, Temba Grootboom's mother, in happier circumstances. She collapsed in the witness box after aggressive cross-questioning tactics were used on her at Temba's inquest.

aggressive manner and who is representing the municipal police. And they have to stand there and actually say to him that what he is suggesting is not so and might in fact even be a lie. The tragedy and crime of apartheid is shown in a scene like this:

The white attorney, who calls the witnesses by their first names, and mocks (or plays with) the way they express themselves in a second language. And the black witnesses having to deal with their conditioning.

The inquest ended on the second day abruptly with Nellie Magee (Temba's elderly mother) collapsing in the witness box after Mr Jooste had used the same aggressive cross-questioning tactics on her. He showed no compassion or recognition for her as the mother of the deceased who was very obviously tense and agitated. When she said she was 'deurmekaar' after seeing her son shot, he said 'Ah, deurmekaar eh!' as if perhaps she was drunk or not really all there. Nellie Magee tried to explain that she meant she was terribly upset by what she had seen, but he wouldn't acknowledge her explanation and kept on and on at her.

When Nellie Magee collapsed I ran across the courtroom and caught her. We sat in the witness box like that. She felt like a little feather.

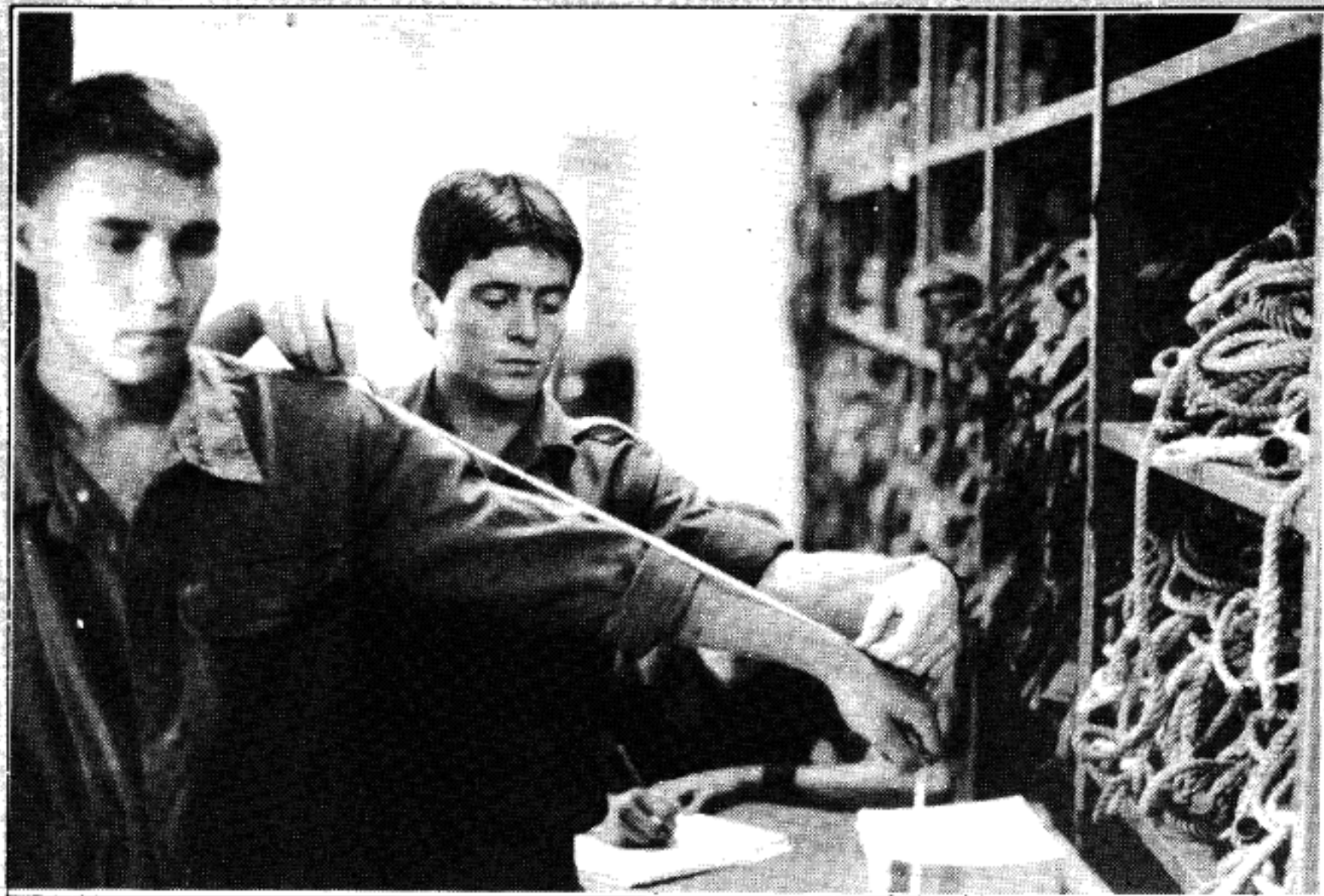
After that Advocate Pillay, acting for Temba's family, asked for an adjournment because Nellie Magee said she didn't feel strong enough to carry on. □



becoming part of the future

Perhaps the greatest challenge South Africans face is to forge a common nationhood out of diverse cultural, ethnic and racial elements.

In this photo-essay we focus on the component of South Africa's nation-in-the-making for whom the risks and insecurities loom largest.



Eric Muller/Alrapix

MEASURING UP

A conscript ponders his future.

SUPPER'S UP

Preparing to serve dinner at the rugby dance in the Boksburg town hall.



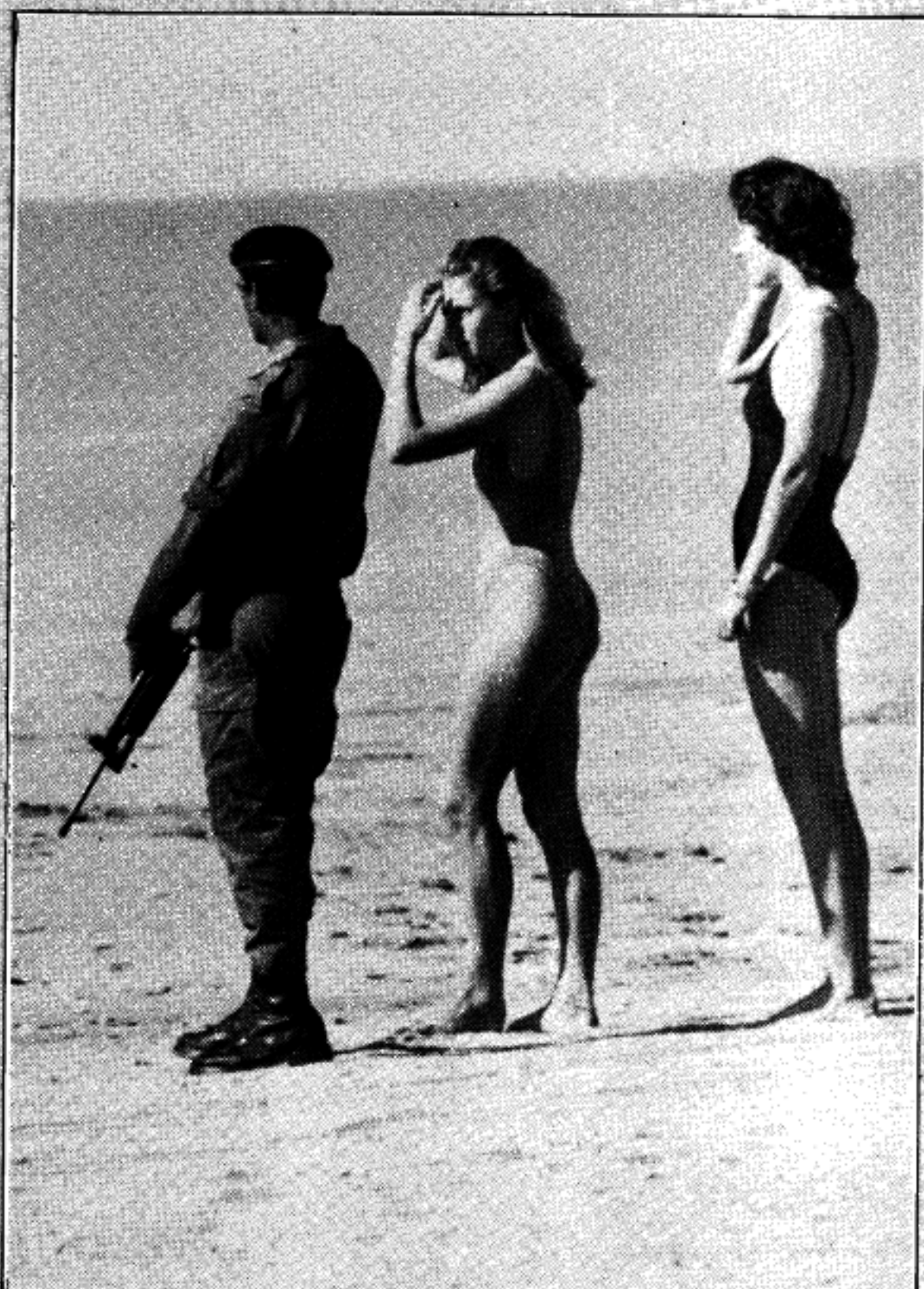
David Goldblatt

WHAT'S UP?

Militarization continues: A scene on a Durban beach during the 75th anniversary of the SADF in July 1987. ▽

PICK ME UP

A traditional South African snapshot - but what does the future hold? ▽



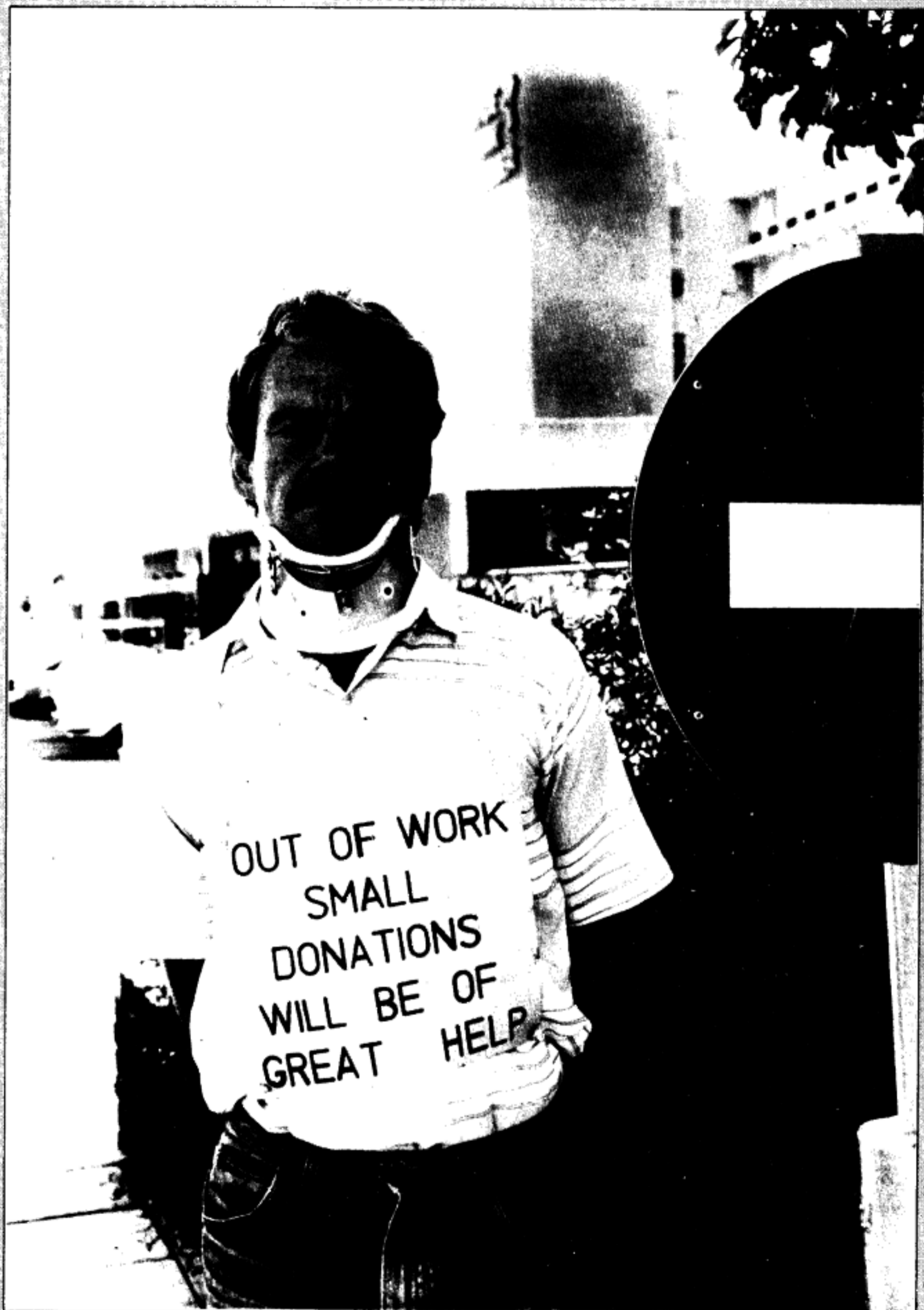
Billy Paddock/Alrapix



Gisele Wulfsohn

OUTSIDE HYDE PARK CENTRE, SANDTON

A statistic becomes human - one of the 3 - 4 million South Africans out of work.



INSIDE HYDE PARK CENTRE

A family luncheon. ▽



Gisele Wulfsohn / Afrapix

BEYOND HYDE PARK CENTRE

An Afrikaans song festival ▽▽



Paul Weinberg / Afrapix

resisting a reign of terror

ronel scheffer

What sort of conditions induce 2 500 people to flee their homes, cross a border and camp under plastic alongside a national road? The Black Sash in the Border Region compiled a dossier to publicise the plight of the people of Potsdam, Ciskei, giving a graphic insight into life under a reign of terror.



The struggle of a small community against a reign of terror in Ciskei continues after their second attempt to flee the homeland and establish themselves in South Africa was thwarted by the combined forces of the two governments in September.

The 2 500-strong shack community of Potsdam near East London has temporarily closed ranks but remains resolved to find a new home in South Africa, from where the people believe they were unlawfully removed in 1983.

Among the options they are considering is an application to the Supreme Court to be reinstated in South Africa.

In February this year the entire community literally walked out of Ciskei and squatted at the roadside on South African territory. Their freedom lasted four weeks. This month only 50 families managed to get out of Ciskei, only to be trucked back to Potsdam again by SA security forces four days later.

The SA government is clearly not eager to create a precedent by tolerating the Potsdam style of resistance and has avoided official comment on the latest flight from Ciskei. The reaction of its ambassador to Ciskei to the first exodus of this community in February must have caused some embarrassment.

Commenting on the roadside group then, Mr Christiaan van Aardt said: 'As far as I'm concerned what they [the refugees] need is a nice damn thunderstorm to wash them back to Ciskei.' He added:

'The whole thing is politically motivated — you just can't have people deciding to leave their country and going to another.'

With seven foreign embassies alerted to the plight of the Potsdam people now, the pressure is mounting for a political decision on the issue by Pretoria.

Shortly before the community started dismantling its shacks at Potsdam this month, it delivered a written appeal to the foreign governments to intervene on its behalf and pressurise the SA government to provide it with a home. The appeal was accompanied by a dossier of background information on brutalities suffered by the community. It was compiled by the Border branch of the Black Sash, which has been concerned about the problems of the people of Potsdam for the past year.

Writing on behalf of the women of Potsdam, Sylvia Ntwanambi told the embassies that the community had been living under a reign of terror in Potsdam since it was forcibly moved there from Blue Rock (the community's original home which now forms part of Ciskei) by the South African government in 1983. (We have published Mrs Ntwanambi's letter in full on page 28.)

The community has always believed Blue Rock, from where they were removed to Potsdam, to be part of South Africa and themselves to be entitled to South African citizenship. They are prepared to live anywhere but in Ciskei.

The violence at Potsdam peaked in August with the killing of a popular community leader, Zola Nozewu. It is said that the alleged killer, a known vigilante, has not been apprehended by Ciskei police and that he is openly circulating in the community. (See 'Working at the Outposts,' page 47, for an account of official harassment, that continued at Nozewu's funeral.)

