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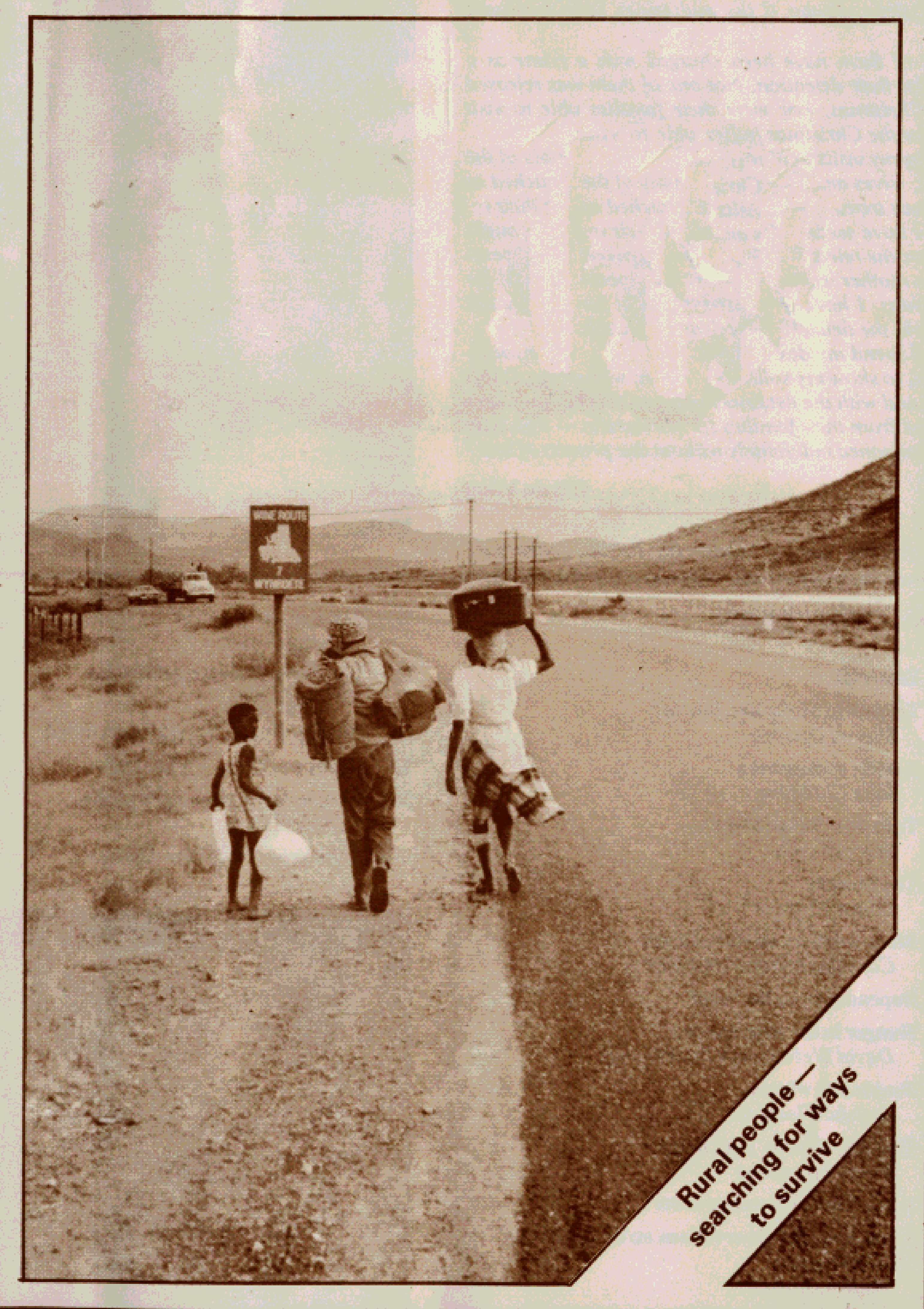
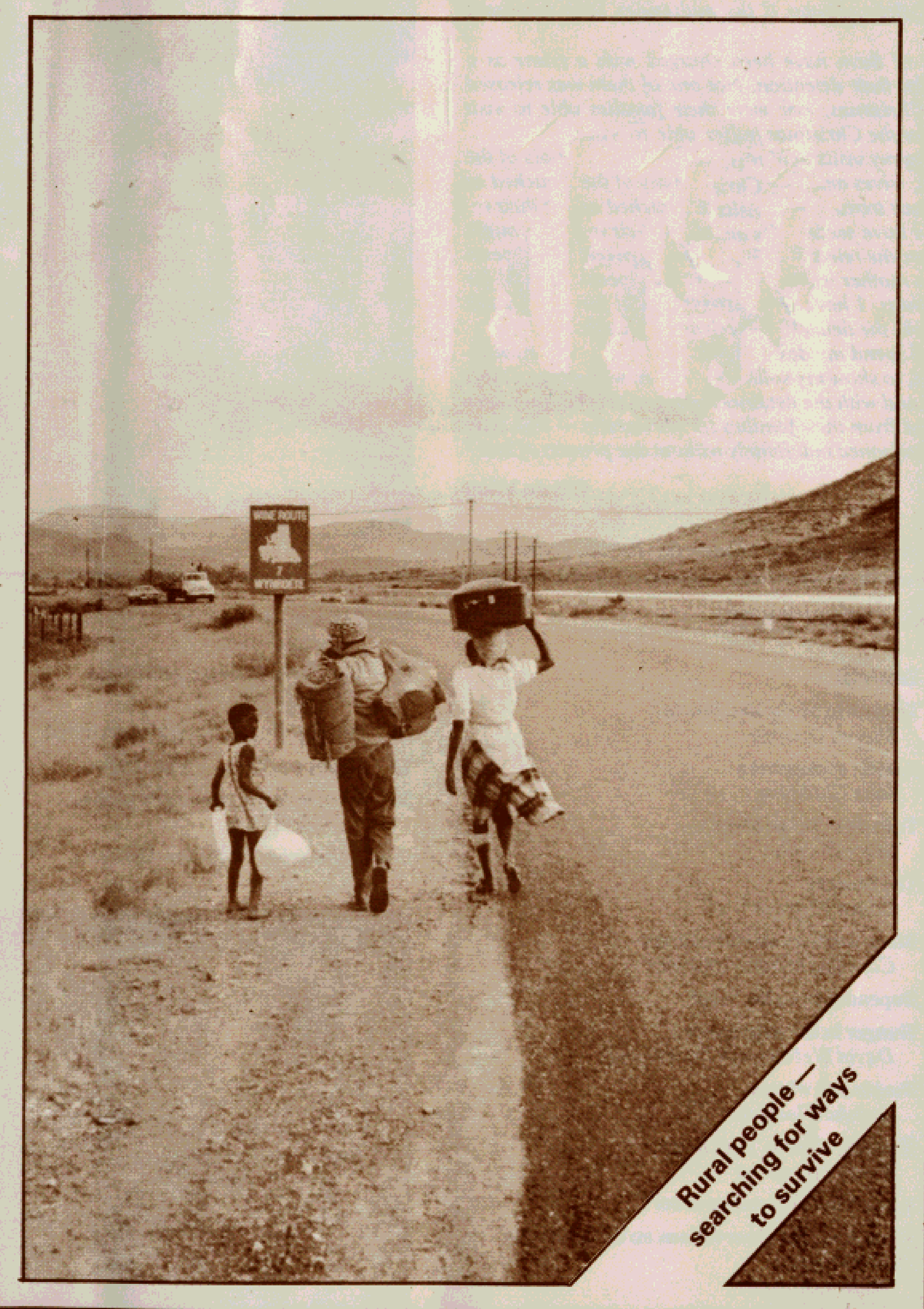


Rural people — searching for ways to survive

Volume 28 No 4 February 1986

Sash



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'Since the beginning of the State of Emergency, I have been assisting relatives of detainees. It is now six months and one week after the declaration of the State of Emergency. There are about 80 'emergency' detainees in Modderbee who have been there for five or six months. Many of them are not well known and don't have anyone outside who knows how to go about lobbying for their release. I often wonder if the authorities have forgotten them.