The dossier compiled by the Black Sash includes several accounts of gruesome violence residents claim they have suffered at the hands of the Ciskei police and the vigilantes in particular. The two groups work hand in hand, they say. We have published two of the many accounts here.

One comes from a 30-year-old woman, Vuyiswa Feni, who tells how she was subjected to an unprovoked attack by vigilantes and policemen wearing balaclavas and long coats over their green uniforms. She was waiting for a bus at a bus stop in neighbouring Mdantsane at the time.

The second is an extract from an affidavit by Velile Dasi, a 34-year-old man accused of being a 'comrade' and brutally harassed by police and vigilantes.

Potsdam residents have given up hope that reporting the continual incidents of assault to the Ciskei authorities will produce results. Despite claims to the contrary, Ciskei's Director-General of Foreign Affairs and Information, Mr Headman Somtumzi, insists that residents have never laid

THE POTSDAM STORY

charges with the police, who, he said, would act on 'substantial evidence of attacks'.

It appears that there might have been some pressure behind the scenes on Ciskei to deal with the vigilantes. When the residents fled earlier this month SA policemen told them that they would 'sort out' their problems if they returned to Ciskei. The day after the SA police trucked the refugees back to Potsdam a number of vigilantes were arrested in Ciskei. However, they were released the following day and attacks resumed almost immediately.

The community claims that the victimisation started in 1983, shortly after Ciskei forcibly removed them from Blue Rock to a vacant site adjacent to an existing community in formal housing at Potsdam. Some residents claim that they had lived in Blue Rock all their lives.

In 1982 a South African health inspector, believing Blue Rock to be in his area, condemned the camp. And Ciskei authorities, who believed the area fell under their rule, subsequently announced that the squatters would be given new homes in nearby Mdantsane. That promise has never materialised.

Spokesmen for the group say they have always been treated as

outsiders and have been singled out for harassment. They believe it is a direct result of their refusal to join the ruling Ciskei National Independence Party.

Speaking of the indiscriminate beatings and raids, a spokesman said 'the police threatened to kill everyone here because they say we are stubborn, we won't follow the Ciskei government'.

In June this year an out-of-court settlement was reached following an urgent interdict to prevent police from assaulting a Potsdam detainee.

Residents say detentions and arrests normally follow when they refuse to pay a R10 development tax demanded by the police. Some people's pensions have apparently also been docked for this reason. But residents also claim that payment of the tax was no protection anyway, as many were also arrested on 'political charges'.

The February walkout came when harassment culminated in the police setting up a temporary camp in the Potsdam tribal authority building and carrying out a series of raids from this base. Before the refugees were forcibly returned to Potsdam in a military operation by the South African forces, they received assurances that the harassment would cease from both South African and Ciskeian authorities.

However, reprisals intensified on their return in March. The refugees were shunned by many of the 'permanent' Potsdam residents, children were refused admission to schools and sick people were turned away from clinics in the homeland.

Headman Somtumzi confirmed that 300 people had been arrested and later appeared on charges of failing to pay tax. He denied the assaults and said that if people objected to police activities this was 'an indirect defiance of law and order'.

The Potsdam community does not have any formal organisation but it appears to be a closely knit group with a high level of organisation and determination despite years of repression. For the latest move it collected enough money to hire two trucks and on 2 September the first families off-loaded their possessions on a site on SA territory a stone's throw from their previous home at Blue Rock.

Their limited resources made the move a slow process though and by 4 September only some 30 families had arrived at the site. The move was closely monitored by SA security police but the refugees were allowed through until trucks were returned to Potsdam by a police roadblock in Ciskei later that day.

The following morning the SA police arrived at the site with dogs and ordered the refugees onto trucks. They were taken back to Potsdam where they were dumped along with their belongings in a central place.

Within hours of their return, the community was feeling the anger of the vigilantes, known as 'Inkatha', from whom they had tried to flee. Vigilantes moved from house to house taunting the people about their abortive flight to South Africa. At least two members of the community ended up in hospital after attacks — a teenage boy with two broken legs and a young man with head injuries. But residents insist they will not rebuild their homes in Potsdam.

'We are still waiting for a right place to stay in South Africa,' said one. □

Potsdam residents load up their belongings for the second time to flee Ciskei.



The women of Potsdam write to foreign embassies

We are living under a reign of terror in Potsdam ever since we arrived in 1983. We were taken from Blue Rock in South Africa, being told we would be given houses in Mdantsane, but we were taken to Potsdam and have been beaten ever since we arrived.

Our husbands have been in hiding for the past five months and we are staying alone with our children. Our children are growing up frightened of the police and vigilantes who are always questioning our children about their fathers. When the children do not reply to the questions they are beaten. Even children of 10 years old have been beaten.

When we came to Potsdam we had jobs and TV sets and radios, but now our husbands have lost their jobs because they are always being detained and arrested and beaten up and the police have taken away our possessions. When we came from Blue Rock we had no wounds on our bodies but now some of us are crippled.

When the old people draw their pensions the headman takes R10 tax. We do not know what he does with the tax because we get no receipts. When one old lady refused to pay the R10 they cancelled her pension and she has not been paid for over a year now.

We want you to talk to the South African government and ask them for a residential place for us in South Africa. We are like doves we came to Potsdam with more children than we have now and we need your help.

Yours sincerely,

Sylvia Ntshwanamba
on behalf of

WOMEN OF POTSDAM

Statement by Vuyiswa Feni

I, Vuyiswa Feni, residing at Potsdam, am 30 years of age. On 14 June 1987 I was assaulted by Ciskei Policemen and other Potsdam residents, known to us as vigilantes. I know these vigilantes by name: Samadoda Mawindo, Khaya, Victor, Monde.

The four Ciskei policemen were wearing balaclavas and long coats. Under the coats they were wearing green uniforms.

At about 9 a.m. I was waiting for a bus at the bus stop at Zone 14 Mdantsane. I was assaulted by Khaya first: he hit me on the right cheek with his hand. I received an eye injury as a result of this assault. Monde also assaulted me on the same cheek. I fell to the ground. While I was on the ground, Khaya stabbed me in the stomach with a large knife with a black handle. One of the policemen kicked my right arm while I was still lying down bleeding. A well-built policeman told them to leave me. He said that they must have killed me.

I was taken by a friend in his car to the Cecilia Makiwane hospital. I was operated on. As a result of the attack my intestines were exposed (hanging out). I was in hospital for five weeks.

I wish to lay a charge against these attackers.

I wish to lay a civil claim.

SIGNATURE:.....
WITNESS:.....
WITNESS:.....

Velile Dasi's affidavit

This is an extract from an affidavit, submitted to the Ciskei Supreme Court by Velile Dasi, 34, who, with other members of the Potsdam community, sought an urgent interdict to restrain the Ciskei police and civilian vigilantes from harassing and assaulting Potsdam residents.

In mid-1985 many Potsdam residents were arrested by the Ciskeian police and were assaulted. I was arrested amongst these many other people and we were all assaulted with either iron objects, pieces of wire and/or sjamboks. As a result of this assault, I received numerous open wounds and serious injuries and I was admitted for medical attention at the Cecilia Makiwane Hospital. Certain of the bones in my back were found to be broken and I received an open wound on the forehead and right temple, and numerous sjambok wounds.

We were held in custody for one week, and thereafter released on bail. The charges were all withdrawn during June 1986. Throughout 1986, regular and arbitrary assaults upon both myself and other members of the Potsdam community persisted. On occasions there would be a break of between one to three weeks before the Ciskeian police would return and recommence assaults; on other occasions there would be no breaks and we would be assaulted every week. On several occasions, Vernon Moto (a Ciskeian policeman) advised me that the Ciskeian police wanted to kill us all.

During the course of 1986 I was personally assaulted on five separate occasions - on the other occasions when the Ciskeian Police indiscriminately assaulted old and young, mostly women and children, I managed to escape by running and hiding from the police. On the

THE POTSDAM STORY

occasions that I was assaulted, I was assaulted with sjamboks and kicked with booted feet. On one occasion the police threatened to shoot me with a firearm ...

This persistent interference, harassment and assaults by the Ciskeian Police became so oppressive and intolerable that, in sheer desperation, a decision was made in February 1987 to leave Potsdam and seek refuge in the Republic of South Africa. This was a last resort, in an effort to put an end to the treatment which the Potsdam residents were experiencing at the hands of the Ciskeian police.

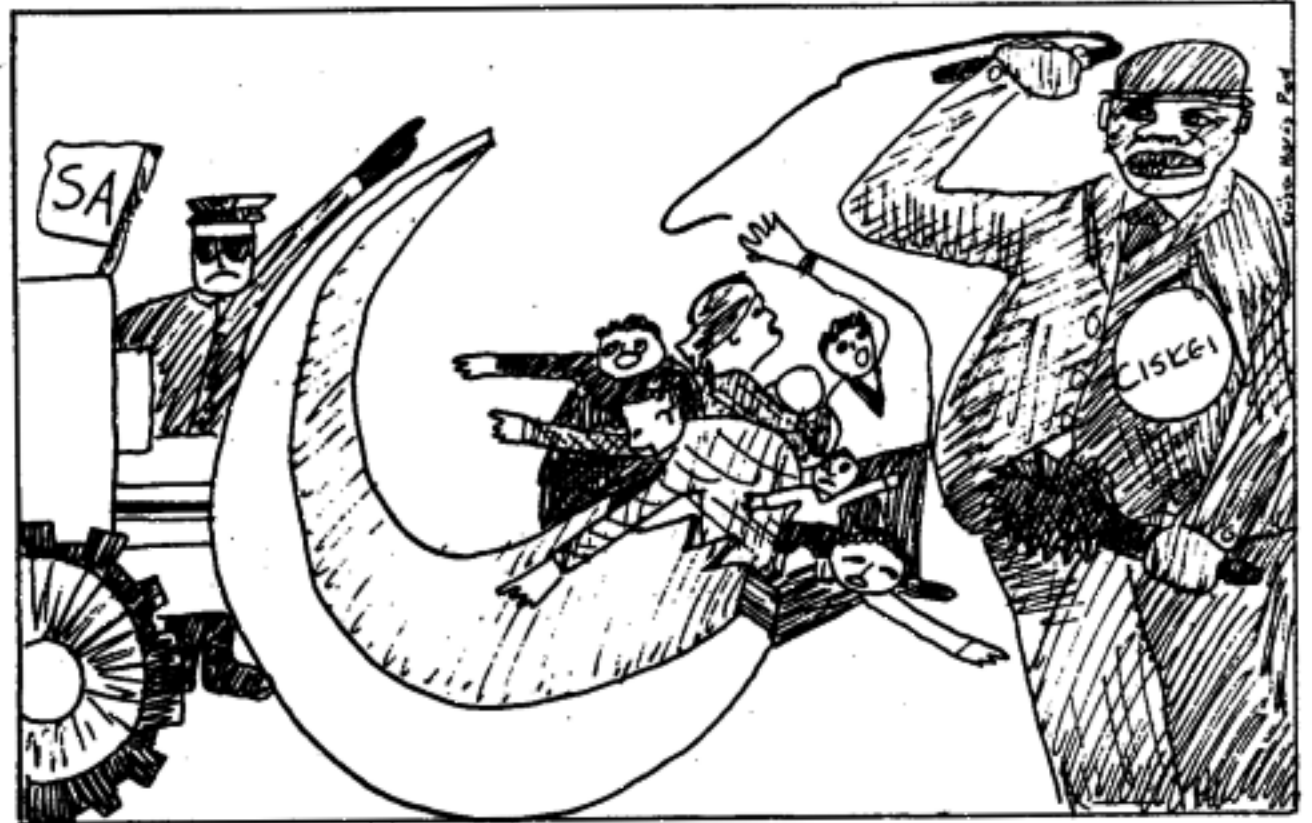
I, together with all the other Potsdam residents, moved in early February 1987 and set up camp on the side of the main King William's Town-East London national road, in the Republic of South Africa ...

At the end of February 1987, we were advised by the South African authorities that we should return to Potsdam, because the Ciskeian authorities had made an undertaking to stop harassing and further assaulting the members of our community.

At approximately the end of February/beginning of March, we were taken back to Potsdam on the strength of this promise.

These indiscriminate assaults by the Ciskeian police on men, women and children recommenced on our return to Potsdam in early March 1987, and have persisted virtually on a daily basis since then until May 1987 when I, together with the other applicants were forced to flee our homes.

Of late there are a group of civilians who have joined with the police in attempting to perpetrate assaults upon [our community]. These civilians have also armed themselves with sticks, bushknives and other dangerous weapons and



Potsdam - between the devil and the deep blue sea.

certain of them have seriously assaulted helpless men, women and children in the presence of, and indeed, with the assistance of, the Ciskeian police, but the Ciskeian police have not taken any action whatsoever in an attempt to prevent assaults by these civilians ...

I and many members of the community have been unable to speak with these civilians as they have moved out of Potsdam itself and spend their time in the company of the police, and sleep at the Tribal Authority offices.

The police and the above-mentioned group of civilians came to my home on three occasions in May 1987 ...

On the first and second visits to my home during May 1987, the police merely said they were looking for me. Then on Friday 22 May 1987 a group of the aforesaid civilians who are working with the police came to me and told me directly that they wanted to kill me. [They] alleged that I was a "comrade". ...

On the evening of Thursday 28/Friday 29 May my house was totally destroyed by the police and this group of civilians. This occurred at approximately 22h00 and I was at home at the time. I ran into the darkness when the people arrived and saw them destroy my

house completely by breaking it down. There were certain personal possessions of mine inside the house, but the furniture was chopped to pieces by the crowd and my clothing was taken and vandalised. All this happened in the presence of the Ciskeian police who did nothing to stop these unlawful actions. My wife was ordered out of the house and Khaya Melani (one of the vigilantes) said: "We want Dasi, we want to eat his liver."

I have been forced to seek refuge in the bushes, but am desirous of returning to Potsdam to continue with my normal life. Because the Ciskeian police have not taken any steps to enforce law and order and even associate themselves with the other civilians who have been threatening us and destroying our property, I am unable to return to my wife to rebuild my home.

VELILE DASI

VELILE DASI

M. J. Ramani

COMMISSIONER OF OATHS

MAHEN KUMAR

MANSUKLAL RAMA JERAM

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forging a future for our children

mignonne breier



Free to be ...

The 'Free to be' symposium on early childhood education, held at the University of Cape Town recently, was a monumental event that thrilled many, astounded a few and is still a major talking topic in pre-school circles.

It brought together for three days more than 2 000 delegates from throughout the country, including

teachers, academics, parents and social, health and community workers. The majority were black.

The result was a vibrant event in which none of the realities of South African life could be avoided.

This was made clear, for example, on the final morning when proceedings came to a halt to make way for an unscheduled, soul-searching play called 'Isegazini' on the plight of domestic workers and the bonds they retain with the white children they raise.

As cast members explored their own experiences with words, dance and music, delegates clapped, cheered, wept, ululated. And when one actor told how she 'f... d off' out of a house where she was given food to eat on a dirty plate and told to eat it in an outside toilet, there was a roar of approval.

There could be no doubt that for the majority of delegates the play struck important chords. It dealt with an area that was touched on in workshops but not examined in depth: the role in early education played by black women who bring

up white children, often on less than a living wage.

For a few, however, the play was literally a bit close to home. One woman complained it 'stirred feelings that should have been left alone'. A few were irritated by the way it delayed subsequent workshops. (The piano could not be found just before the start, causing the play to extend beyond the tea-break into which it had been slotted.)

Others queried its relevance at a discussion on pre-primary education.

But then the 'Free to be' symposium was not just about education.

Its workshops covered a vast range of topics from story-telling and puppet-making to drug education and child abuse, from the effects on children of political violence to the role of early education in the political struggle.

Said Jinny Rickards, chairperson of the symposium's planning committee (and a Black Sash member): 'The aim of the symposium was to bring to public attention the fact that pre-school education and child care — I call it *educare* — is an area of great importance but is overlooked and in a state of crisis in this country.

'I did not want it to be an elitist, intellectual exercise. I'm glad it was a huge, circus-like event. I have been to many political rallies. It was the only rally that was a genuine microcosm of South Africa.'

It was an underlying irony of the symposium that the bulk of the delegates represented that section of South Africa's population with the least facilities and money for early education.

According to figures from the Early Learning Resource Unit (ELRU), given at a workshop at the conference, only 130 000 — about two percent — of the five million-odd black children of pre-school age in this country have a hope of a place in a pre-school.

Speakers exhorted delegates not to depend on the state to meet the crying need but to mobilise communities into taking responsibility themselves. Various suggestions were offered including:

- Childminding schemes in which groups of childminders are guided by supervisors and

committees that allow for parent participation.

- Home-based education programmes whereby parents — many of them at home with their children because they cannot find work and cannot afford crèche fees — are trained to teach their own pre-school children and make their own

Speakers emphasised the importance of parental involvement in pre-school education as a means to raise parents' own educational levels, boost their confidence and involve them in the broader liberation struggle, as they rise to meet the challenges of day-to-day problems.

They also looked ahead to a new non-racial South Africa and its needs. Educationist Neville Alexander told delegates about the Vumani Pre-School Project which he described as 'a call on all our children and people to sing together with one voice'. He said the project tries to bring together, in workshops, teachers and parents from various pre-schools to develop pre-school curricula that will prepare children for a non-racial democratic South Africa.

The project believes a common core of metaphors should be accessible to all in post-apartheid South Africa, he said. If all children learned the same stories, songs, proverbs and nursery rhymes, regardless of language, then in the long run communication between people of different language groups should be facilitated, using English, or another common language as the *lingua franca*.

In a point made at the final session, Brother Neil McGurk, headmaster of Sacred Heart College, Johannesburg, spoke of the way in which whites were having to change in this country and said the transformation was painful.

'For some of the whites who attended the symposium it was a transformational experience to be in that set-up,' Jinny Richards said.

Others, like the Black Sash members who attended, marvelled at the goodwill, friendliness and hope that prevailed throughout the three days and simply revelled in the experience. □

transforming a life

lesley greensmith

It began on 15 May 1986 — a particularly miserable, cold day at the Port Elizabeth advice office. There was nothing much we could do for the majority of the hungry and depressed people desperately needing work.

Towards the end of the morning, Mellisango Johnson, aged 38, came in. Through an interpreter he told me he was angry and bitter he had been released from prison 13 days earlier after serving a two-year sentence for a crime he did not commit.

During his time in prison he had lost his job and his home and was now totally destitute, without food, shelter or even sufficient clothes to keep warm. Mr Johnson had been convicted of culpable homicide. At his trial he had had no legal representation and was sentenced to four years' imprisonment. He was unable to read and write and was very depressed. As he was not very articulate he was not able to tell me what he wanted me to do, or how I could help him. His immediate need was food, so the first thing I did was to ask a local church to supply him with a food parcel. All I could get out of Mr Johnson was that he was angry. 'I didn't do it!' kept coming through.

Wanting to show him that I sympathised, but really feeling there was nothing to be done, I phoned a sympathetic advocate at the Legal Resources Centre.

Jeremy Pickering listened to the story and like me was sympathetic but pessimistic. However, despite a busy schedule Jeremy asked me to send Mr Johnson over and he would see him out of compassion and in an attempt to explain the situation to him.

The case went out of my mind, as I was caught up with other problems. A few weeks later I received a call from a jubilant Jeremy telling me that he had a case — as it turned out, a very good

case indeed. Upon investigation Jeremy had found out that while Mr Johnson was in prison he had lodged a 'jail appeal' and had been granted leave to appeal by a Supreme Court judge. This jail appeal came before the Supreme Court on 18 May 1984; it was upheld and the conviction and sentence were set aside on that day. But the court decision was not acted upon and Mellisango Johnson was kept in prison for a further two years!

In a letter to the Minister of Justice claiming R150 000 damages, the Legal Resources Centre said that despite Mr Johnson's being entitled to release from prison immediately, he was held until 2 May 1986 — two years later. Mr Johnson, being unable to read or write, had asked a fellow prisoner to fill in the forms for his appeal. These were then given to a sergeant at St Albans Prison. He was then told he could appeal but had to get his own attorney. As he was in no position to instruct an attorney and had heard nothing else about his appeal, he presumed the whole thing had fallen through.

At no time during his imprisonment did he hear whether his appeal would be heard, that it had been heard or the outcome.

To cut a long story short — after legal wrangling Mr Johnson decided to accept an offer of compensation of R50 000 in an out-of-court settlement by the Minister of Law and Order. It may have been a fortune for Mellisango Johnson, but debatable whether it was worth several years of his freedom. The Legal Resources Centre arranged that Mr Johnson obtain expert advice on how to invest his money.

A happy ending to a sad story; but is this the tip of the iceberg? However, it is an encouraging case for all advice office workers.

Just keep trying, sometimes it pays off — handsomely. □

living without a home



*The homeless
assemble
their shelters*

As the international year of shelter for the homeless draws to a close, Josie Adler, Merle Beetge and Glenda Glover focus on the dimensions of the problem in South Africa.

The issue of homelessness in South Africa requires some understanding of the interaction between political ideology and economic forces. Until the late 1970s, political ideologists believed that the apartheid policy would remove all 'permanent blacks' from 'white' South Africa. Consequently only accommodation for labourers (who were intended to be 'temporary sojourners') was provided in the form of hostels. All blacks were supposed to find permanent homes in the 13 percent of the land allocated to the 'homelands' in terms of the Land Acts. Despite the fact that the policy was steadily failing, the freeze on black housing in 'white' South Africa was maintained. Chris Heunis, Minister of Constitutional Development and Planning, recently reported to parliament that a backlog of approximately 342 000 units, outside of the homelands, would not be eradicated within less than 20 years. The South African Institute of Race Relations talks of a shortage in excess of 574 000 units. A great proportion of these people are homeless — and most are *not* recent arrivals in the urban areas.

However, the problem of homelessness has also been accentuated by the demise of the pass laws, as rural people, taking advantage of their regained freedom of movement, begin to move to urban areas. There they find themselves in the same position as hundreds of thousands of others, without the right to occupy land or erect a dwelling close to potential sources of employment. The Land Acts, the Group Areas Act and trespass laws prohibit them from occupying most land in and around urban areas. If they manage to find an unoccupied corner on which to erect a shack in an overcrowded urban township, they can be evicted under a host of other laws and regulations designed to combat overcrowding, health hazards and other 'undesirable' conditions.

Homeless people are often termed 'squatters'. Many live 'illegally'. They may be Africans living in backyards of properties in white, Indian and 'coloured' residential areas; in shacks in black urban areas; on public land; in rented properties in 'grey' areas such as Hillbrow, Yeoville and Mayfair; on church and mine properties; on agricultural land; on small holdings on the peripheries of the urban areas; and on undeveloped land designated for residential occupation by 'other

groups'.

Many people become squatters on the fringe of the city to retain their city jobs and live with their families in their own homes. Authorities can and do demolish these homes and arrest the occupants for squatting. There is nothing in the law to compel the authorities to provide homeless people with an alternative site or dwelling before demolishing their shacks.

This article focuses mainly on the homeless living in the Witwatersrand area, where until the mid-1970s there were many white-owned farms and smallholdings. The labourers living on these farms bore children and earned residence rights to remain there. Today, there are squatter families who claim to have been there for three generations.

Farming ceased on this land when large sections of it were expropriated for 'coloured' and Indian group areas and the suburban expansion of Johannesburg.

Many ex-farm families who remained on the land, or were pushed out to neighbouring farms by encroaching suburban development, formed the basis of developing squatter settlements. Their numbers grew as they were joined by people leaving established townships, such as Soweto, because of the chronic housing shortage, in search of places to erect their homes. We found a man in one of these settlements who had been on the waiting list for a township house for 22 years. This situation is exacerbated by official building regulations which promote unrealistically high standards at prohibitive cost.

The homeless on the Witwatersrand (and elsewhere in the country) also include pensioners, either men who are too old to be of use to a farmer, or widows of farm labourers, or retired urban workers squeezed out of the growing city, lacking traditional family care or adequate institutional support. There are also the 'migrant widows' who have been deserted by their menfolk, and have come to look for their men or earn money.

Recently a survey was conducted amongst breadwinners and household heads at a 'squatter' settlement known as Weilers Farm, consisting of 6 000 - 8 000 people living on white agricultural land south of Johannesburg. The farm was recently expropriated in response to pressures to remove the homeless from the area.

Two-thirds of those interviewed were men.

The research made it possible to construct a portrait of the average homeless family in the area.

Over 90 percent were not new arrivals on the Witwatersrand, having lived elsewhere in the PWV (Pretoria/Witwatersrand/Vereeniging) area before moving to Weilers Farm. Three-quarters reported residence in the PWV area for 15 or more years, during which they worked and, usually, had their families with them. The greatest proportion of households had an income of between R101 and R300 per month, 10 percent had no income and 20 percent had less than R100 per month. At the other end of the spectrum more than 25 percent had an income of R300 per month and more. Half of the household heads worked in what they classified as formal employment. A further 7 percent said they did informal work and 6 percent found piece jobs. The unemployed accounted for 17 percent and 1 percent were looking for work. A further 20 percent were pensioners.

Their overriding problem is the need to obtain legal accommodation. The illegality of their residence means that they do not exist as far as social planners and services are concerned. Other problems flow from this:

Access and availability of water: Sites where squatters are located seldom have a water supply, so water has to be stolen or bought and occasionally water is collected from streams. All these sources — which are unreliable and sometimes contaminated — involve carrying water some distance.

Education: Entry into schools poses difficulties. Where children are accepted there are often long distances involved and no formal transport facilities.

Health care: Some state services are available and homeless people do have access to them. The visits of health officials to squatter sites have not resulted in water provision or other services.

Welfare agencies and other organisations: These bodies may have bona fide motives for their intervention and may provide much needed resources and services. The consequences, however, can be dependency and even conflict over scarce resources.

Emergency services: Obtaining police, ambulance and fire brigade assistance creates difficulties as these services are strictly not available to communities living illegally. Asking for police assistance in combating crime draws attention to their illegal situation.

Higher costs: Cost of transport to work and to find work are high. For example: a woman who earns R30 a week as a machinist in town, pays R11.20 for her weekly bus ticket. The overall cost of their requirements, food, clothing, fuel are all higher because of their distance from major shopping centres

where commodities are cheaper. Water costs between 50c and R1 for 20 or 25 litres.

Licensing regulations: These make it impossible for people to get the necessary permits to earn a living by starting an informal business in their homes. People who set up shops in their houses, and thereby not only earn income for themselves but provide supply-points in the community, are harassed, sometimes charged, and their stock is confiscated.

For the most part, homeless people are seen by the authorities as a problem to be disposed of. So the police and sometimes the army are deployed to demolish shacks and arrest the occupants, who are often prosecuted under tightened legislation to control squatting and trespass. If they are not legally represented, which applies in virtually all instances, they are processed through the legal system and convicted. They cannot avoid being on the wrong side of the law, because whenever they are in their homes, they are existing illegally.

The controls on the settlement of homeless people are being applied in various forms. Action is taken against landowners, their tenants or both. Sometimes the owners are put under pressure to act against squatters. Sometimes they act voluntarily. When homeless people settle on public land, the authorities take direct action.

One way or another, the consequences for the homeless are much the same: they either hang in where they are and re-erect their homes, or find a similar place where they feel they may survive for a while.

Most squatter settlements are merely dispersed. One of the exceptions is Weilers Farm, partially because of the attention this settlement has aroused. The people are now scheduled for removal (as opposed to dispersal) to the Sebokeng/Evaton area. This is the only additional land in that area that is being released for black occupation.

But this will not be the end of their problems. It is questionable whether the sites will be affordable to people with an average income of between R101 and R300 per month for a household of six. Will pensioners be offered sites at prices they can afford? Will those who are either self-employed or working in the formal sector be able to continue their work?

The homeless may have freedom to move. What they require is the freedom to stop moving and settle down. The new 'orderly urbanisation' process is failing dramatically in providing this right. The continued existence of the Land Acts, the Group Areas Act, and the countless other laws and regulations that prevent people from erecting affordable dwellings in areas where they can earn a living will achieve only an acute exacerbation of the existing problem. □

perseverance pays

joyce harris

The struggle of the Mogopa people is not yet over. But during the past three years they have shown what can be achieved by organised and sustained resistance.



Bethanie, Bophuthatswana. September 1987. A member of the Mogopa community, which was forcibly removed in 1985, waits to be transported by state trucks to Onderstepoort, near Sun City - the second move in three years.

Paul Weinberg / Afrapix

In the early hours of 14 February 1984, government officials executed what they thought would be just another removal of a 'surplus people'.

Defying international opinion and local resistance, they forcibly moved the people of Mogopa from the land they owned, and trucked them to Pachsdraai, scheduled for incorporation into Bophuthatswana.

Three and a half years later, in September 1987, a committee representing the Mogopa community met Gerrit Viljoen, Minister of Development Aid, and after four hours of face-to-face negotiations, secured a landmark compensation settlement.

In terms of the settlement, the government has undertaken to purchase land that the Mogopa

people will hold in freehold title. They have been given the assurance that they will not be incorporated into a homeland and that they will retain their South African citizenship.

The community is now waiting temporarily at a site near Onderstepoort for the implementation of the undertaking that will, if deeds match words, effectively negate much of what the government intended to achieve by their removal.

What happened in the intervening three years that brought the government to accept that it could not force the Mogopa people out of South Africa?

A look at the events shows that the key element was a dogged and determined resistance by a community that refused to give up

in the face of official coercion and breathtaking cynicism. What is strikingly apparent, looking back, is that the only party guilty of illegal and violent action was the government.

The illegal action was the removal of the Mogopa in the first place, according to an Appellate Division judgement handed down in September 1985. But by that time it was too late. The government had already expropriated the land.

State violence began even before the removal. While the tribe was still attempting to avert the removal through negotiation and appeals, the Department of Co-operation and Development was busy demolishing the schools, churches and the medical clinic the people had built. The authorities terminated the bus service to

Ventersdorp, removed the water pumps and refused to pay out pensions or assist in the application for 'reference' books.

The removal has been described by the Mogopa themselves:

'It was around 3 a.m. on 14 February 1984, when we suddenly hear a terrible noise ... A loud-speaker saying Bakwena be not afraid as we are the SA Police and we are here to protect you from your enemies ... We were shocked to hear our doors being kicked through ... They said we are here to take you to Pachsdraai as you don't want to go there ... pushing people forcefully into waiting trucks and buses. Those who refuse were beaten with batons ... People's belongings were left behind ... All livestock were left behind ... Most families were removed in this forceful manner ... Mr George Rampou was pushed in police van whilst handcuffed ... the tribe suffered a great deal of loss including furniture, livestock etc. Cattle were sold at a loss, eg R50 each and sheep at R10 each.'

Thus were the people loaded onto trucks and dumped at Pachsdraai. Refusing to remain, they fled to Bethanie, the home of their paramount chief. And in the months that followed, a once proud and independent tribe was reduced to the level of ragged, hungry squatters living in corrugated iron shelters. They were refused pensions. They were not allowed to meet together. They were not allowed to be in registered employment. The privations they suffered were acute. At a public meeting in August, addressed by a Mogopa spokesman, a sample of their drinking water was displayed in a cooldrink bottle. It was a dirty grey and speckled with floating particles.

During their stay at Bethanie, the government actually offered them alternative land, but the Mogopa turned it down as they could not accept the attendant conditions: they would not have had freehold title or security of tenure and they would have had to accept incorporation into Bophuthatswana.

Conditions at Bethanie continued to deteriorate steadily and the people began to talk about returning to their land, despite the grave risks involved. Supporters



Paul Weinberg/Alrapix

One of many meetings at Mogopa to resist the impending removal.

tried to dissuade the community from embarking on a 'suicide mission', but their resolve was growing. During this period, three support organisations — the South African Council of Churches, the Black Sash's Transvaal Rural Action Committee and the Environmental Development Agency — began to investigate the possibility of securing other land near the original farms on which the people could safely settle. By this time the Mogopa had united with the Machavie people, who lost their own farms in 1971 and have been living 'temporarily' in Rooigrond for the past 16 years.

Finally a farm called Holgat, belonging to the Hermannsburg mission and classified for occupation by black people, was located and the purchase price of R2,8-million was raised. The deed of sale was signed and the money transferred. The Mogopa and Machavie people agreed that they would live there, together with the people already living on the farm. They had held two workshops to discuss its running and organisation.

All that remained was for the farm to be registered in the name of the new owner, the Botshabelo Trust, which had been formed to control the monies raised.