None of them have been charged with a crime as a reason for their detention. Not one of them was released before Christmas, nor were their families able to visit them over the Christmas period.

During my visits to Modderbee I have met many of the mothers, wives and sisters personally. I have watched as their hands tremble as they hand over money for their relatives. I have seen a mother cry as she feared she might die before the release of her son. I have seen the desperation of a mother whose 14-year-old son was detained for 5½ months. I have no answer for them when they ask "when will the detainees be released".

I shall spend my day outside Modderbee Prison, without food, to show my solidarity with the suffering of these women and with the detainees themselves who have been separated from their families for six months — who have been imprisoned indefinitely without due process of law.'

Gill de Vlieg

Gill de Vlieg, outside Modderbee Prison, January 28 *photo: Jo-Anne Collinge*

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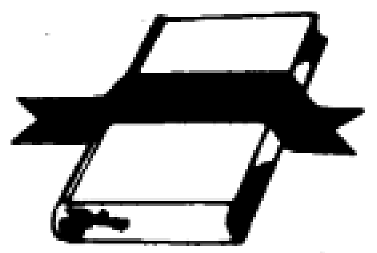
Cover photo by Philip van Ryneveld

A piece of the peace ribbon



According to Mrs Ina Perlman of Operation Hunger, the mystery of rural survival is *ubuntu* — an attitude towards people and society. It's a prescription for a human way of life as opposed to an animal way of life. It involves sharing, caring, love, compassion. Everyone belongs to someone. No one should be without. If someone lacks the means to survive, then give it to him or her (see page)

This is what keeps people in the homelands alive. It's not cash from a migrant worker's earnings or the woefully inadequate rural economy which is insufficient to survive at even a meagre level.

As a philosophy of social existence, *ubuntu* is in striking contrast to the one brought to Africa by the European colonialists and which has reached barbaric extremes in this country today. The notion of survival of the fittest is linked to 'group' preservation. Each group must survive as a group, albeit at the expense of another. People are not simply people — they are members of one group or another and the treatment they get depends on the group to which they belong.

The dominant group, which gets its position from its weaponry and economic superiority can, and usually does, justify its treatment of other 'people' by alleged group differences — 'blacks don't need as much money as we do, they only eat mealie meal' . . . 'they don't feel the death of their children as much as we do' . . . 'they're used to getting up at three in the morning' and so on.

This spirit is carried to an extreme by the police and army who command the weaponry that keeps the white group in power. 'Vandag gaan ons die *kaffirs* doodskiet' policemen have allegedly shouted from their armoured vehicles at a time when it is alleged that they shot live bullets into crowds of fleeing township residents in Mamelodi (from affidavits collected by Peter Soal in November).

The abyss our society sinks into becomes worse and worse as we abandon one civilised concern after another. A lie in Parliament pales into insignificance in the face of police now teaming up with marauding bands of thugs. In Moutse, for instance, signed statements collected by us paint a terrifying picture of white men arriving at a rural homestead at 4 am in a yellow SAP vehicle. The men claimed to be members of *MBHOKOTO*, a group of so-called vigilantes employed to protect the interests of the Ndebele 'group'. The men scaled the homestead fence, shot bullets through the windows, kicked down the doors, beat up the children.

In spite of this terror in our land, in spite of the fact that it is brutalising a generation of black children who are learning to kill and to believe that terror and arson are their best weapons; and, in spite of the parallels between this 'group' philosophy and that which prevailed in Germany before the war, the present Government will clearly not relinquish its ideology of 'group' preservation. In one short week after its announcement that apartheid is outmoded, it back-tracked three times — once on the question of integrated education, once on the question of separate group areas and then on the question of the possibility of a black man becoming president.

It's such a pity that resort has to be made to sports boycotts, cultural boycotts, consumer boycotts and finally economic boycotts that erode the quality of all our lives and our links with the rest of the world because we cannot learn the simple philosophy of sharing and caring for one another as equals — the philosophy of *ubuntu*. If those who rule in the white community could in all humility go to their black compatriots to learn the lessons of *ubuntu* there might be some hope of real change in South Africa.

Tribute to Molly Blackburn

by Sheena Duncan at the funeral service

courtesy of Fair Lady

Molly Blackburn with her husband Gavin and daughters Josephine (16, left) and Fenella (15)

When Gavin phoned me last night to ask me to speak briefly this morning my mind went totally blank.

There are some things which are too deeply felt for any words and such is my sorrow. There are no words to say what we have all felt over the last days and what we are feeling now.

I went back to share with other Black Sash people who have come to Port Elizabeth from all over South Africa my feelings of inadequacy. One of them handed me an old envelope on which she had scribbled some words.

She says she writes things down when she hears them. She doesn't know where this comes from and she doesn't remember when she heard it but she has given me the words I needed.

This is what it says:

A warrior for justice had walked briefly in a troubled land, seeded the minds of men and women with new visions of themselves and changed the course of history.

Molly was such a one.

I have not known her for very long and I wish there had been more time for us. But there are some people whom one instantly recognises as great from the moment one meets them.

Molly was such a one — a truly great person.

Yesterday I opened the Black Sash magazine of May 1985 which reports on our national conference held here in Port Elizabeth last March.

There is a photograph of Brian Bishop taken in Namibia.

There is a photograph of Matthew Goniwe and one of Molly. All of them — *'Warriors for justice who walked briefly in a troubled land.'*

They are all dead.

We weep today but we know that they *have* changed the course of history and their work will continue.

This is the tribute we pay to them — our commitment to go on trying to follow them as 'warriors for justice' — our dedication to the cause they served.

We will not forget them and we will not be turned back from the path they trod.

Molly's death is a national as well as a bitterly felt personal tragedy.

All of us today reach out to comfort her husband, her children, her family, her friends, especially Di, and all the thousands of people who mourn her now.

There is a verse from the first psalm which is for our consolation:

And she shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth her fruit in season; her leaf shall also not wither; and whatsoever she doeth shall prosper.

In the shade of her tree we shall bring forth our fruit in due season and we will always seek to prosper the work she has begun.

A sister remembers . . .

It is two weeks today since the accident in which Molly and Brian were killed. After the funeral — that amazing and wonderful day when black and white wept, sang, danced and shared their sorrow — I found myself pondering often what it was that had turned Molly from an industrious, social housewife like so many others, into the phenomenon that swept 70 000 Uitenhage mourners to their feet, clenched fist raised, shouting 'Viva Molly'. When was the moment for her when she suddenly started to stride towards black South Africans with hands outstretched?