The Mogopa people had entered into the Botshabelo/Holgat project reluctantly, not as an alternative to returning to Mogopa, but as a fall-back position in case their plans did not succeed. But as the prospect of

a decent and independent life started to materialise, their spirits and enthusiasm rose.

They had reached decisions about housing, water, committees, migrant workers, the allocation of work and who should be allowed to live on the farm. The process was almost complete and a secure future was at last within their grasp.

At that late date, the government suddenly whipped the ground from under their feet by expropriating the farm, stating the land was 'urgently required' to set up a black agricultural college. A TRAC statement, underlining the inhumanity and cynicism of the government's action, pointed out that the farm had been on the market for years. 'It is apparent that the real reason for the expropriation is to satisfy the interests of the local white farmers,' TRAC said. Lucas Kgatitsoe, a member of the Mogopa tribe, said that the expropriation of Holgat, their last place of refuge, hurt the people more than can be imagined. They were peaceful people who had had their land removed. None of their efforts had been to any avail, he said.

Having tried every other option, the people resolved to move back to their land, and many organisations and individuals, who had till then attempted to dissuade them, declared their intention to support their defiance actively despite the great risks. A date was set, and arrangements were well advanced for the move, scheduled for early September.

At the eleventh hour Viljoen called a meeting with the Mogopa committee and agreed to the compromise that averted potential disaster.

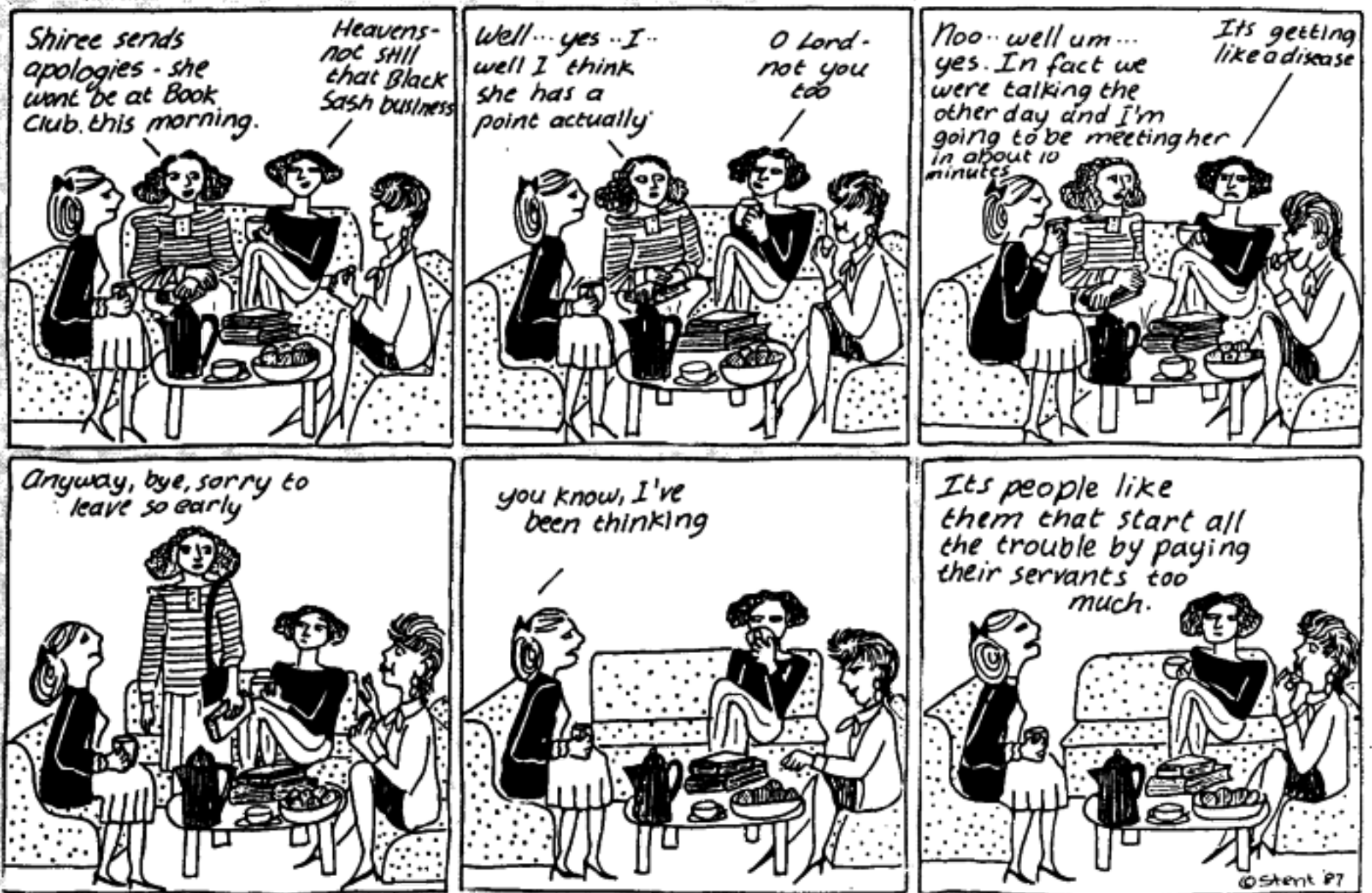
But the people are not yet confident that the issue will be resolved. They have been disappointed and betrayed too often before. And they have not yet abandoned the hope that they may still be able to return to Mogopa. The months ahead will tell.

The Mogopa saga will go down in history as an apartheid classic — and as proof that organised resistance can achieve results. □

● **STOP PRESS:** The Mogopa committee had another meeting with Viljoen on 28 November, at which their hopes of returning to Mogopa were dashed.

WHO'S LEFT?

by Stent



Weekly Mail, 2 July 1987

a tribute to the pioneers



A Black Sash protest, in 1957, on the East London beach front.

The Black Sash of today owes an inestimable debt of gratitude to its pioneers, who with great courage and foresight created a political home for hundreds of like-minded women to work together for justice and democracy. The articles on the following pages are the first in a series dedicated to our pathbreakers. Some have written their own inimitable accounts of the early yers, capturing the issues of the day and the character of the Black Sash then. Other members have been briefly profiled. We salute you all.

Hilda Wood

living history and future hope

marjorie shingler



What excitement as East Londoners, waving Union Jacks, gathered on the Market Square. There was ginger beer, buns and a medal for each child. It was 31 May 1910, and I'd just turned four — my earliest recollection. It was Union Day, when there was going to be 'one country'. I had no understanding then that the cost of Boer/Brit unity was an agreement not to extend the franchise rights of black South Africans.

Our father, Philip Wills Shingler, grandson of an English 1820 Settler and an English father, was deeply involved in public affairs so as a family from early childhood we attended political meetings in the East London and Cambridge town halls. Later in our teens John, Dorothy and Marjorie (known as J, D and M) became interested in national issues and always shared the same views and principles.

After finishing high school in East London, I worked in an office for eight years. In this period D and I were keen members of the Young Women's Christian Temperance Union — a worldwide body to combat alcohol and drug abuse, advocating women's franchise and pacifism and other forms of community welfare.

Abroad

In 1930 J and I set sail for a holiday in Britain and the Continent. Winning a £250 competition (a small fortune then) enabled me to extend my travels to Canada and New York. This glittering and rather overpowering metropolis — so different from ancient London — was a stimulating experience.

Passing through Harlem one

was saddened by the overcrowded tenements and obvious poverty of its black inhabitants. I had not then seen our South African black townships. That lay in the future.

Lovedale

A new epoch in my life dawned when in 1932 I went to Lovedale Missionary Institution as the Principal's Secretary. As an ordinary white South African whose previous black contacts were limited to domestics and messengers, I was now in the Mecca of black education, pioneer of academic and industrial training and nursing. Founded in 1841 by Scottish Church missionaries, it attracted thousands of students from the huts of Ciskei, Transkei, other South African villages and cities as well as East, Central and West Africa. Later 'coloured' and Indian students joined the black boys and girls — a challenging amalgam. The staff was a happy blend of foreigners and South Africans of all ages. Many sporting, cultural and religious activities promoted the development of the whole person.

Many Old Lovedalians made their mark as community leaders seeking to improve the lot of their people, but alas some, branded as 'agitators', were imprisoned or detained. As a Former Students' Reunion I remember a prominent Trade Union leader, in reply to an old teacher's chaffing remark: 'You didn't learn that at Lovedale', saying 'No, Sir, but you taught us to think.'

Those golden years at Lovedale gave me an insight into the minds,

aspirations and hearts of those who longed for a full free life, denied them by their skin colour.

Tragically Lovedale and other leading missionary institutions, some years ago, were closed and their special contributions were lost. Recent good news is that Lovedale will be rejuvenated and equipped as a Teachers' Training College.

Political involvement

Leaving Lovedale with great sadness in 1947 I returned to East London to be with my elderly mother and D. My new employer was active in public work and was especially concerned with racial problems. Knowing my sympathies, he soon enlisted my help as Secretary of the Civil Rights League, then the Treason Trial Defence and Aid Fund. When after four years all were acquitted, we had to help the detainees and their families.

D and I joined the Liberal Party, welcoming contacts with all races in our home, a venue for meetings. The Black Sash also claimed our allegiance and we took part in protest stands in front of the City Hall. On one occasion I noticed a black man who, as he walked on the deserted pavement past us, quietly raised his hat in silent tribute.

Whilst our family were South Africans who happily accepted black people as our fellow human beings, my dear English-born mother shrank from contact with 'black hands.' One day I mentioned that I'd invited Miss Minnie Soga, the well-known Red Cross worker and a friend, to tea. Whereupon mother said 'Then I'll remain in my

A TRIBUTE TO THE PIONEERS

room.' However, she was in the lounge when they arrived and had an entertaining time hearing of overseas travels. As mother shook hands with them and thanked them for coming, I was happy to hear her invite them to come again! If only all could have such contacts, how much happier we would be.

London — Anti-Apartheid

D and I worked in London in 1953/4 and on retiring in 1961 we returned to spend a few months there. Following another trip to the Continent we started work in London and stayed 12 years, loving every minute of that fascinating city and seeing all that we could of it, an endless delight.

A friend asked us to help in the newly formed Anti-Apartheid movement, so after work every Tuesday we went to the office where we met many South African and English members.

When 'coloureds' were to be removed from the common voters roll. D and I, wearing our black sashes, stood in a protest group on the pavement facing South Africa House. A West Indian BBC singing star, Nadia Catousse, was our neighbour and when an irate Rhodesian abused her for wasting time, Nadia replied that she could think of no better way to spend it.

Rallies at Trafalgar Square were memorable as we mingled with up to 50 000 marchers from Hyde Park through the streets of London to hear protests against some actions of the SA government, sometimes standing in falling snow. The processions were usually escorted by good natured policemen and we personally never saw any disorderly behaviour or violence then. An unforgettable experience was a rapt congregation in a packed St Paul's Cathedral listening to the spell-binding American civil rights campaigner, Martin Luther King Jnr tell of their non-violent crusade for human rights and abolition of colour discrimination. Still ringing in my ears is his closing message 'Either we live together as brothers or die together as fools.' Some months later the first woman to

speak in St Paul's Cathedral, his equally dedicated and gifted widow, Coretta, brought the same message.

What struck us as South Africans was the freedom of speech at public meetings and in the open. Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park was one of London's most popular spots not only for the British, but a 'must' for all tourist. The media too had few curbs while BBC television was the mouthpiece of all shades of opinion on public issues. This was especially evident before a general election when all parties had their say. We were sometimes surprised and shocked at the views of political extremists, but realised it was essential for the public to know what they were thinking and planning. After a while strong ideological differences began to emerge in the Anti-Apartheid Movement and although we shared a mutual goal to end apartheid we differed in other aims. So D and I ended our connection with the organisation.

Other action

Where we lived in North West London had become a 'black' area because of a large West Indian and African influx. The English residents — conservative and wary of foreigners — found the 'blacks' very different and resented the overcrowding due to housing shortages. As members of the local Methodist Church and as South Africans happy to be with darker people, we welcomed them into our home. Many West Indians had been devout Christians back home and so we helped to integrate them gradually — from the back pews — into the full life of the church community where many are now valued leaders. This was our contribution to English Anti-Apartheid!

During our London stay our home was open to many South Africans and people from over 20 different countries. These contacts were an educative and enriching experience for us, while they appreciated the hospitality of an

'English home' which we pointed out was, in fact, a South African home.

Home again

We were both nearing our allotted span and brother John wrote 'As we grew up together, let us end our days together.' Dorothy had her passport, but South Africa House had refused to renew mine on expiry, of course refusing to give a reason! However, they issued a temporary document as I 'claimed to be a SA citizen' and we returned home safely in May 1973.

After an absence of 12 years many changes and developments were noticeable in residential and industrial expansion. It was good to see well-dressed urban people, indicative of their higher incomes, and black faces behind counters and in offices. Black Consciousness shone in youth's face — no longer for them their elders' subservience. We welcomed the good and grieved over the bad, and prayed for a just, united land.

Back to be beginning

Eighty-one years ago I was born at Highgate, Cambridge, East London. Time's clock has moved full circle and I'm now resident at Fairlands Home, Cambridge. Here one follows with keen interest the unfolding of the future of our beloved land. In spite of Anno Domini, in the recent general election I was happy to give the Progressive Federal Party a little help and am an active Toc H member — and I am, of course, still a very interested member of the Black Sash.

Among our nursing staff is the grand-daughter of Nellie Mlumbi, who 50 years ago, I'd known at Lovedale when she came each term to pay the fees of her seven sons and two daughters. Barefoot, illiterate and unable to speak a word of English, she had a magnificent obsession to educate all her children. Seven became teachers and her grand-daughter's strong arm and kindly heart supports many a frail, white resident. There is hope for South Africa.

□

great going, hilda

jean daphne



Rob Mellin/Daily Dispatch

Can we in Border Branch claim to have the oldest Black Sash member?

We visited Mrs Hilda Mary Wood (nee Parker) in her charming Kennersley Park cottage and found it hard to believe she was born in 1889 – on 4 November in Nottingham, England. Immaculately dressed in a blue woollen suit and with dark hair and patrician features, she gives no hint of her 97 years. (By the time the magazine appears she will be 98.) Her mind is still as bright as that of the young woman recruited in 1913 by the Church of Scotland to work at Lovedale College as a missionary and teacher. The Walmer Castle brought her to East London where passengers were lowered by basket into a lighter to get ashore. Then she went by train all the way to Alice where, at Lovedale, she received a very warm welcome from

the principal and the large staff, both black and white. That evening at supper in the dining hall she looked down at the sea of girls' faces, all looking, to her, exactly alike, and wondered if she would ever be able to distinguish one from the other!

In the early days her students went to villages on Sundays to take services and Hilda would ride out on horseback to monitor and encourage them. After a time this ended when she was needed to play the organ at Lovedale church, which she did for the remainder of her stay.

Hilda taught at Lovedale until she was 50, returning to Nottingham every year to spend her 10-week annual holiday with her parents. In those days the return voyage by sea (often third class!) was cheaper than staying in an hotel for the holidays. It was a lot of fun

too. She did this trip about 26 times in the Union Castle mailboats and, as in fairy stories, this led to her happy marriage in 1942 to Jack Wood, Staff and Property Manager of Union Castle. She was then aged 52.

A new phase of her life now opened – a complete contrast – in busy, war-time Cape Town. The occasional trip to the UK was now very much first class.

When Jack retired in 1953/54, they moved from Cape Town to the home Hilda had designed in Bonza Bay, and two events that were to play a big part in her life now took place. She became involved with the Black Sash – and Mrs Doris Mavelo, known as Nontsi, came to work for the Woods. Her Xhosa name of Nontsikelelo was adopted, and shortened to the easier Nontsi, when Hilda's younger sister Doris (now aged 94!) came to visit from England. Nontsikelelo means "one who is a blessing" and she is truly well-named. For many years Nontsi has been Hilda's companion and ministering angel and the affection these two women have for each other is beautiful to see.

In those early Black Sash days, there was in the East London branch a Mrs Curry (still very much here) and a Mrs Rice! and it was Mrs Rice who took Mrs Wood to her first meeting at the Curry home. Stands, as now, were held in front of the City Hall and Mrs Wood took part in many. Meetings were held at her home and she has an album of fascinating photographs: of the monthly Sash Bring & Buy on their lawn; of a motorcade of protesting Black Sash members setting off for Cape Town; one taken on the East London beachfront of cars lined up 'to protest against current legislation' – with Hilda's Car, CE 4149 the fourth in the line. That was in June 1957.