I can see that Molly possessed a fairly unique set of attributes. Having won the PFP Provincial Council seat for Walmer in 1981 she had a platform which she could — and certainly did — use to put pressure on government bodies. She had an upbringing in which the pursuit of justice and liberal values were considered important. She had an attractive personality, a good speaking voice, lots of confidence and an acute and well-organised mind. She had always been determined and single-minded in her pursuit of a set goal. She had a husband who was very supportive as was her Member of Parliament. Other women (and men) have possessed most or even all of these qualities, so how did she differ?

She differed in that she gave herself to the black communities of the Eastern Cape. This has also been done

before, but added to the other qualities I have mentioned, the combination became unique. In our strife-torn, depressed and angry Eastern Cape she shone like the Star of Bethlehem.

As sisters go, we have always been very close, and I have always felt that I knew her pretty well, but in the past 18 months I have been awed by the way she grew in stature. And the tragedy is that I know, for her, this was just the beginning.

To go back quite a long way, Molly was born into a comfortable middle-class home in Port Elizabeth on November 12, 1930. I was born two years later. As children our relationship was not without its storms — from a tender age Molly asserted her leadership qualities, but even then for her, things always had to be 'fair'. I can never remember her telling a lie.

Our father, Buller Pagden, was a successful attorney; our mother descended from 1820 Settler, Samuel Cawood. Our roots lie deep in Eastern Cape soil. As children, we lived in an atmosphere that was perhaps more enlightened than most. Our father was a far-sighted and clear-thinking man, numbering among his friends many politicians and political writers of the post-war period. Looking through a visitors book we had then, I see the signatures of Jan Hofmeyr, de Villiers Graaff, Hobart Houghton, A M Keppel-Jones, Alan Paton. One night I can remember Alan Paton having a tremendous argument with de Villiers Graaff over the latter's failure to come to grips with the real issues facing South Africa. Our father became regional director of Race Relations and was on the national executive of the Progressive Party after it broke away from the United Party.

And the tragedy is that I know, for her, this was just the beginning

Molly left the Collegiate School in 1947 with a first class matric and after four years graduated from Rhodes with a BA Degree. After travelling and teaching in London for a while she married an Englishman and settled in Belgium where she spent the next seven years of her life. On a visit to her at this time I took her a record of the rock musical, *King Kong*. I remember her sitting playing it, tears pouring down her face. 'You know,' she said to me, 'I am not going to be able to live away from the people of Africa for the rest of my life.' She was consumed with homesickness and seven years and three children later she returned to Port Elizabeth to live.

During the next two decades Molly remarried, this time to Dr Gavin Blackburn, had four more children and, in many ways typified the busy, suburban, South African housewife. Yet, looking back, she was gaining training and skills that were to equip her for the work she was finally to do with such consummate skill. She started off as an estate agent employee, and after some years acquired and ran a highly successful estate agency of her own. Juggling this career with four young children takes organisation and skill — but she loved the challenges it presented.

During the 1977 general election we both worked flat out for the PFP, canvassing evening after evening, walking the streets of the Walmer constituency. One evening I remember her saying to me, 'You know, Jude, this isn't where it's all happening. You know where I'd really like to be? — finding out what's going on in the black communities. It's what's happening over there that's really going to count.' How out of touch such words must sound to Sash members who had been fighting the battle for justice for so long, but her time was yet to come.

Molly had to wait for another four years to make the first move in that direction. 1981 brought another general election and a victory for herself as Provincial Council candidate with Andrew Savage as her Parliamentary partner. She sold her estate agency and, in order to improve her political knowledge, she spent a year as organiser for the PFP, a job she did superbly.

Her first term as Provincial Councillor was frustrating and difficult. 'The Nats don't listen to a word Di or I say,' she complained. 'They sit with their feet up and snore. It's unbelievable.' Those first months were very trying, but she returned full of admiration and praise for her fellow councillors, and in particular, Di Bishop. Together they presented a team the Nat MPC's found they could not fail to acknowledge as courageous, tenacious, highly capable — and troublesome.

Di, although many years Molly's junior, had far more experience in fighting the bitter battle against apartheid. A Black Sash member since 1977, her training as a social worker had brought her into close contact with the terrible living conditions, deprivations and needs of the black South African.

'White South Africans think that the gap between black and white is too wide to be bridged, I don't think this is so. If you stretch out a loving hand, somewhere on the other side a loving hand will take it, and that will be the beginning of a bridge'

Gradually the people of the townships began to learn that here was a woman who was ready to listen to their problems. The ensuing years, 1982/3/4 brought Molly increasingly into contact with the township communities, the whole of the Eastern Cape becoming her concern. She advised Matthew Goniwe in Cradock on how to form a Residents' Association and the calls began to come in from far and wide, 'How do we structure a committee?' 'We want to form a self-help group', 'We have so few taps, the roads are so terrible and the rents so high', 'My child has been taken by the police, he is only 13.' Cradock, Graaff-Reinet, Colesburg, Middelburg, Port Alfred, Jansenville, Somerset-East, Fort Beaufort, Steytlerville, De Aar, Cookhouse. The files are piled high now on Molly's desk.

November, 1984, brought with it the shooting by police of 19-year-old Madodane Tyuke in Port Alfred. The circumstances were horrifying and so was the indiscriminate shooting of mourners a his funeral. Twenty people were shot and subsequently charged with public violence. The Port Alfred community called on Molly for help and this was to be her first involvement in the

sort of mass police violence that was to be repeated time and time again in the Eastern Cape and throughout the country. Right from the start Molly kept meticulous records of all such incidents and any action she took was performed with the minimum of fuss and the maximum of effect. I am sure that it is in part due to her initial advice and continued watchfulness and concern that the 19 Port Alfred residents charged with public violence in this case were, on October 4, 1985, acquitted.

Those Sash members who were at the 1985 Conference in Port Elizabeth observed the vicious police behaviour first hand in the Uitenhage Charge Office. It was followed four days later by the Maduna Road Massacre in Langa, Uitenhage.

Molly was catapulted into the limelight. The TV cameras of the world focused on her, the phone never stopped ringing, visitors from far and wide poured into 13 Brighton Drive. She never allowed the publicity and continual attention of the media to get between her and the people she was trying to help. She attended to everything and everybody but the little people, with their often huge problems, always came first. It was at this time, too, that the death threats started coming in, usually at two or three in the morning. These never seemed to really frighten the Blackburn household, but were resented because they disrupted sleep.

I think we all know well the role Molly played during the rest of 1985, the intensification of pressure on us all, but particularly her when the State of Emergency was declared. She used to phone me every morning just after seven and we would discuss the previous 24 hours, what her plans were, how I and other Sash members could help.

She worked in the Advice Office every Thursday morning and on those days the queue was half as long again. Attempts by the police to interfere with her work by arresting her or removing her township permit were viewed with impatience but did not hamper her.

She was asked to speak at meetings and rallies all over the country and her fluency and stature grew with each appearance. At funerals, and she only went if the communities invited her, she was often asked to speak and this she did so very well, finding the balance between a call for peace and an utter implacability and refusal to give in to the violence of the apartheid system. All over the township, graffiti bear witness to the peoples' acceptance of Molly's relevance to their cause — and the police concern over this acceptance.

These then were the foundation stones of the bridges Molly hoped, with help and her strong faith in God, to build. It is South Africa's tragedy that she will not be here to continue with that work. Her funeral was a testimony to the love and respect she had gained in so short a time from the black community. She said to me once, 'White South Africans think that the gap between black and white is too wide to be bridged. I don't think this is so. If you stretch out a loving hand, somewhere on the other side a loving hand will take it, and that will be the beginning of a bridge.'

Judy Chalmers

Brian Bishop

— a tribute by Mary Burton

For the majority of Black Sash members, contact with Brian Bishop came through Di. Some of us, however, had prior acquaintance and enjoyed working with him in the SA Institute of Race Relations or the Civil Rights League, or had met him as a fellow member of the Liberal Party. Brian gave generously of his time and concern to these organisations and made important contributions as chairman of the Civil Rights League and as chairman of the Cape Western Region of the SAIRR.

Brian was an efficient chairman, attending with equal care to matters of policy and details of administration. He brought new energy to the Civil Rights League, and his frequent letters and statements published in the Cape Town newspapers were a significant contribution to political debate. He was sensitive to the many strands of political thinking which have been current in the Western Cape and extremely acute in his evaluation of major issues. A discussion with him of any particular crisis always helped to clarify the situation.

Even-tempered and good humoured, he was always pleasant company — as Di has said 'He was a very quiet person'. However, he was angered by injustice, and driven to take action. He was also deeply concerned for individual victims of the apartheid system, and we remember in particular his efforts to help Siphiwo Mtimkulu and his attempts to trace him after his mysterious disappearance. I remember too his anger at the injury and indignities to which the people of Cradock were subjected.

Di, Molly and Brian working together in the Eastern Cape

In his capacity as a businessman Brian also made a contribution to the task of shaping opinions and laying foundations for change. Through the Chamber of Commerce and the Association of Chambers of Commerce he frequently brought matters of political urgency to the attention of fellow businessmen. The Cape Town Chamber of Commerce is indebted to him for providing oportunities for formal and informal contact with members of black community organisations — important links which will surely not be broken.

During 1985 Brian had succeeded in arranging his business affairs so as to allow him increased time to devote to the struggle for basic human rights in South Africa, as well as to supporting Di in her work and to having more time for his family. His loss is therefore a particular tragedy for us and for them.

We have many reasons to be grateful for Brian's life, but most of all we have to thank him for giving us Di — for encouraging her, supporting her, and selflessly setting her free to give her time to Black Sash work.

And as the Black Sash work continues so Brian will live on in our memory.

The funeral

Laura Pollecutt reports

Gavin Blackburn chose, quite rightly, to have Molly's funeral in her regular place of worship — the Methodist Church.

It was a difficult decision because it was obvious that the crowds would spill out into the street beyond the church walls and, being within a white area, this would give the police an excuse to be out in full force . . . not a recipe for a peaceful funeral.

We, Black Sash members from other areas, were warned to be at the church as early as possible if we wished to gain a place inside. The funeral was set for 10 am and, on our arrival at 8, the church was already beginning to fill up. By 9 am every bit of space had been taken. Chairs were also laid out in the passages and rooms adjacent to the main body of the church and the sound system was set up to broadcast the service to people in the streets outside.

During our wait we sat peacefully in the church with the other mourners who, every now and again, broke into song. As they sang we cried, for their voices conveyed the despair of all the oppressed in South Africa and the true depth of the emotion they felt on Molly, their saviour's, death: 'Who shall speak for us now, Molly Blackburn?'

The service was an ecumenical one, with the Reverend George Irvine the host, assisted by Reverend Paul Verryn and with tributes from Bishop John Murphy, Bishop Bruce Evans and the Reverend H M Dandala. It was attended by other prominent churchmen, dignatories and by staff of the various consulates. There was also a strong delegation of PFP Members of Parliament and Members of the Provincial Council.

Approximately a half hour before the ceremony was due to begin, a controlled and serene-looking Di Bishop was wheeled in and our hearts went out to her in her personal grief. Unfortunately she had to suffer having cameras and video equiment thrust at her as she was wheeled along. While waiting, people went to pay their respects to her and even grown men had tears in their eyes.

Tributes to Molly were paid by the PFP, Black Sash and UDF, as well as by local community leader Mkuseli Jack. Each seemed to feel the inadequacy of words to convey the feelings we all felt. Alex Boraine of the PFP said of her: 'She epitomised the quality of a bridge so desperately needed in our land — and, like a bridge, people sometimes walked all over her. But she never minded so long as she could unite black and white.'

Sheena, too, paid tribute and said that Molly, along with Brian Bishop, 'had changed the course of history.' Mkuseli Jack, who had worked so often alongside Molly, said 'She did not compromise with injustice.'

Soon after this the enormous crowd (estimated at 20 000) gradually dispersed in a highly disciplined manner, watched by the large security force on standby.

Site of the Langa shooting. To ease the tension amongst the crowd who gathered when Justice Kannemeyer went to do an in loco inspection, Molly knelt down and a large part of the crowd followed suit. *photos: Colin Urquhart, Eastern Province Herald*

Di and Brian Bishop at their home in Cape town with Siphiwo Mtimkulu on Christmas Eve, 1981. Di explains: It was Siphiwo who brought Brian and me into much closer contact with Molly. For though we had been involved in investigating living conditions of certain squatter communities, it was Molly's phone-call from Port Elizabeth to us about Siphiwo in November 1981 that got Brian and me involved in the question of detainees and extended our work with Molly.

Siphiwo, who as a member of Cosas, had been in detention for some five months. He was detained on Republic Day 1981. His parents were never informed. For weeks they hunted for him and it was through the release of other detainees that they learnt that he had been seen in police custody with gun shot wounds. His father then discovered his whereabouts and its was confirmed that he had been shot and was having treatment to a wound on his arm. He had been detained under Sect 6 of the old Terrorism Act.

Within two days of his release at the end of October 1981 he became very ill. Not being able to diagnose his problem the hospital staff in Port Elizabeth made arrangements for him to be transferred to Groote Schuur in Cape Town. Molly had phoned to ask us to visit Siphiwo.

At Groote Schuur, where he was under the care of Professor Francis Ames, it was discoverd that he had thallium poisoning. The symptoms of this poison only appear some weeks after it is imbibed. This diagnosis gave rise to the assumption that Siphiwo must have received the poison during the time he was in detention. There was a great deal of publicity about it and a claim for damages of R140 000 against the police was instituted.

Siphiwo spent two months at Groote Schuur. During that time we got special permission to have him with us for Christmas. When he was discharged from Groote Schuur at the end of January he became an out-patient at the hospital in Port Elizabeth. On April 13 he left home with his friend, Topsy Madaka to visit the hospital where he was to collect his aeroplane ticket and other papers. At that stage the court case was still pending. He and Madaka never reached the hospital. To this day his whereabouts and those of Madaka have never been discovered.

Brian, who was chairman of the Civil Rights League, took up the matter of Siphiwo and Madaka's disappearance. The Civil Rights League offered a reward of R1 000 to anyone who could supply information that would lead to their whereabouts. That reward is still unclaimed but the interest that Brian generated around the disappearance has since waned.