Now, thirty years later, the principles and firm belief in justice which inspired Hilda Wood to protest have not changed though she is no longer able to take part in Black Sash activities.

A TRIBUTE TO THE PIONEERS

'voortrekkers' of the transvaal



Left to right:
Dora Hill
Jean Sinclair
Rose Franks
Trude Hemp



joyce harris

This list is by no means all-inclusive. Some members may unwittingly have been left out. If so we apologise. It has not been possible to contact our country members in time to meet the deadline, and for this too we apologise. Some members are untraceable as they have not kept their membership records up to date. Some were contacted but did not wish to feature for a variety of reasons. Their feelings were respected though their moral and financial support over all the years has been highly valued. Others were away and could not be contacted.

Nevertheless many members over the age of 75 surfaced, quite a number over 80, and even one over 90. Still keen members, they have been the backbone of the Black Sash since its inception.

Jean Sinclair is surely the most prominent of all our pioneers. Jean founded the Black Sash in 1955. She was returning from holiday by car with her husband and five children and in Colesburg

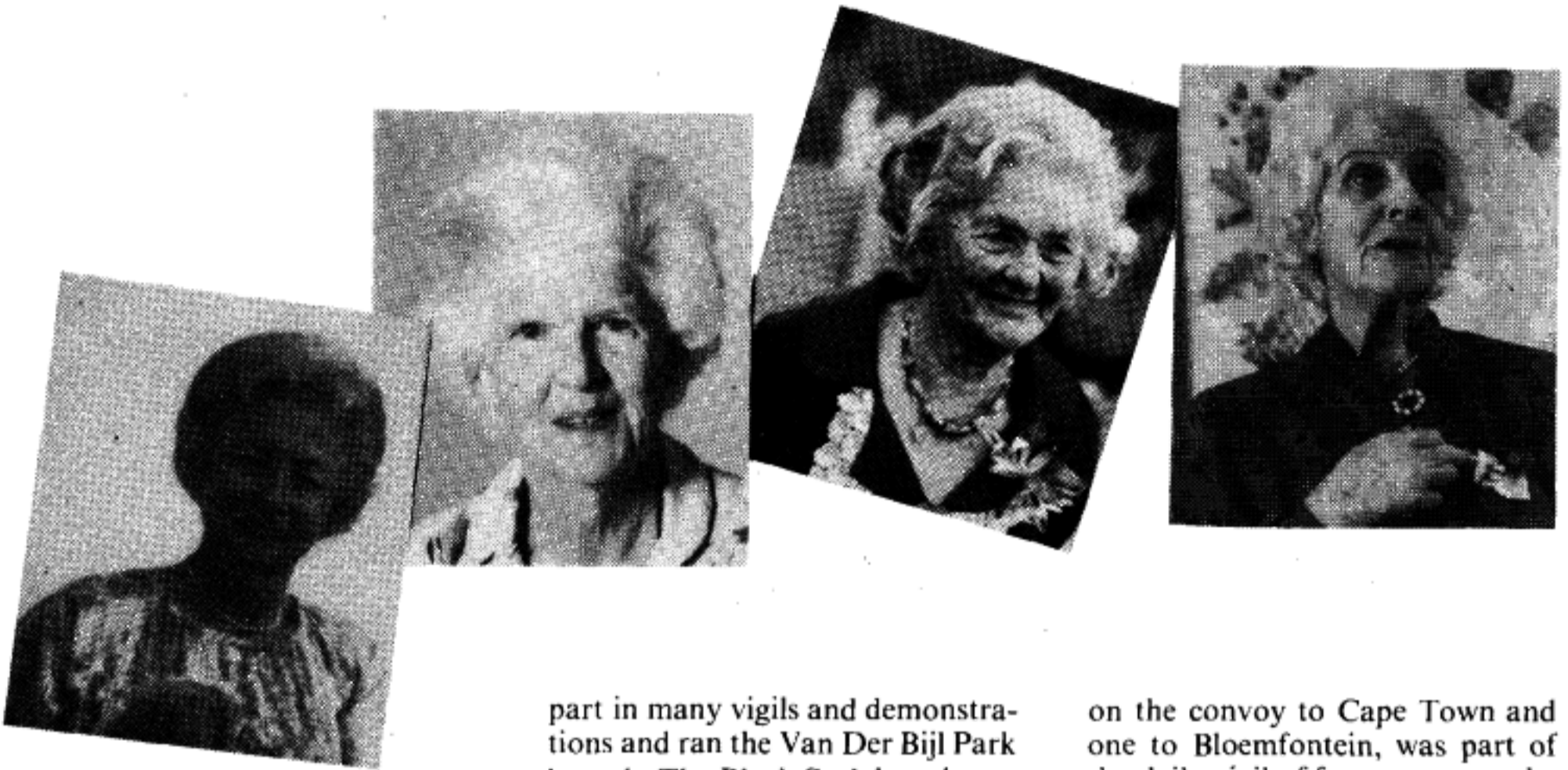
received news of the Senate Bill. While in Cape Town she had attended Parliament and listened to the debate on the Appeal Court Bill. Both Bills were attempts by the government to circumvent the Constitution in order to get the 'coloured' voters of the Cape off the voters' roll.

Jean was incensed, 'furious' as she so often was and still is. As a United Party member of the City Council, she decided that something had to be done about those Bills. She called four other women together and they decided to organise a march of women from the Scottish Memorial to the City Hall in Johannesburg to attend a public meeting the Council had forced the Mayor to call. There were thousands of women marching, and thus the 'Women's Defence of the Constitution League' was formed. Two petitions were launched nation-wide, there was a vigil outside the Union Buildings in Pretoria, and a magnificently organised convoy to Cape Town, with contributory convoys converging right on time to drive together into Cape Town and converge on the Houses of Parliament.

The Women's Defence of the Constitution League became the Black Sash, a constitution was drawn up, and the organisation decided to continue despite the fact that it had lost its first battle. Ruth Foley was its first National President, and eventually Jean became National President, a post she held for 14 years. Not only was she always in the midst of all the action, she actually introduced a great deal of it, and was always ready to do absolutely anything she felt would promote the causes for which the Black Sash stood. She made ordinary people do extraordinary things because she was always ready to do them herself.

Her efforts kept the Black Sash alive and active through all the arid years when not even the Press was interested in it. She never allowed its tempo to slacken. She worked in the Advice office, she attended all demonstrations, vigils and marches, she was always seeking new ways of achieving results, and she led the organisation with determination, imagination and great courage through its most difficult years. It is safe to say that without her there would have been no Black Sash. We salute her.

A TRIBUTE TO THE PIONEERS



Top, left to right:
Isobel Giddy
Eileen Mendelsohn
Lorna Ferry
Jeanette Davidoff
Below:
Olga Rosenberg

Kay Brown is over 80 and was a member from the very beginning. She participated in all demonstrations and did 'everything I could to say NO against the government.' She is now ailing, and is going to live in Cape Town.

Phyllis Craig Cochrane participated in the first march and the first vigil to Pretoria. She took

part in many vigils and demonstrations and ran the Van Der Bijl Park branch. The Black Sash has always been very important to her and she is still a very keen member. She was part of the convoy to Cape Town, and one of those who 'haunted' Minister Eric Louw when he fell up the steps, to the jubilation of the Black Sash members. (Haunting was a major Black Sash activity in the early years. Members, wearing sashes, would congregate in silent protest at venues where senior government officials, usually Cabinet Ministers, were present and 'haunt' them.)

Jeanette Davidoff, whose husband was a Labour Member of Parliament, was coming home from Parliament on the Blue Train in 1955 when she bought a Rand Daily Mail in Krugersdorp and learnt of the vigil at the Union Buildings. She decided to go, with the support of her husband, and went to the Johannesburg City Hall with the women. Then and there she decided to join the organisation, in which she has remained very active to this day. She attended its first meeting, called by Jean Sinclair in her home, at which it was decided to wear sashes and to use the slogan, 'Eerbiedig ons Grondwet.' (Respect our Constitution.)

Netty was the Black Sash's first press officer. She also chaired its first Education Committee, attended all demonstrations, went

on the convoy to Cape Town and one to Bloemfontein, was part of the daily vigil of four women at the Union Buildings, and was Vice-President of the organisation for some time. She has been a member of the Transvaal Regional Committee throughout its existence.

She says that for her the Black Sash has always meant camaraderie, care and genuine affection. At the age of 80 she still makes an immense contribution to all its activities.

Lorna Ferry, who is 80, has been a member from the beginning. She went on the first Johannesburg march, took part in the hauntings and demonstrations, and has always been very keen and active. She is a special gardener, and the organisation has benefitted from her plants and cuttings over many years. She also ran the bookstall at the City Hall on a number of occasions.

Rose Franks has been a keen and supportive member for very many years and used to help with clerical work in the office.

Isobel Giddy participated in the first march in Johannesburg and has been a member ever since. She took part in many demonstrations, including the torch demonstration at the City Hall, and was questioned by the Security

A TRIBUTE TO THE PIONEERS

Police at the time of the Dean of Johannesburg's trial — an unpleasant experience. Isobel worked in the employment centre for many years. She is a wonderful needle-woman and still makes lovely garments for the sewing stall at the morning market.

Dorothy Grant is an original member of the Black Sash. She was one of the first secretaries of the Johannesburg Committee and press officer for the Johannesburg Region. She was editor of SASH for four years. She was unable to continue actively after her husband died and she returned to work, but she remains a valued member.

Trude Hemp joined the organisation in 1956. She participated in demonstrations, and bought her first pair of sunglasses in response to the pictures the Special Branch were always taking of Black Sash women. She worked in the Advice Office for very many years and is still a valued member of the sewing stall at the morning market. She feels that her years in the Black Sash reflect both sad and happy times — sad for the sort of work it has to do and happy for the people she has come to know through it.

Dora Hill, also 80, joined the organisation in its early days, and was a member of the convoys to Cape Town and Bloemfontein. She has very amusing stories to tell of those times. The absence of toilets (when most urgently needed) seems to have been a real problem. She stood at the Union Buildings, joined most of the demonstrations, was an early National Treasurer, Chairperson of the Transvaal Region for very many years and a member of its Committee for even longer. She and her husband graciously made their home available for the annual morning market for many years.

Jennie Hoare is over 80 and has been a member right from the beginning. She attended all demonstrations including the vigil at the Union Buildings and the

convoy to Cape Town and haunted ministers at the airport and everywhere else. She helped with clerical work in the office and worked in the Advice Office for many years. She has always given the organisation the most generous financial support, and still does.

Constance Kinghorn, who is 87, has been a member from the beginning. She participated in demonstrations, vigils and activities at the Union Buildings in Pretoria, and always helped in any way she could. She is still a keen member.

Anna Marais is over 80. She is still a member of the Transvaal Regional Committee and has been a member of the organisation since its inception. In those years she worked during the day and was not available to do very much, but she participated in demonstrations whenever she could, including those at the airport. Her father fought on the side of the Boers during the Boer War, but soon afterwards encouraged his children to play with the little English children, and said that we must build a country together.

In latter years, as a member of the committee, Anna has always pulled her weight. She did (and still does) a great deal of clerical work in the office, and for many years she ran the white elephant stall at the morning market.

Eileen Mendelsohn is also 80. She was introduced to the Black Sash in the early days by Netty Davidoff. She attended many demonstrations, and on one occasion was arrested and taken to the Hillbrow Police Station with her posters and her colleague. After some time there the Special Branch was called and allowed her to leave.

Eileen has helped in the Advice Office, worked in the employment centre for many years, and still helps with clerical work in the office, despite poor health. She served on the Transvaal Committee for many years and is still a committee member.

Sylvia Nell has been a member almost from the beginning. A busy person, involved in many organisations, she had limited time to devote to the Black Sash, but has always been a keen and supportive member.

Beatrice Pullinger is a sprightly 93-year-old, who has been a member from the beginning. She worked for most of her life and had little time to devote to the Black Sash, but she did participate in demonstrations, including the one long one at the City Hall, and she remains a keen member.

Olga Rosenberg has been a member for very many years. She joined when she saw fish being thrown at the Black Sash women doing a vigil at the City Hall. She was so impressed with their courage that she walked straight into a little shop, bought a length of black ribbon, and joined them. She attended the meeting which decided on the formation of the Advice Office, and worked in it for 10 years. Olga attended many demonstrations, is still a keen member, and has given very generous financial support over the years.

Barry Silcock has been a member from the beginning of the organisation. She participated in many demonstrations and was part of the march and vigil in Pretoria. She always attended general meetings and is still a keen member.

Mina Steuart joined the inaugural march from the Scottish Memorial to the City Hall and has been a member of the organisation ever since. When she saw a student interfering with that march she hit him in the chest with her shoe bag because she was so angry, even though she knew this was not permitted. She was almost pushed into the flame at the City Hall demonstration, and had to be saved. Mina attended most demonstrations. She is also an excellent marmalade maker, and has been making marmalade for Black Sash morning markets ever since they started. □

beloved memories

zilla m. herries baird

In Durban it all started at The Victoria Club, when the late Miss Killie Campbell, of beloved memory, co-opted her bowling, horticultural and intellectual friends into a branch of the 'Women's Defence of the Constitution League', Jean Hill being its first chairwoman.

That evening, our organisation, by then known as the Black Sash, mounted an all night vigil on the steps of Durban's historic post office.

Until midnight our stand numbered some 70 Black Sash members. In the small hours of the morning, when our line of protest had been reduced by half, an unfriendly passer-by saw fit to set my sash on fire. Of poor quality material the wretched thing just smouldered ... but it did smell horrid! And I was, anyway, happier with its successor made from the pure silk mourning skirt of an aged aunt.

When the Indian Myna birds in full voice heralded the dawn, we were all back on the steps, offering a stubborn silence to the little man, still drunk at that hour, who paced the line asking 'Wotchu Waiting For?' When the last woman in the line replied in ringing tones 'JUSTICE,' the little man, most sensibly, left us to our Lost Cause.

In the course of the years, legislation has progressively limited the number and choice of venues for Black Sash stands. In the halcyon days when we were able to mount huge protest stands in the Town Gardens, we did so under the surveillance of the special branch, which had an office in one of the buildings overlooking the Gardens. The less serious-minded among us claimed that it was Zilla's hat and

gloves which were the attraction!

Like other regions, Durban has had its share of men who are able to dine out on the stories of the posters they have snatched from Black Sash women. Oddly enough, when I have smilingly offered mine to the creatures, saying how glad I was that they should be so interested, they have never accepted my kindly offer.

In the first and subsequent years, we foregathered in the spacious elegance of 'Muckleneuk', the Campbell family seat where we partook of china tea from bone china cups.

When Miss Killie went to join her distinguished forebears, protesting to me the day before her death that she had left too many things half done to be ready for death, we were without a home. But, before the date of the next meeting, Miss Brown had solved our problem and we continued our deliberations in the stately home of that Natal family of commercial consequence.

When Miss Brown's health made it impossible for her to continue living in the great house with her companions and innumerable dogs — each with his/her own blanket on the leathered upholstered chairs and couches in an enormous foyer — Patty and David Gearts opened the doors of yet another early Natal tree-shaded homestead with a view to eclipse the Mediterranean littoral.

And in the deliberations under so many distinguished roofs, the Natal Coastal Region has worked tirelessly, identifying themselves with the rage and sorrow and suffering which continue to mount in the townships on Durban's well-heeled doorstep.

Now in my eightieth year — and



still Scottish-country-dancing — I find that I don't hear any better than I did after my mastoid operation in my early twenties. In this context, my stage training prompts me to suggest that speakers — both from the floor and the podium — should hold their papers up rather than their heads down: that they should take enough breath to enable them to THROW their voices. I come away from meetings irritable or enlightened according to the speaker's capacity for projecting the voice.

As I look back, I think of those who have given day-in-and-day-out of their health, their hearts and their leisure — and for whom no tribute can be high enough.

Nor is it an afterthought that we pay tribute to husbands who have, in so many instances, made it possible for us to continue labouring in the vineyard.

The recent increase in Natal Coastal's membership by a huge influx of the Young, Beautiful and Enthusiastic had brought a glimmer of hope to my harassed heart ... a hope that dies as I see not only the youngsters, but so many of those with whom I have worked in the past, turning in desperation to the left.