Dear Sash Members,

I know you will all forgive me for replying in this way to your kind message of sympathy and affection. Dearly as I would love to respond to each of you individually, I fear that with all the other responsibility now on my shoulders it would take me many months to do so.

My children and I would like you all to know how much we appreciate your love for Molly and your concern for us. As you can imagine, her death has left us completely devastated, but it has been of tremendous comfort to us to realise how much she was loved and by how many, and how personal was the sense of loss felt by an enormous number, many of whom had had only brief and infrequent contact with her.

One aspect of that wonderful ceremony of Molly's funeral deserves special comment I think. This is the fact that there was such a cross-section of the population, and that there was no incident. It showed a vast number of South African citizens that it is possible, even easy as many remarked, for all 'groups' to breathe the same air, pray together, mourn together, live side by side, without the sun stopping in the heavens. And this I believe is one of Molly's main messages. She was not a politician : certainly she had no political ambitions or aspirations. But she did have a very strong sense of right and wrong, and cared for people. Therefore she could not abide the injustices and inhumanity shown to so many by the upholders and enforcers of Nationalist Party policy.

This message must not be allowed to go unheeded. The help and care that is required by so many must continue to pour out from every concerned person. Contact must be made and maintained, and we must realise that such contact can only be achieved by each and every one of us making effort and sacrifice. It cannot be achieved by comfortable arm-chair platitudes.

We must get ourselves to the funerals of victims of the injustices, to the courts for the trials of those who are being harassed, to the authorities to help those whose husbands, wives, children have been detained and who can get little or no redress.

For these are things that Molly did, and there was ample evidence at her funeral of how much it was appreciated.

We can no longer afford the complacency with which we have all viewed these events to date. On the day after Molly died I remarked to a friend 'This is something that happens to other people'. One's own experience of it makes one realise what these other people suffer. I believe we must now start to feel what other people suffer before it happens to us.

January, 1986

GAVIN BLACKBURN

Black workers on white farms

— *what they go without*

The Cape Western Region of the Black Sash has decided to try to extend its work from a mainly urban base to include the small towns and farming districts of the Western Cape. In order to do this we have employed a rural field worker, Phillip van Ryneveld, and also started a rural interest group, locally known as RIG. The initial task that RIG set itself was to educate its members about the conditions under which farm labourers work and the laws which apply to them. This article is a summary of a number of discussions we have held with people with special knowledge of farm labour.

— without proper legal protection

Little of the usual industrial legislation which offers workers limited protection at least, applies to farm workers. They are specifically excluded from the Wage Act, Unemployment Insurance Act, Basic Conditions of Employment Act and Machinery and Occupational Safety Act. This means that there are no legislated minimum wages, hours of work, leave provision, etc.

— without written contracts

Conditions of work and relations with the farmer are governed by either a common law contract or, in the case of migrant labourers, the standard contract entered into at a labour bureau. Farm workers are seldom if ever given written copies of their contracts. In the case of labour bureau contracts, these are filled in in quadruplicate, but the worker himself is not entitled to a copy.

— without decent wages

Wages of farm workers are very low. In the Western Cape where wages are the best in the country, workers were earning on average R32 a week in 1985. There is little differentiation for length of time worked on the farm. The low wages on farms are usually justified by farmers who refer to other benefits that workers have, for example, free housing and rations. There are no minimum requirements for these benefits. The housing provided is often of a very low quality.

— without secure homes

Housing in fact is an area of prime importance for workers. The provision of housing ties the worker to the farm. Should a worker lose his job on the farm he must in most cases vacate the house he and his family occupy sometimes with as little as 24 hours notice, whether or not he has alternative accommodation.

The need for housing also limits members of farm labourers families to working on the farm. The male head of the family contracts verbally with the farmer for the entire family. The females are on standby — generally on 12 hours call at harvest time. Some farmers allow farming members to work in town if they pay rent for their rooms on the farm. Others do not allow family members who do not work on the farm to live there. A serious problem with the 12 hour call system is that women who have better paying char jobs in nearby towns do not have time to inform the town employers that they cannot come to work.

— without proper access to pensions

Old age presents many problems for farm workers. Most farms are outside the prescribed urban areas and therefore it is impossible for Africans ever to receive permanent legal rights to live there. This means that people who are too old to work often have to move to a homeland. Farm workers who qualify for old age pensions are sometimes discouraged from obtaining them. As one worker put it, 'Workers who are over 60 want to go on pension but the farmer refuses to allow them because he thinks that they will get too much money and they are still able to work.' Farm workers, many of whom are illiterate, are almost entirely dependent on the farmer for things such as assistance with making a pension application.

— without solid access to health and safety services

They are also dependent on him for access to health services as he has control over both transport and communication, ie the telephone. One piece of industrial legislation that does cover farm workers is the Workmens Compensation Act. Once again, without the coop-

Picking tobacco *courtesy of the Financial Mail*

picture of courtesy of the Financial Mail

eration of the farmer it is very difficult for workers to claim this. Payments based on a formula which includes the wage as one factor are often very small, eg a worker who was earning R20 per month in 1980 had his hand severed in a reaping machine and received R329 in compensation.

Certain occupational hazards of farming such as insecticide poisoning are notifiable diseases. In 1985 fewer than 100 cases were notified and yet it is common to see farm workers spraying crops without any form of protective clothing. Without some form of enforcement agency legislation remains little more than useless pieces of paper to farm workers.

— without access to registered trade unions

While it is not illegal for farm workers to join trade unions, such unions cannot be registered, as farm workers are not classified as employees under the relevant legislation. Access to farm workers by people such as union organisers is strictly limited by the readiness of farmers to invoke the trespass laws. Until farm workers can organise freely it is unlikely that they are going to win better conditions, eg fixed working hours including lunch and tea breaks, overtime pay, annual leave, etc. It is possible though that the extension of the kind of advice offices run by the Black Sash in urban areas into rural areas would be one way of assisting people to obtain the rights to which they are entitled.

What is the State doing about the plight of farm labourers?

— sitting on the National Manpower Commission!

RIG makes an urgent plea for the commission to make recommendations which will put an end to feudal labour conditions on farms — and in houses.

In 1974 the repeal of the Masters and Servants Act was greeted enthusiastically. But because the Act was not replaced by any legal protection, farm and domestic workers are now subject only to the common law. Then in February 1982 the National Manpower Commission enquiry into wages and working conditions of farm and domestic workers was established. The report of this commission, 'to investigate possible measures for the regulation of the conditions of employment of farm and domestic workers', has not been published four years later. It is a matter of the greatest urgency and public concern. The report should be released without further delay.

Unless this report recommends livable minimum wages, eligibility for the Unemployment Insurance Fund, provisions for sick and annual paid leave, paid public holidays and Sundays, overtime, protective legislation for children and pregnant women, and the freedom to organise and bargain collectively, it will perpetuate the feudal labour conditions on the farms and in the homes of this country. In fact, these workers and their families do not even have the security of tenure of the feudal system — at a moment's notice they may be evicted from land where they have lived for generations.

Even if all these provisions are written into the legislation, the plight of farm and domestic workers will improve little unless adequate and effective measures for the implementation and monitoring of the laws are clearly laid out.