For me, socialism is unacceptable. I am — in utter desolation — beginning to wonder whether the Black Sash and Zilla have not come to the parting of the ways. □

life-changing experiences

rita easton

Most politically involved South Africans can think back on at least one experience that transformed their understanding of our situation and shaped their commitment. Rita Easton, of the Natal Coastal Region, reflects on her life-changing experiences.



Like other white South African women who were brought up in a privileged environment, I have never known what it is like to live in a perpetual state of fear and deprivation.

When I married the pattern did not change. There was always enough food. Always enough for the pleasures around us.

Today, with our children married and gone, the same ease of living has not altered.

But in many respects we, as people, have changed. For while in our youth we took what was given to us — our privileges — for granted we have since undergone a transition which has broadened our

outlook, widened our perspective and, above all, evoked a level of concern we had never before experienced.

Yet one of the things we still tend to think about (and even feel guilty about), is the time we took to reach this transformation. At that time we liked to think of ourselves as liberals.

Yet, like others who believe themselves to be significant in our 'classed' society, we tended to be very tentative about building lasting relationships with people of colour. If and when we did, it was only on a sporadic basis due, in part, to our being overly sympathetic and, at worst, paternalistic.

We still remained locked within the inhibiting ambit of our personal identity and fears. While we were prepared to acknowledge the need for some sort of 'political upliftment' for blacks, we were subconsciously resisting their total liberation. So we tended to speak about a qualified vote (for them); required standards of education (for them); and, just as unwittingly, a patronising selective magnanimity, entitling 'them' to become members of 'our' clubs, play sport with 'us', use 'our' beaches, etc.

It was in the midst of these beliefs that I came to join the Black Sash, although I was not yet in tune with its principles.

A number of factors precipitated my joining. I had assumed a sort of self-assigned do-gooder status in a

tightly-knit parochial community (we were still living on the lower South Coast of Natal, then). My liberally-styled letters to the press, and my concern for all the racist incidents which continually seemed to pervade that area, led to my being sent a circular from the University of Natal, informing me of a conference planned for September 1982 on the effects of detention and security legislation. It was a subject I knew hardly anything about but one that had begun to gnaw at me.

So with my R25 paid, I was for the first time exposed to the real tyrannies which were being used to silence the majority. I remember being shocked, sickened, and sometimes either in, or very close to, tears. Each paper seemed to be more harrowing than the next. Solutions were not given, only facts. And to me, this was a very sobering experience and a stark revelation of the brutal mechanics which had been designed to quell resistance.

I was prompted to write to the Black Sash in Durban and express my desire to join the organisation. Once I was accepted, a lot began to change for me.

Our move to Durban hastened this process, for it allowed me upfront involvement and the type of educative influences I needed. As my metamorphosis continued my fears weakened, my feelings changed; but, above all, I was able to abandon the tendency to categorise blacks, to think of 'them' as a collective entity rather than as individuals.

This was an important step in my learning process.

Then I became involved in the advice office. There, my experiences evoked deeper emotions: despair, depression, and a huge compounding anger.

But more markedly, both my husband and I found we had become less and less interested in those who had once been our social acquaintances. Outside diversions became increasingly minimal. Our lives now centred on a different understanding of reality.

We do not have regrets about this self-styled yet, to us, relevant alienation. It happened. And for this we are grateful. □

WORKING AT THE OUTPOSTS

The Eastern Cape is the furnace of South African politics. These extracts, compiled by Lindy Harris, give us a sense of what this means for Black Sash work in

the border region



Nora Squires demonstrates her willingness to take up yet another burden.

Linda Berkowitz, Border Region fieldworker.



The Border Region of the Black Sash has grown tremendously over the past year. From a small group of concerned women, meeting once a month, we have now expanded our activities to include a very busy advice office. We also have a full-time fieldworker, Linda Berkowitz, who has proved invaluable. However, there is still far too much to do. At our monthly meetings, there never seems enough time to discuss all the issues at hand. Although attendance has grown, there are still nowhere near enough members to deal with all the work, and our members tend to be very thinly stretched.

The needs in our area are vast: resettlement problems, repression and extreme poverty mean there is no shortage of work. This has its positive side as everyone can gain experience and skills in a wide range of areas. We are now beginning to form a few sub-committees, and hope in this way to draw additional people into the Black Sash.

The Border area has a long and proud history of resistance. Black people here are militant, principled and uncompromising, with incredible courage and ability to

bear huge hardships. It is not always easy to build trust, but we feel that we are making some progress. We are lucky that the Black Sash has built up a reputation of trustworthiness nationally, and we are able to draw on that reputation. We are also learning that missionary fervour is not enough, and that we have to take the history, principles and dynamics of existing organisations very seriously if we are not to be patronising.

There are hardly any progressive organisations in the Border area in which whites can easily get involved. This has meant that our small group is very visible, and sometimes vulnerable to things like nasty phone calls and letters, and the slashing of car tyres.

As an illustration of some of our work, we include descriptions of some incidents by some of our members. First, *Nora Squires* describes what happened one day when she went to assist pensioners at Kwelerha:

Pension payout day in Jongilanga, Kwelerha, in May. Not an engagement that filled me with joy. I had had several brushes in the past with

WORKING AT THE OUTPOSTS

the paymaster as well as the soldier guards who accompany the pay-out combi. This occasion was to be no different. The pensioners were receiving their back pay, ie the difference in the pension rate between South Africa and Ciskei. The pensioners had been paid at the Ciskei rate when the administration of the area was illegally taken over by Ciskei in 1981. Administration reverted to South Africa in 1985 and those pensioners who qualified were owed quite large sums of money.

To ensure that the pensioners, most of whom are illiterate, received the amount indicated on their pay-out card, we devised a system whereby the pensioner would bring her/his card to us, and the amount on the card would be written in pencil in the back of their ID books. When they received their money they would return to us to have the amount checked against the entry. Amounts paid varied between R600 and R900, depending on the length of time that the person has been receiving a pension.

I started the usual procedure, taking the first pensioner's pay-out card, when I was stopped by a shout of rage from the pay-master in the combi. He would pay no pension, he said, unless I desisted from interfering in his work and handling government property. I was completely baffled, as to my knowledge I had not touched government property. The soldiers took their cue from the pay-master, rushed up to me and threatened to arrest me for touching government property. 'What government property?' I asked.

'The cards, the cards!' came the reply. I promised faithfully to desist from handling government property and the pensioners were quick to take their cue. They would come to us holding the 'government property' aloft like a banner, and we would only handle private property, their ID books. Pension monitors beware, you might be handling government property unwittingly, and ignorance is no defence!

Zola Nozewu's funeral

The plight of the people of Potsdam in the Ciskei is one that has moved us greatly. In February this year, they fled from their homes in the face of ongoing assaults and harassment by the Ciskei police. About 2 500 people squatted at a roadside on the South African side of the border, pleading with the South African authorities to be given a place to stay in South Africa. Instead, they were forcibly trucked back into the Ciskei, to face even worse harassment. Most recently, a community leader, Zola Nozewu, was murdered by the vigilantes. Nora Squires and Sue Power describe what happened at his funeral, which they attended:

Sunday 9 August was the date set for the funeral of Zola Nozewu, a leader from the Potsdam community. We had got to know and respect him during the period when the community camped alongside a South African road, after their unsuccessful attempt to escape from Ciskei.

Nozewu had been the victim of endless harassment from police and vigilantes since his return to Potsdam, culminating in his murder by a vigilante in July.

His mother was terrified that there would be trouble at the funeral and her fears proved to be tragically correct.

Four Black Sash members from East London attended the funeral. We were stopped twice on the road leading to Potsdam by police road-blocks. On the first occasion we were questioned and the car was searched. We told them where we were going and they allowed us to proceed.

About 100 yards from the funeral service we were stopped again by a casspir and several police cars. This time they gave us a thorough going over, to the extent of running their fingers through one of the men's hair. Sue's bag was searched, private letters, diary and purse were checked before they finally allowed us to join the service.

The people had been warned by the police that the service should be

non-political with no freedom songs, raised fists or toi-toi. A most restrained and dignified service was held at the home of Zola's mother, Nellie Nozewu. The burial ground was situated some 1.5 km away on the side of a steep hill running down to a river.

A hearse, followed by a combi carrying Zola's mother and other close relatives and friends, led the procession. The rest of the mourners followed on foot in a very orderly manner.

After we had walked about half the distance, a casspir, police van and several police cars approached from the left.

We were near the back of the procession and could not see what happened but suddenly crowds of people came rushing back towards us saying that the police had attacked the combi with tear gas and that as the terrified mourners tried to get out of the combi they were sjambokked and shots fired.

We continued walking forward and found the deserted combi and saw that people had run down into the valley to escape from the teargas, the smell of which was still heavy in the air.

The hearse now stood alone at the grave, with the police lined up on the road above.

A man in the crowd suggested that we should walk right up to the police and ask them if we might

WORKING AT THE OUTPOSTS

proceed to the grave side and continue the burial. This we did. The police did not respond and as they had expressed no objection to our plan we proceeded to the grave site.

As the priest began to pray the police fired five shots of teargas directly at the grave. There was no warning and the crowd was not asked to disperse.

Overcome by the fumes, the group ran. We saw elderly relatives weeping and choking on the gas as they tripped over other graves in their efforts to escape the unprovoked violence of the police.

The deserted coffin was left at the grave site as we looked anxiously on from the hill up which we had scrambled.

The police did not move and when the gas had cleared a small group of us returned to the grave which the men hurriedly took turns to fill. There was no time for prayers to be said.

What had been a dignified service had been reduced to a chaotic shambles.

Zola's mother had wandered off up the road in a state of shock, unable even to bury her son in peace. After the burial was complete we approached the police and asked them for their names. They refused to give us their names, threatened the man who had asked, and told us to get out of the Ciskei.

Later at the home of Zola's mother we looked at the sjambok wounds on five people and understood fully for the first time why the roadside people had been prepared to leave their homes and live under plastic on the side of the road, rather than face the vicious unprovoked attacks of the police and vigilantes at Potsdam.

We later discovered that 80 people had been arrested before the funeral and locked up for the day to prevent them from attending the funeral — they were not charged. Many others were turned away from the funeral at roadblocks where they were asked for Ciskei tax receipts — and prevented from proceeding if they could not produce them. □

Taking 'deepest exception' to greenflies

Another issue we have had to deal with extensively is the large number of alleged assaults by the Duncan Village municipal police against residents of that township. Many assault charges have been laid by township residents with the help of the Black Sash, and we have helped to publicise the matter. Recently, we received our first response from the Gompo Town Committee, under whose authority the force falls. (Gompo Town is the new official name for Duncan Village.)

The response took the form of a lawyer's letter, in which they informed us they took the 'deepest exception' to our calling the police 'greenflies' — the name township residents have given these men in green uniforms, with little knowledge of the law they are supposed to serve. Apparently, the Gompo Town Committee first noticed that their municipal police were being called greenflies when the name appeared in a report in the Daily Dispatch which quoted the Black Sash. We were amazed, as we hadn't coined the phrase and weren't responsible for their behaviour, which has led to so many complaints of brutality. Perhaps the Black Sash was simply an easy target. Be that as it may, the Gompo Town Committee regarded the term as 'a direct insult' and advised us that 'their rights are reserved'.

We felt this letter was probably the only way for the committee to respond to the deluge of complaints laid against the greenflies, sorry, municipal police. Black Sash members helped Duncan Village residents to lay complaints. Often,

people were prepared to lay complaints only if a Black Sash member was present, for fear of further assault or victimisation at the police station. As a result of publicity nationally — although not locally — Helen Suzman asked a question in Parliament. Minister of Law and Order, Adriaan Vlok, said 63 complaints had been laid against the Duncan Village municipal police. There were 195 complaints in the whole of the Cape, and none in any of the other provinces. Of the 63 Duncan Village complaints, one had led to an arrest on a murder charge. Three other policemen were awaiting trial on charges of assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm, and one was being charged with pointing a firearm.

The SAP had not approached the Gompo Town committee about the complaints, but discussions had been held on several occasions with the commander of the force, 'who conducts lectures for members of the municipal police on a regular basis to restrain them from committing offences'.

While there was a huge number of cases reported to us in June, we had only two fresh reports of assaults in July — an indication that the municipal police have been reined in to some extent. We think that the Black Sash's work, assisting people to lay charges and generating publicity, helped to improve the situation. However, in other areas in the Eastern Cape residents are cut off from legal and other support. There assaults are still occurring regularly — and the name 'greenflies' remains apt indeed! □

REVIEWS

Forces' Favourites: A collection of stories

Male South African writers,
in English and Afrikaans
(Taurus, 1987)

The SABC's popular radio programme 'Forces' Favourites' is an institution in our national life — it rates with braaivleis, rugby and sunny skies. Glib and cheery messages, interspersed with catchy tunes are broadcast to the 'boys' somewhere on the border.

The choice of the same title for a newly published collection of army stories is a wry comment on this genial programme and the role it plays in the South African psyche. For this book represents the dark counterpart of that facile conception of the war — the raw perspective of the boys at the receiving end of the peppy messages of encouragement.

In this range of eighteen stories by South African writers (all of them men) in both English and Afrikaans, the full spectrum of the army experience is portrayed, from the boredom of camp life to the bewildering events likely to overtake one on township duty; from the horrors of bush war to the mindlessness of life in the Permanent Force, or the loneliness and isolation of a draft dodger in exile. The stories also examine the full spectrum of perils which one is prey to in the army, from not-so-subtle harrassment by intelligence officers to total dehumanisation in the bush; from going on patrol and getting shot at, to — the worst peril of all — getting someone in your sights and shooting him. And finally, these stories represent the varied ways in which men and boys assimilate and cope with their army experiences, each one dealing in his own way with his dose of 'bossies' — the psychological shell-shock that pervades the collection.

In the more satirical pieces, the whole world goes bossies. In the 32nd year of the war the regime

declares that death is no longer an adequate reason for exemption from military service (*In the thirty second year of the war: Michael du Plessis*), thus taking the sting out of the most devious conspiracy to sap the nation's morale. The vision is grotesque, the world absurd, but at moments the satire shines like a beam on to the present battlefield.

Equally gruesome and absurd is the trooper's vision of conditions in the bush, as in *Die hond dink the terrie roep hom*. In staccato lines, Tertius Meintjies evokes a brief scene of debased humanity with a sergeant stringing his victims' fingernails like trophies on



to his necklace, and a pet dog joining a captive Cuban in a howling lament through the night.

But the disease is not confined to the border. Bossies breaks out everywhere now, because the border is everywhere.

Life for the Permanent Force family in Andre van Niekerk's *The brussels sprouts obedience lesson* ran very smoothly indeed for seventeen routine-deadened years, until 'a moerse crowd of agitators ... started causing kak' in Sergeant-Major Kritzinger's territory, and his ten-year-old son decided to assert his independence, all on one day. The entire family contracts an ugly strain of bossies

that day, resulting in a family tragedy not uncommon in a society under stress.

However, there are those in this collection of stories who clearly run no risk of contracting bossies. But far more frequent are the cases of young men who realise, like the narrator in Etienne van Heerden's consummate army story, *My Kubaan (Tafelberg, 1983)*, that once you have shot your Cuban, you carry him like an albatross for the rest of your life.

The young man in Andrew Martens' story *The fly* is to be court-martialled for dropping his weapon and running to the side of the boy he had shot on a township raid. Even in his cell, with this threat hanging over him, he remains detached, finding himself on a plane of physical and emotional asceticism. Since looking into the eyes of the boy he killed, his life has taken on a new dimension. 'That frozen moment would always be a hole in his life, because nothing could be measured in it.'

One of the severest causes of bossies, and certainly one of the most eloquently depicted, is the case of the boy who returns from the border, to the bosom of his family and society: (*A return: Peter Rule*). The glowing boy whose picture stood on the mantelpiece and to whom we sent our cheery messages is back amongst us — but he wears the albatross about his neck. Through the first person narrative rich language (in contrast with the crisper, cruder language of most of the other stories), we are given glimpses of the brooding hell in which the boy fumbles for his recovery, aware of those around him, but unable to connect with them.

The quality of the stories in general varies from this sensitive and vivid description of a journey to wholeness, to the overtly cryptic and rather disjointed narrative of *Die waterwyser*, by Harry Kalmer, but in their varied ways each story lays bare a wound or a scar, and as a whole, the collection forms a powerful anti-war statement.