Until farmworkers' trade unions organise nationally, a network of advice offices throughout the rural areas is an urgent necessity. Farmworkers need advice and possible legal representation in the case of unfair dismissals, evictions, assaults, theft of their stock, refusal of old age pensions, workmen's compensation, amongst other problems.

Farmworkers are more seriously disadvantaged than urban or mine workers as they work in small groups, far from each other and urban contacts. Even those who are literate seldom get to see newspapers or pamphlets. Transport is irregular and expensive. Access to telephones is an unknown luxury. The only contact is through the church and schools. Because priests and bona fide religious representatives are allowed to visit the farms, responsibility rests heavily with the churches (and teachers) to assist farmworkers with their problems. The not insignificant labour reforms introduced in the rest of South Africa over the past five years must be extended to farm and domestic workers.

Dependence on the 'Dop'

— worker control on wine farms?

The 'Tot System' (Dopstelsel) is the euphemistic description given to the practice in which farmers administer large quantities of reject wine to their workers on a regular basis. It is essentially a system of institutionalised alcohol addiction — it gives the employer much greater control over his workforce who are dependant upon the liquor he can choose not to administer.

The system has been in operation for many years with missionaries agitating against it as long ago as the 1840s. In 1928 the Liquor Act limited the amount of daily wine given as wage to 1½ pints. And in 1961 it became illegal to pay workers with alcohol. However, there remains to this day no law against the free dispensing of liquor to workers.

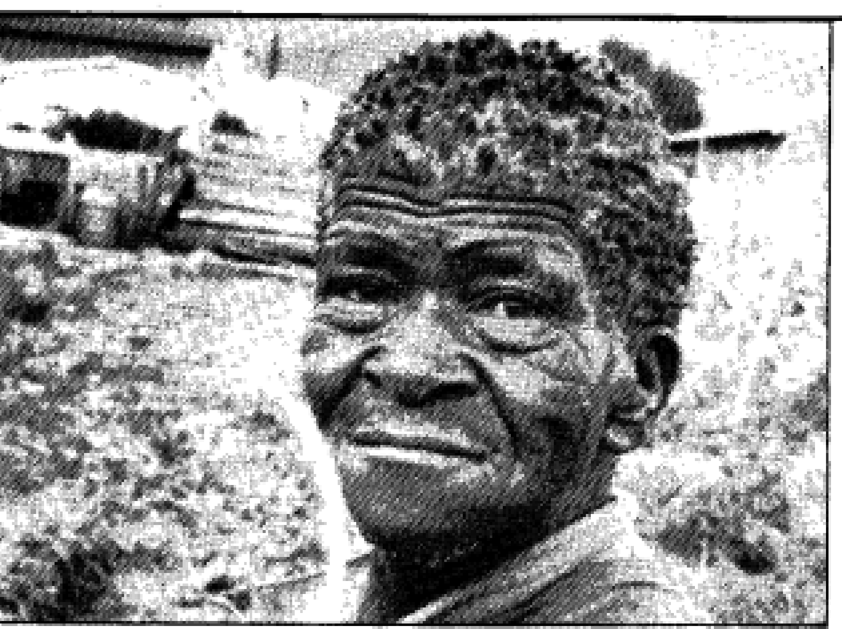
The practice is widespread in the Western Cape especially on the wine farms even in supposedly relatively progressive areas. While the tot system has been successfully abolished on some farms, as recently as 1984 a survey of the 18 farms of one co-operative between Somerset West and Stellenbosch showed that not one of the farms did not give 'dop' — a tot, usually a condensed milk tin or 'visblik' full of wine, or 'a bottle' the common 750 ml bottle. One farmer gave five tots and a bottle of wine to each worker per day. Six farmers gave three tots and a bottle; six gave two tots and a bottle; three gave one tot and a bottle; while two just gave the bottle each evening.

There is pressure from the South African Agricultural Union to reduce these quantitites. The reject wine is generally bought from the wine co-operatives at 26c per litre. Farm labourers consume between 3% and 5% of the entire wine crop in 'dop'.

Productivity is clearly disadvantaged to an extent by the alcohol consumption, but within the existing forms of coercive management the benefits to the farmer tend to be more compelling. Withholding 'dop' is the most common and effective form of punishment, while the skills required of labourers in the vineyards are too minimal to be seriously affected by the levels of intoxication they are permitted to reach during working hours.

A Cape wine farm

An interview with Mr Flip Jooste (known as Oom Flip) illustrates some points made about the tot system


Philip van Ryneveld

Oom Flip was born on a farm in Calvinia in 1931 and has spent most of his life as an agricultural worker in various parts of the Western Cape. He now lives in Montagu where he makes a living by doing odd jobs and growing vegetables on unused plots around the town. The following are extracts from a discussion one evening between Oom Flip, Philip van Ryneveld of Black Sash and Dawie Bosch and Lala Steyn of the Montagu and Ashton Gemeenskapsdiens (known as MAG)

• **Oom Flip describes the working day . . .**

'When the bell rings on the farm then you must get up. The second ring means "Come!" When the second bell rings then you must be at the cellars. When you get there the men have already drunk their dop. If you're perhaps five minutes late then you don't get that dop. That's the inval-dop — the dop when you fall in in the morning. 6 o'clock or 7 o'clock. Farm time is 6 o'clock. That's the proper fall-in time — winter or summer. Then you get dop. You know how big a condensed milk tin is? One of those nicely cut open — that's a farm dop. You get the tin-full. Right. That's fall-in. Now, breakfast-dop — before you go and eat. You're going to eat so you go down to the cellar. 8 o'clock. Now the baas is there. then he gives you a dop — another one. All right. After breakfast, you fall in. 11 o'clock, he pours dop — another one. Then you carry on working,. 12 o'clock, when you go and eat. The farmers all break at 12 o'clock. Here and there you get a farmer who breaks at 1 o'clock. Right, another dop before you go and eat. 4 o'clock — dop. In the evening another dop. That's 6 dop. Sometimes the men ask him for another dop. Then he'll give if he's in a good mood. If he's not in a good mood then they leave it. They know him, they know when he's in a good mood . . .

Yes. The one who hasn't worked properly, or so on — he doesn't get a dop. The farmer holds that dop back. Sometimes he takes off the whole week's wine. Then that man doesn't drink for the whole week. He says he must come every evening and stand in front of the men. He says, "Stand there so you can see how the men drink." Then he gives out the wine — the people drink . . .'

Philip Van Ryneveld: Most of the farmers around here — do they give their workers 'mos'? ('mos' is the name for the reject wine used in the tot-system)

Oom Flip: Yes, they do. They all do. The thing is — why they all give it — if they didn't give mos then they wouldn't get workers on the farms.

Philip: So they must give mos? If they want to get workers then they must give mos?

Oom Flip: Yes. When someone comes looking for work he doesn't ask how much the baas pays. He asks how much mos the baas gives. That's why we can't come right.

Dawie Bosch: How do you mean, Oom Flip?

Oom Flip: I'll tell you how I mean. You know baas Pierre where I worked. Well, one day, I went to him. I said to him, 'Baas, I don't think I can carry on working for you.' He wants to know why not. So I told him, 'Well, baas, look. I work well at everything, There aren't any problems with the work. But the only thing is I can't accept the salary you give me for the work that I do. (He was getting R2 a day). 'Okay', he says, 'I'll go and hear what the other workers have to say.' And he gets onto his motorbike and drives away. All right. I carry on with the work.