Lynette Paterson

REVIEWS

World Human Rights Guide

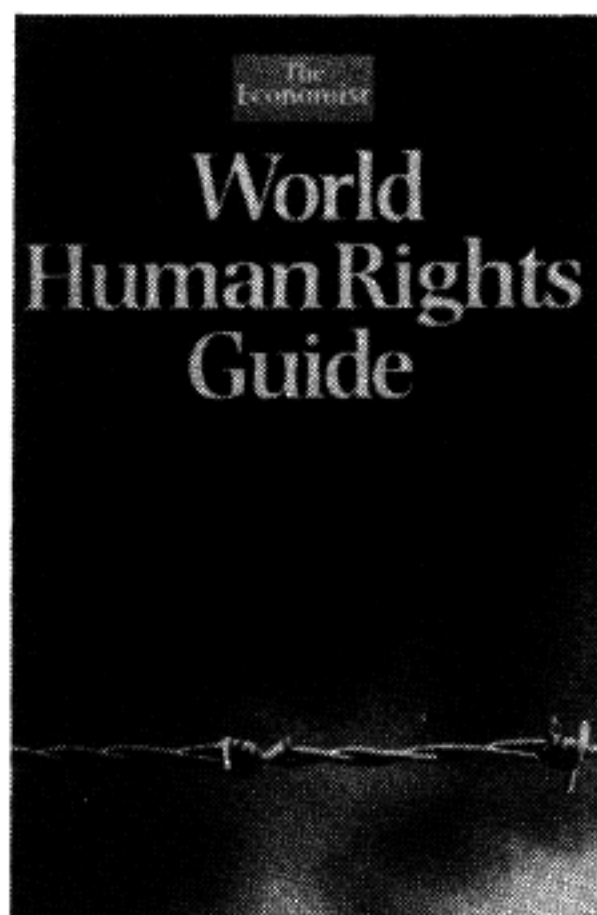
Charles Humana (comp.)
(Economist Publications,
London, 1986)

In 1984 Ecuador suggested to the United Nations that it investigate the human rights records of member nations, a task declined by that body but undertaken by Humana in this volume. There may be those who find a quantitative comparison of human rights abuses unpalatable but Humana employs a sophisticated approach by weighing attacks on individual human freedoms more heavily than those on general rights. Thus in scoring each of forty factors on a scale of 0 to 3, seven of them are loaded in such a way that torture becomes a more serious abuse than telephone tapping, for example.

Another objection which might be made to an analysis of this kind is the idea of human rights as part of a Western liberal value-system not necessarily emphasised by other cultures. Humana deals forcefully with this point by arguing that 159 nations have joined the United Nations voluntarily and must accept the fact that they will be judged by the organisation's clearly enunciated human rights standards. To prove the point the questionnaire is derived from three United Nations instruments: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

One hundred and twenty nations with populations in excess of one million are assessed. The results for thirty are reported in summary form only, either due to a paucity of data or the unco-operativeness of their authorities. The rights investigated are general, legal and personal and the freedoms assessed are inclusive and exclusive (providing for the right to political opposition and protection from

detention, for instance). Readers of SASH will not be surprised to hear that the top six nations scoring 97 to 98 percent are the four Nordic countries, the Netherlands and West Germany followed at sometimes embarrassing distances by the rest of western Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. Also achieving ratings of 75 percent or better are countries in other continents such as Costa Rica, Venezuela and Dominican Republic; and from Africa, Botswana and Senegal. Post-Galtieri Argentina scores 88 percent illustrating the fact that sanguinary regimes characterised by death squads, arbitrary arrest and State-



sponsored brutality are not omnipotent for ever.

Consideration of a reformed pariah state brings one logically to the case of South Africa. It would require an attitude of either extreme optimism or overt cynicism to expect to find South Africa anywhere but in the company of reprobate nations such as Libya, Bulgaria, the Soviet Union and Ethiopia with a rating of 22 percent. Most alarming of all is the chilling fact that this figure was calculated *before the declaration of the third State of Emergency in June 1986*. In terms of the seven factors defined as the most sensitive personal human rights, South

Africa earns one solitary point out of a potential 21; and overall receives maximum points on only three factors of 40: freedom from compulsory political party membership and adherence to a political ideology; and the availability of contraception. These facts give credibility to suggestions that a post-liberation South Africa should institute tribunals to assess crimes against humanity. The text on South Africa is now inevitably dated and betrays a certain lack of familiarity with South African repression: the Directorate of Publications, for example, has no jurisdiction over newspapers. The errors are, however, few enough not to spoil an otherwise important account.

The methodological problems revealed in assessing human rights issues and documented by Humana will no doubt be addressed in future editions. That there should be further publications of this series is taken for granted. Whatever its drawbacks such work provides the opportunity for comparisons of the strengths and weaknesses of human rights through time, an exercise which is an important if sombre one for us in South Africa.

Christopher Merrett

Women in South Africa

Christine Qunta (Allison and Busby Ltd. London in association with Skotaville Publishers, Johannesburg, 1987)

The enemies of African women ... are colonialism and imperialism, white racism, class oppression and sexual oppression. (p. 15)

This review should never have been written ... but I will come to that later. When I wanted to 'scan' this volume of topical essays, interviews and biographies, I got 'stuck' in the preface, reading it word by word.

REVIEWS

Then, I was hooked on the book ...

Quanta makes it clear in her opening paragraph that the book is not only by and about, but also *for* African women 'since the non-African who studies this rather complex issue [of African womanhood] is inevitably an observer rather than a participant'. Her view that African women are 'Africans before [they] are women' should always be kept in mind, especially by those inclined to think along Western feminist lines. Her positioning of African women 'at the bottom of the scale of humanity' as a result of centuries of oppression, exploitation and one-sided writing of history, has to be accepted if we want to understand, communicate and change. Compared to white women, African women suffer double or triple oppression.

The history of colonised women can only be written by themselves. As white women living in Africa, we can only 'play a supporting role where necessary', namely 'critically ... inspect the role [our] own societies have played and are still playing in the oppression of African people in general and African women in particular'. If one has never thought along these lines, this important book might be an eye-opener.

Quanta's own essay on *Outstanding African Women, 1500 BC - 1900 AD* is the longest and reads well, even though not all her 'facts' can be proved scientifically. The essay starts with ancient (especially Egyptian) history, and works its way through the slave trade era and patriarchy into the 20th century, incorporating short biographies of important African women. It is immaterial whether we regard patriarchy as fact or myth; it is of greater significance to reach for a goal - even an utopian goal - somewhere in the future. Quanta's account of the Angolan colonisation makes fascinating reading: it seems mythological to read of amazon-like women heading for war against the Portuguese under the leadership of Queen Nzinga, or the story of king Ozei Tutu of the Asante.

Olivia N Muchena's contribution

The Role of Women's Organizations Within Southern Africa is an important one, concentrating mainly on post-independence countries. In a key question she asks how effective women's organisations can be in achieving meaningful changes in women's lives, when they can only work *within* a given ideological framework.

The more general part is followed by a section devoted to 'Azania (South Africa)', where the introduction, in rather emotional language, once more starts with Jan van Riebeeck. Special attention is given to the position of African

biography of Lilian Masediba Ngoyi, a former president of the ANC Women's League.

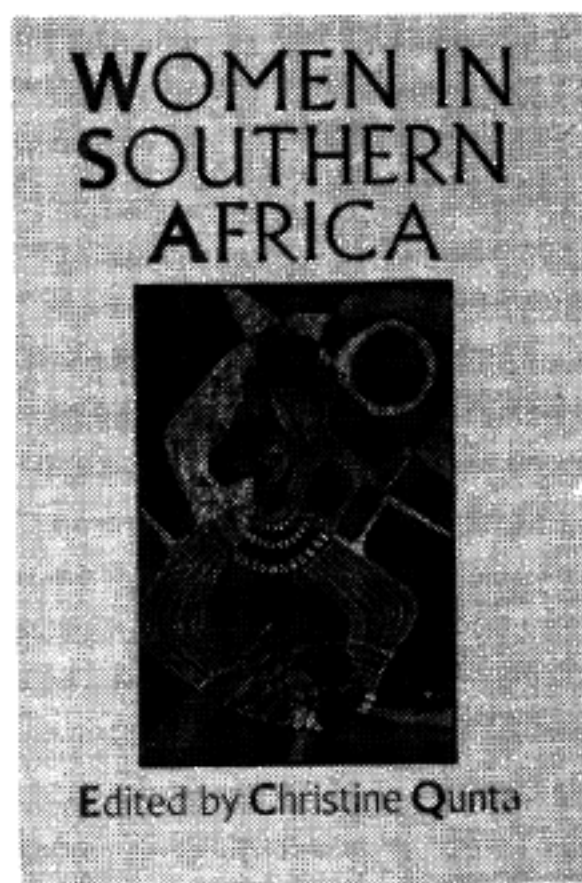
Further sections cover other African countries with an introduction to each. The section devoted to Zimbabwe includes an informative case study on District Councils in Zimbabwe and two interviews. The Namibia section includes a biography of Lucia Hamutenya, Swapo's Secretary for Legal Affairs, and an interview with Nora Chase, Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the South West African National Union (SWANU). All the other frontline states are covered as well, though some rather in a cryptic and superficial way.

Some of the contributions to this collection may be regarded as polemical, yet I feel we have to accept this as part of the 'other' perspective in our history. African history as taught at our schools is still largely the history of the coloniser - and as such part of the colonisation itself. In sharp contrast, African history as experienced by Africans is completely different: the history of Africa's colonisation as it 'really' happened cannot be written. There is no such thing as 'objective' history.

The white colonisers used to be the subjects of history, but now are only its objects. We have to accept the boundary the colonial praxis has erected between colonisers and colonised. It may be difficult to overcome these problems, to take seriously the colonised, the oppressed, particularly the women; to accept a new discourse without immediately interpreting it or even taking part in it.

This is why the review should, in a way, never have been written. We have to accept that since we are the colonisers - even though women - we face the boundary between 'us' and the colonised, oppressed African women. This collection might indeed help to bridge the gap in understanding those 'on the other side'.

Birga Thomas



women in the South African legal system. Dabi Nkululeko's essay *The Right to Self-Determination in Research: Azanian Women* touches on a number of problem areas. She challenges white women (whom she calls Euro-settler women) not to turn their back on their 'own sisters, mothers and daughters (who unleash oppression on the native women) because it is they who need to be shown the wrong in so doing'. This section also includes interviews with Nomvo Boo, a Central Committee member at the Pan Africanist Congress, and Sibongile Mkhabela of the 1976 Soweto Students Representative Council, as well as a

LETTERS

More on the logo debate

On behalf of those responsible for the now-famous tree banner, may we tell you how it came to be.

Last year some friends in the End Conscription Campaign offered to help us make a banner that we could use at meetings, rallies, fêtes and those many public occasions where the Black Sash wants to demonstrate visually its presence and support.

In particular we wanted a banner for use at the week-long cultural festival that was planned for December 1986 (and was cancelled by the police two days before it was due to begin).

A small group got together to think out ideas of what visual symbols would portray what the Black Sash stood for - it was a fascinating and complex exercise. We tried many different ideas and many different designs, consulted with the Regional Council, who gave us many different opinions.

Finally we decided on two designs which were made into two huge banners.

The tree was seen as a positive and forward-looking symbol, with the Black Sash (at the roots), contributing to and nourishing the flowering of justice, peace and democracy. The design of the tree and the border are African, symbolising our commitment to (South) Africa. The 'other' banner is illustrated here.

At no time did we attempt to change the Black Sash logo. We do understand democratic procedure, and the fact that it is not within our powers to change a national logo. It is very interesting, however, how frequently the Black Sash tree has been adopted and used by us (not only in the Western Cape) - is it perhaps the sense of optimism and growth which the tree symbolises and which is so sadly lacking in these times?

Jenny de Tolly and
Cassandra Parker
Cape Western Region

The Black Sash and the working woman

Linda-Jean Dykstra's article, 'The Black Sash and working women', will hopefully start fruitful discussions in all Regions and branches of the Black Sash. I also hope that you will receive quite a number of letters which might help to 'solve' some of the existing problems.

I do not agree with everything said in Linda-Jean's article, eg 'One of the reasons for the Black Sash's survival *must* be the fact that ... many members who were not formally employed had time to give to the Black Sash ...', 'three important areas of Black Sash work that are problematic for working women - court monitoring, advice offices and *executive meetings*'. At least, the last is not necessarily an obstacle, it's rather the attitude towards it, because here we have the potential to change the situation.

I feel very strongly that the change has to start with our election procedures. If we really want to be democratic, we cannot discriminate even at the nomination level. Everybody (whether in formal employment or not) must be able to be nominated for any office in all our structures, eg Regional councils. Of course it might be or even will be very difficult, should a Regional chairperson be somebody in formal employment - but if that person feels confident of being able to fulfil all her duties, it should be 'allowed'. In my opinion, a Regional council (or any other body) elected has to decide on its procedures, meeting times, etc *after* the election - a democratic organisation will be able to find the 'common denominator'. I feel, we have to start thinking along these lines. ...

Birga Thomas
Cape Western Region



This Black Sash banner has gone virtually unnoticed while its counterpart, the now famous tree banner, has caused much debate. Neither was intended to usurp the role of the Black Sash logo, write Jenny de Tolly and Cassandra Parker in the letter above.

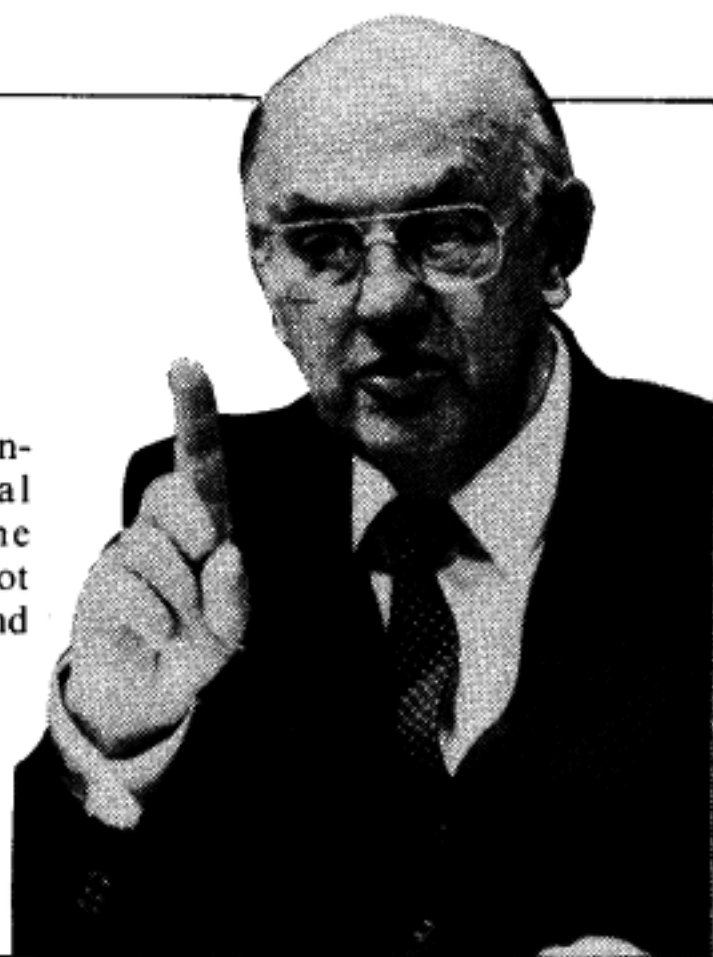
NEWS-STRIP



Gideon Mendel

Everybody knew what was meant ...

Following a particularly concentrated dose of presidential remonstrations recently, the Johannesburg Region could not resist taking to the streets in a stand with a difference.



Cape Times

The Black Sash at the National Arts Festival

During the 1987 National Arts Festival in Grahamstown, the Albany Black Sash ran an information stand and poster exhibition as part of the festival 'Fringe'. Considerable interest was shown by the festival-going public.

Badges and Black Sash magazines were on sale and pamphlets given out. The latter contained some unpleasant facts about living conditions and prospects for most of the people in the town. The intention was to put forward the 'other side' of Grahamstown, whose image of historic, rural charm or 'little bit of England nestling in the lush foothills of the Eastern Cape' is often belied by the harsh realities of this frontier region. A series of photographs by local historian Julian Cobbing showed scenes of repression and violence in the area.

This Black Sash tribute to the victims of apartheid underlined similar statements expressed by many artists at the festival this year.