The next day we're there in the vineyard. We're weeding in the vineyard — weeding the vineyard clean. So I ask him, 'Baas, now what about the thing I spoke about yesterday?' so he calls the people there. 'Come! All of you come here! Look here! This guy says he wants more money. He says he can't come by on the money I pay him. And what do you say? Do you also want more?'. The baas says, 'Look then, I'll give you R4 a day.' He says, 'I'll give you R20 a week — but then I'll stop the wine.'

Allemagtig! Toe maak hulle darem 'n lawaai! Then they really began to complain! It's war! and some of them want to leave! And the baas says, 'Look, you see there. Yesterday you came to me and now some of them want to leave because of the wine.'

So I said, 'No, baas, Give them their wine, but give me money. It's got nothing to do with me. I'll buy my wine in the town.' I told him, 'But don't deduct the wine from my wages. I know that you deduct from my wages for the wine — that's why it comes out as so little.'

But the baas said. 'No'. He says he'll pay R4 a day, but then everyone must stop drinking.

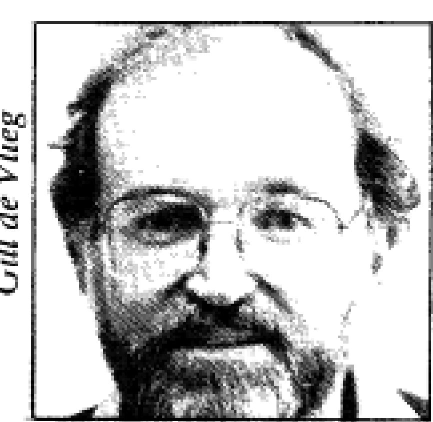
So I left . . .

Towards the end of the evening one of us noted how critical we had been all evening of the farmers. Surely there were good farmers?

'Ek sal vir jou sê,' said Oom Flip, choosing his words with great care. ''n Goeie boer is 'n boer wat meer betaal.' And after a long pause he added, 'En hulle betaal almal dieselde.'

Hunger in the homelands

The causes of chronic poverty, hunger and malnutrition in South Africa today go back to the 1870's when the 'drive for labour' gave rise to the most pernicious of all the effects of colonialism. DR DAVID WEBSTER, an anthropologist from the University of the Witwatersrand, charts the effects of colonialism on the rural indigenous economy until the 1930's in a paper entitled *The political economy of food production and nutrition in Southern Africa in historical perspective.* Extracts from that paper are reproduced below.


Gill de Vlieg

David Webster

Past causes . . .

In 1807, a traveller in the Transkei described the health of the Xhosa as follows:

'The abundant health enjoyed by these people must undoubtedly be principally ascribed to the simple food on which they live: milk, the principal dish, which is supplied in abundance by numerous herds of cows; meat, mostly roasted; corn, millet and watermelons, prepared in different ways, appease hunger . . .'

Ludwig Alberti, 1807

Over a century later, a district surgeon from the Transkei made the following observation:

'The tuberculosis scourge is undoubtedly on the upgrade in the Native Territories and especially in this district with its high rainfall and congested population. Unsatisfactory conditions of living and nutrition are amongst the chief factors in spreading the disease. The chief maladies have been those of malnutrition . . . the former accounted, I'm afraid, for a considerable infant mortality and pellagra-like conditions among the adults.'

Engcobo district surgeon, 1937

The two contrasting quotations cited above cast into stark relief the changes that have overtaken the Transkei (and the rest of Southern Africa) from the pre-colonial period to the present.

Evidence on the state of health of pre-colonial peoples is rather scanty, but in South Africa we have been fortunate that a number of travellers, missionaries and, from earlier times, victims of shipwrecks, have recorded, sometimes in detail, the dietary habits of the peoples through whose land they travelled.

A consistent picture emerges from these early accounts of the East coast Nguni peoples: that the societies were well fed and healthy, practising cattle rearing as the main economic activity of men, supplemented by the agricultural pursuits of women. Milk, either fresh or sour formed the staple food, with varieties of grain and many other vegetables providing bulk and nourishment. Meat, mostly garnered from hunting (cattle were too highly valued to be slaughtered for their meat) was also quite commonly eaten.

Fynn, a trader and confidant of Shaka, recorded events in Zululand between the years 1824-1836. He recorded the following crops as being grown by the Zulu: four types of millet (of which guinea corn was the principal crop); beans of two kinds; two types of potatoes; four kinds of sugar cane; pumpkins, melons and gourds. Hunting brought in meat, and wild fruits and vegetables were gathered — berries, *imifino* (wild spinach), mushrooms, etc. Overall, the diet displayed a variety of protein, calorific content and vitamins.

The coastal zone of South Africa, with its high rainfall and relatively rich soils, is, of course, better endowed than the interior, which was the habitat of the Sotho-speaking peoples. But even here, early reports show a varied and well-balanced economy and diet. Among Sotho peoples, less emphasis is placed on cattle, with a consequent consumption of less milk, and more emphasis is laid upon agricultural production. Dr P J Quin, an employer of black labourers for the Zebedeila Estates wrote a thesis on Pedi food and feeding habits in 1959.

He says 'The ancient Sotho, with their simple diet and healthy manner of life, generally lived to a great age and retained their health and intelligence up to the end of their days. Since those days, however, the health of Pedi has degenerated to such an extent that they have today become an undernourished and disease-ridden people.'

It is dangerous to generalise about early Southern African societies from the scanty evidence available, but there appears to be consensus on certain key issues. Most important is the general acceptance by observers that the indigenous population was adequately fed and were of outstanding physique. Shortages and hunger only occurred in times of ecological disaster — a prolonged drought, livestock epidemic, etc.

Production was conducted by domestic units — a man, his wife or wives, and their children, and the unit of consumption was the same group. The goal of production was 'livelihood not profits', which meant that a family would attempt to grow enough to last a full year, with a small surplus which would be used for sacrifice to ancestors, or to exchange or reciprocate with neighbours or kinsmen, or to pay as tribute to a headman or chief.

The societies seem to have been structured by a simple division of labour along the lines of age and sex (men doing short, intensive and heavy bursts of labour, like tree felling and field clearing, also cattle herding, while women did the more tedious, long-term tasks of planting, weeding, threshing and cooking). The implements used were essentially extensions to the human body, needing human power to guide them.

It would be wrong, however, to give the impression that pre-colonial Southern Africa was a uniformly

The abundant health enjoyed by these people must undoubtedly be ascribed to the simple food on which they live — Ludwig Alberti, 1807
Picture drawn and engraved by C C Mitchell

egalitarian garden of Eden. Production for subsistence rather than surplus is prone to failure whenever there is ecological pressure, such as drought or pestilence.

Also, many pre-colonial societies were not strictly egalitarian, most notably when the Zulu state began to emerge, followed by the Swazi, Pedi, Sotho and Ndebele. These states were built upon the centralisation of power, in the form of regiments, which broke the autonomy of domestic units and their production. The regiments gave surplus labour to their kings in their fields, plundered neighbouring societies for the fruits of their hard labour, or used the threat of violence to extract tribute from subjugated groups. Most societies were able to adapt to these changes. The advent of colonialism, however, was to set in train a much more serious series of changes, from which the indigenous societies would never recover.