Nova de Villiers

A sixtieth birthday party in Albany Region

Turning 60 is no sweat if you are fêted by your friends. So Betty Davenport (left) and Jill Joubert discovered when the Albany Region gave its founder members a party. The women decided to liven up the evening by donning 1920s dress — in vogue when they were born.

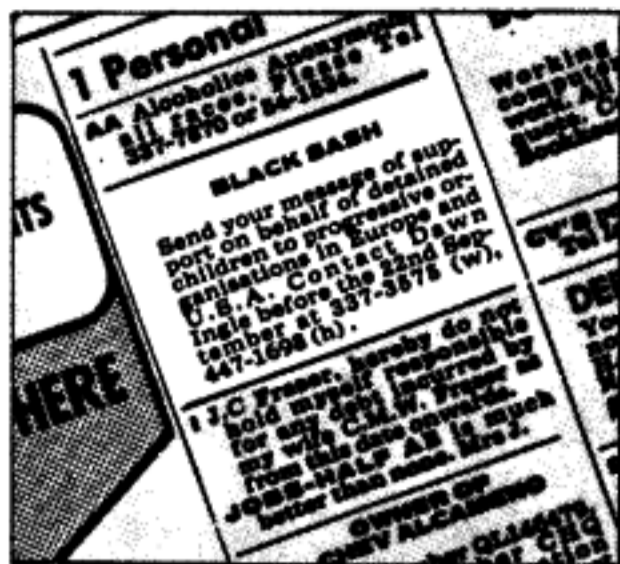
Betty and Jill's association goes back to their days at the Collegiate Girls High School in Port Elizabeth, and they gave a spirited rendering of the school song 'Girls of the College'. They recalled their years at Rhodes University during the war with an appropriate party ditty, 'Roll Out the Barrel', and finally sounded a note of warning, 'It's later than you think ...'.

After they graduated their paths diverged. It was not until Jill moved to Grahamstown in 1970 that they were together again, this time as members of the Black Sash. Betty joined the Albany branch and Jill in Port Elizabeth.



Betty Davenport and Jill Joubert at their joint sixtieth birthday party, given by their friends in the Albany Region. Betty's purple evening gown was authentic 1920s: it had belonged to her mother.

NEWS-STRIP



New forms of harassment

Shortly before Dawn Ingle left for the United States to participate in the New York launch of a campaign to free South African detainees, she became the target of various forms of harassment. Apart from the routine telephone calls from heavy breathers, and a security police visit to her home, this advertisement (above left) mysteriously appeared in the 'Personal' column of *The Star's* classified column. Dawn was puzzled by the spate of abusive telephone calls (some in the early hours of the morning), until alerted to the fraudulent advertisement. Her enquiries revealed that a woman with an English accent had placed the advertisement. Dawn was lucky to escape receiving an account for it.

A week before she was due to go, Dawn, who holds an Irish passport, was officially informed that she would have to apply for a re-entry visa abroad. She left South Africa without any certainty of being able to return. Fortunately the SA consulate in New York issued her a return visa. It was valid for a single entry until 30 October, the day she returned.

Vandalism to Black Sash members' home

Black Sash members Melissa de Villiers and Marion Lacey recently had the door of their house in Grahamstown defaced by unknown persons.

On the night of 29 July, Melissa de Villiers, a Black Sash research worker, arrived home to find on the front door a mutilated doll and a red-painted slogan reading 'Your wall won't help you' — apparently referring to a wall being built around the garden of the house.

This act of vandalism seems to have been a reaction to a series of lectures given by Marion Lacey, a Rhodes University politics lecturer, on the ANC and the significance of the IDASA talks in Dakar.



Above:
The historic stand: twelve members of the Black Sash's Natal Midlands Region stand together to protest the SADF's presence in Namibia.

Anecdotes from the Pretoria branch

One of our members works for a concern which helps to establish small businesses, mostly for black people, with funds, advice, etc. Their post is obviously tampered with: envelopes are opened, pages not replaced in the correct order. One day the security police came to the offices and demanded to search their post. The director of the organisation asked why the search was necessary since it was obvious that their mail had already been inspected. This was vehemently denied. On being confronted with an envelope which had very clumsily been resealed with sticky tape, the policeman burst out: 'But we've just got a new machine which opens your letters nicely. We don't make such a mess!'

The paranoid attitude prevalent in Pretoria can be rather infectious. One of our members was lent a video which might not be approved by the powers that be. That evening her domestic help answered the doorbell and informed her that the GG man (from the registration of government vehicles) was at the door. Panic stations! On advice from the domestic help the video was put into the vegetable container in the fridge! When the lady of the house finally answered the door, very gingerly, behind a chain, she demanded rather rudely, 'What do you want?' Poor man! He represented Gigi Transporters, a removal company, and was lost!



NEWS-STRIP



Natal Midlands make History

On Saturday 29 August, the Natal Midlands Region held a 'group stand' to protest against the presence of the South African Defence Force in Namibia. Twelve of us stood together with placards for the first time since the clamp-down on public gatherings in 1976.

And it was all perfectly legal! We applied to the chief magistrate for permission and, after giving a written assurance that it was not our intention to 'incite the public', we were given permission to stand together. The stand was videotaped by the police and we were all photographed as well. Plain-clothes and uniformed police kept a constant watch on us — but they could not prevent our message from getting across to the public.

Obituary:

Barbara Willis

Barbara Willis, a founder member of the Black Sash in the Cape Western Region, died recently at the age of 76.

Barbara was born in Johannesburg and lived there much of her life, apart from a seven-year period in Gordon's Bay during the Second World War. In 1952 the Willises retired and moved to Simon's Town, where they lived for the rest of their lives.

During this period Barbara devoted much of her time to the work of the Black Sash. She became the Cape Western Region's first honorary treasurer, attending devotedly to her task and setting an extremely high standard for her successors to maintain. It was a marvellous feeling to know that the finances of the Black Sash were in such competent and caring hands.

But Barbara will best be remembered for her role in organising opposition to a proposal in 1959, under the Group Areas Act, that Simon's Town be eligible for occupation and ownership by whites only. A public meeting was organised by the Black Sash in Simon's Town, where a decision was taken to do

everything possible to enable people of colour to retain their rights to live and own businesses in Simon's Town. The meeting also resolved to protect the rights of people facing eviction. Barbara took the initiative in helping to collect evidence of the hardships that would be created if the proposal were implemented. She made sure the evidence was submitted to the authorities. She also wrote a booklet informing people how best to protect their rights in the face of the Group Areas Act.

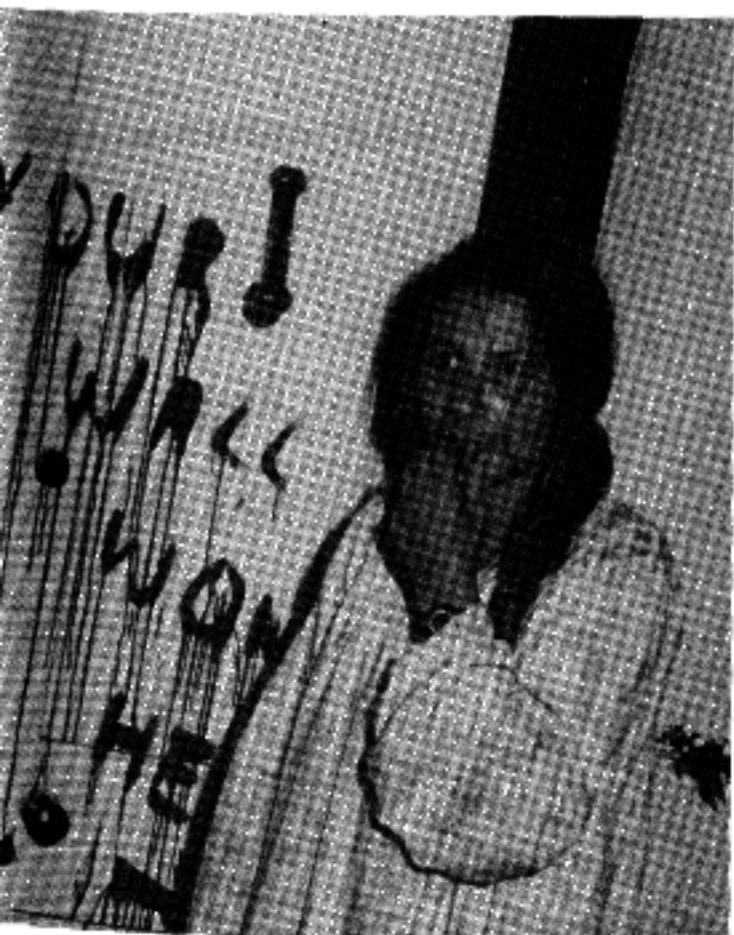
It was ironic that Barbara should have died when virtually all the people of colour had been removed from Simon's Town — and at a time when the government is talking about the possibility of permitting 'grey' (mixed) residential areas. I hope that Barbara's contribution in defending and supporting the right of all people to live in Simon's Town will be remembered for as long as the memory of the hardships that were inflicted may last.

Eulalie Stott

Below:

Melissa de Villiers and Marion Lacey (right) examine a 'necklaced' doll and graffiti on their front door, which was vandalised recently.

Marion Lacey, a Rhodes University politics lecturer, has been lecturing on the ANC and the significance of the Dakar talks.



Steve Hilton-Barber

NEWS-STRIP

Dutch support for children in detention

In the photograph above a leading member of the Albany Black Sash, Marianne Roux, and Heidi Cobus, a worker for the Dependants Conference in Grahamstown, are shown sorting through some of the two hundred or so letters and postcards which have arrived from the Netherlands in the Black Sash's postbox over the last few months.

Sent by various church groups and signed individually by Dutch women, they convey Christian concern and support for children detained without trial. They also express the hope that the letters will somehow reach the persons to whom they are addressed.

One of the letters says: 'As Christians we feel closely involved with you and those thousands of prisoners who are being detained without any trial. Last Sunday we mentioned some of the prisoners by name in our prayers before God. ... We realise that in the Netherlands we also have our responsibility towards you ... Hoping for a just, non-racist South Africa in which there will no longer be room for imprisonment and suffering, we greet you.'

Enclosed with some of the letters are photographs of the senders, while others have petitions of support attached. Many of the cards depict attractive scenes from Holland.

Since most of the children had already been released by the time the cards and letters arrived in this country, the Albany Black Sash and the Dependants Conference are doing their best to trace them.

Marianne Roux hopes to visit the Dutch groups while on holiday in Europe later this year. She has been closely involved in helping detainees with visits, lawyers and study rights, and personally experienced some of the problems faced by families and by ex-detainees when her son was held for some months last year.

Nova de Villiers



Marianne Roux (left) and Heidi Cobus with some of the letters and postcards of support sent from the Netherlands to children in detention.

Panic averted

An attempt to disrupt a Black Sash public meeting in Cape Town in October failed when a flare-thrower missed his mark and well-briefed marshalls avoided panic among several hundred people in the hall.

The interruption occurred during question-time when proceedings were halted by a loud whooshing sound and a crash. White smoke billowed into a window. Most people, thinking it was teargas, jumped up to leave. Prompt responses from the marshalls enabled Di Bishop, in the chair, to assure the audience that the meeting could proceed.

The smoke came from a magnesium flare that had been fired

from outside the hall. It had been aimed at an open window nearest the stage, but hit the window frame landing outside and igniting a bush. The consequences could have been extremely serious if the flare had come through the window and hit someone inside the hall.

A senior nightwatchman at a nearby building saw the thrown flare. He also saw a man running to his car and driving away. The guard noted the car's registration number and called the police.

The meeting concluded without further interruption. The Cape Western Region of the Black Sash has resolved to lay a charge and to keep themselves informed of the progress of the investigations.

Linda-Jean Dykstra

NEWS-STRIP

A voice in the wilderness ...

The following letter, in response to an appreciative letter by a parent concerning 16 June discussions in a school, highlights the plea by the Cape Western Region's Education Interest Group to encourage 'progressive' teachers, who need to know who the supportive parents are. The letter is reproduced with the consent of the teacher concerned.

Dear Mrs ----

Thank you so much for your letter. It really made me feel good knowing that someone does support me. I get incredibly frustrated teaching at a school where "political" issues are not discussed (and may not be). I feel it is so wrong that our pupils have no idea of what is going on in our country. No thought is given to the future. I felt yesterday that the least I could do was mention why June 16 was a special day in our history. The boys, as (your child) told you, reacted violently, disgustingly. It was really sad how strongly some of them are committed to the apartheid system. The girls were amazing! They showed so much concern, interest and ability to discuss. I am waiting to see if any parents phone to complain - I have my reply ready!

Thanks once again for your note: it is wonderful knowing that some of our pupils have parents who are aware of what is happening. (Your children) are lucky to be growing up with their eyes open.

Regards

Natal Midlands Region: News

National Women's Day: A cultural day was held in Pietermaritzburg at the Lotus Hall on National Women's Day. Tables were arranged around the courtyard, and various organisations displayed and sold publications, T-shirts, posters, etc. A programme of songs, music, readings and plays was presented inside the hall and local Black Sash member Hazel Barnes read one of Bessie Head's stories. Black Sash members also set up a crèche so that mothers could relax and enjoy the day.

Contact Group: The Black Sash was one of 18 organisations which met on 25 July in Pietermaritzburg to initiate discussion on areas of common concern. The major outcome of the discussion was agreement that there is an overwhelming need for greater co-operation among Pietermaritzburg's organisations. The precise form of future co-operation could, however, be decided only after delegates reported back to and had discussions with their organisations. Two mandated representatives attended the next joint meeting in September.

The sticker below, of the key, is produced by the National Education Crisis Committee and the Free the Children Alliance, is available from Black Sash offices.

Keep the issue of detention alive

Continue to work for the release of detainees.
Stick the key in a conspicuous place.
Talk about detention at school. At home.
In places of worship. At work.

**UNLOCK THE DOORS OF
APARTHEID JAILS**

If you want to do more, contact the Free the Children Alliance, of which the Black Sash is a member.



NEWS-STRIP

**Border Region
wins appeal**

Four Black Sash members of the Border Region have won an appeal in the Grahamstown Supreme Court against their conviction under the Internal Security Act.

Their conviction arose from a stand in December 1986. Their alleged offence was that, after meeting in front of the Town Hall, they spent some minutes talking before taking turns, one by one, to hold the poster.

The police photographed the group, and used the photograph as evidence that the meeting constituted an illegal gathering in terms of the Internal Security Act.

'We noticed the police photographing us at the time, but as they

always do that weren't unduly worried,' said Sue Power, one of the four.

'The poster was visible in one of the group photographs, and they clearly thought this was sufficient evidence to lay a charge.'

They were convicted in the magistrate's court, but the conviction was overturned on appeal, primarily because the state could not decide exactly where the alleged offence occurred.

One of the four, Pat Flemmer, was particularly pleased to win this appeal, as she had lost her job in the Department of Justice because of her 'criminal record'.

Pat had been appointed a temporary judge's clerk for an acting judge of the circuit court in East London. It is now too late for her to get the job, but at least her record is clear.



*The Paarl 300 Festival:
a view of the opening at the
Central Sports Grounds on
7 February 1987.*

**Greeting cards and
gift-wrap**

Two sets of greeting cards, which carry no printed message, have been produced by Cape Western Region.

Three whimsical drawings by Gus Ferguson have each been reproduced twice to make a set of six cards. Gift-wrap to complement the Ferguson cards is also available.

More serious cards come in a set of four and are reproductions of work by Black Sash artist Marguerite Bolland.

Neither the cards nor the paper is seasonal or occasion-specific, and all should be available now from your local branch or Regional office.

If you cannot obtain them locally, ask your office to place an order with the Cape Western Region.



Linda-Jean Dykstra

NEWS-STRIP

The Paarl project

The year-long celebration marking the 300 years of white settlement at Paarl has spurred community organisations to form the Paarl People's History Project with the aim of producing their own history, which the glossy tercentenary publications largely ignore.

The Black Sash's Cape Western Region had fortuitously launched a project to produce a booklet that drew on advice office records relating to Paarl (spanning almost 30 years), information compiled by field worker Lala Steyn, and the contributions of many Black Sash volunteers.

These projects have dovetailed, and the 64-page Black Sash booklet, entitled *The Hidden Story*, is available now from 5 Long Street, Mowbray 7700 at a cost of R3.00.

Candy Malberbe

THE HIDDEN STORY