The great transition: from subsistence cultivator, to peasant, to proletarian

The transition of the independent black population of Southern Africa from a condition, if not of plenty, then at least self-sufficiency, to one of underdevelopment, poverty, over-crowded reserves and townships is a long and painful one, brought about by a multitude of interlocking causes. The most important was that of colonialism, which is historically linked to underdevelopment.

'Colonialism is a system of rule which assumes the right of one people to impose their will upon another. This must inevitably lead to a situation of dominance and dependency which will systematically subordinate those governed by it to the imported culture in social, economic and political life'.
E A Brett: *Colonialism and underdevelopment in East Africa*

Colonialism is usually a blatantly coercive system, which uses all the means at its disposal — violence, the economic, political and ideological, to dominate, control and exploit its colonised population.

In their original state indigenous societies were 'undeveloped' or non-developed', and it is only later, when subjected to pressures from colonialism and capitalist development, that they became progressively *under*-developed. Certainly, the history of Southern Africa is testimony to this hypothesis.

A pattern emerges across South Africa which shows that, at first, the indigenous population responded with alacrity and vigour to the new opportunities which emerged with colonisation. Not surprisingly, the Transkei and Ciskei were the first to respond: they were in intimate contact with the white settlers, and responded positively to market opportunities, so that, between 1830 and 1870 a thriving peasantry had emerged in the region, not only meeting subsistence requirements, but producing a healthy surplus for the market.

In an article in *African Affairs* published in 1972 Dr Colin Bundy wrote:

'Throughout the Ciskei, north-eastern Cape and western Transkei, peasants gained a foothold as land-holders and cultivators, selling grains, forage, stock, and animal products. They won prizes at agricultural shows in competition with white farmers, and a statistician noted in 1870 that, "taking everything into consideration, the native district of Peddie surpasses the European district of Albany in its productive powers"'.

The 1870's saw an explosion of peasant activity. Dr Bundy records that:

'Five hundred wagons of corn were sold by Fingo-

land's peasants in 1873, as well as a wood crop worth £60 000; and in 1875 the trade of Fingoland "at lowest computation" was adjudged to be worth £150 000 . . . African produce in 1875 was estimated to be worth £750 000 . . . New methods and resources rippled from tribe to tribe, and even amongst the most "backward" tribes crop diversification and wider cultivation were common in the 1880's.'

In Glen Grey (now one of the most impoverished areas of the Eastern Cape), a traveller remarked:

'Man for man the Kafirs of these parts are better farmers than the Europeans, more careful of their stock, cultivating a larger area of land, and working themselves more assiduously.'

Similar events were taking place in Lesotho, Natal, OFS and Transvaal. But there were two important trends emerging simultaneously. First, the flourishing peasantry was becoming stratified, so that a class of small farmers was emerging alongside peasants and a poorer group of unsuccessful peasants were being forced back into subsistence cultivation, or worse, to sell their labour to other peasants or to white employers. Second, as the peasantry reached its zenith in the 1870's, so too were the seeds of its destruction being sown, for the discovery of minerals, first diamonds and later gold provided wider markets for agricultural produce, but the mine owners wanted something else more — their labour.

The drive for labour came not only from the mining magnates, but also from white farmers; both found that it was impossible to dislodge labour from the midst of a successful peasantry — coercion was required.

- The peasantry was attacked in the most vulnerable area for an agriculturalist — the land. Successive land appropriations took place, with the black population being forced onto smaller and smaller pieces of land.
- In the Ciskei a kind of enclosure system was adopted, where blacks suddenly found themselves as tenants on white farms.
- Later, legislation was employed to dispossess blacks, culminating in the 1913 Land Act, which officially allocated only 13% of South Africa's land to blacks.
- Taxation was another means of pressuring the peasantry, as Rhodes so clearly saw: 'We want to get hold of these young men and make them go out to work, and the only way to do this is to compel them to pay a certain labour tax.' Taxation was progressively increased.
- And furthermore, white farmers formed themselves into co-operatives to market their goods, excluding black participation, and cutting African competition.
- Infrastructure, such as railways and roads, was provided to white farming areas, not black. Small wonder that by the 1890's the Transkeian peasants were in crisis, and almost destroyed by 1920.

A similar pattern emerges from the rest of Southern Africa, and Lesotho is perhaps as graphic an illustration as any. In his Ph D thesis Colin Murray charts the progress of the region from being a granary to a labour reserve. Compare the following description of Lesotho in the 1880's with the barren country it is now:

'Hitherto our Basotho have all remained quietly at home, and the movement which is taking place beyond their frontiers has produced no other effect than to increase the export of wheat and other cereals to a most remarkable degree. While the district in which the diamonds are found (ie Kimberley) is of desperate aridity, the valleys of Basutoland, composed as they are of a deep layer of vegetable mould, watered by numerous streams and favoured with regular rains in the good season, require little more than a modicum of work to cover themselves with the richest crops.'

People dispossessed of their land wander around in search of a place to settle

Impetus was added to the process of peasantisation by the discovery of diamonds in Kimberley. Suddenly an urban area mushroomed in the arid Karoo, and it needed food and manpower. Sotho peasants responded to the former but not the latter; they increased production, but shunned work in the diggings. In 1873 they exported 100 000 bags of grain and 2 000 bags of wool (Murray 1976:15), but this was the zenith of their success, for the pressures on the diminished portion of land began to take their toll, and a series of economic recessions, coupled with ecological crises, led to peasants moving into the inhospitable mountains, and many began to turn to migrancy. Rinderpest decimated herds, so much so, that bridewealth was calculated as future surety for cattle.

The Basotho peasantry made attempts at recovery, the most successful being in World War I, and wheat exports reached a peak of 256 000 bags in 1919, but stratification and division between rich and poor was growing, and in the early 30's a combination of the world recession and a crippling drought which destroyed crops and killed half the cattle, finally broke the back of a self-sufficient peasantry. In 1933, more than 350 000 bags of maize had to be imported, while as recently as 1929, Lesotho had exported 100 000 bags. The decline continued, and at the time of Murray's study, villages were producing much less than half their subsistence requirements themselves.

The consequences of underdevelopment for health, food production and nutrition

Successive South African governments were faced with a dilemma: whether to support and encourage the self-sufficient peasantry which emerged in the 19th century, or whether to respond to the white (capitalist) farming community and more importantly the mining industry in their demands for large supplies of cheap (black) labour, which would undermine the peasantry. We know that the latter demands were acceded to, and the processes of proletarianisation set in motion (appropriation of land, taxation, the penetration of consumer goods, such as blankets, lamps, etc, which soon became necessities of life for the indigenous population, and aided by ecological problems such as droughts and the 1896 rinderpest epidemic) ensured the creation of that supply of labour. It also created a large labour reserve, surplus to the immediate needs of employers, but which has historically worked to suppress worker militancy and living standards.

There are, however, costs to the employer and the state in pursuing this strategy: once the destruction of a pre-colonial economy has begun, it is almost certainly irreversible. The underdevelopment of the rural reserve areas proceeds apace, quickly becoming unable to support even a fraction of the population inhabiting it. A settled black farming strategy to accommodate some of the surplus population was advocated by the Tomlinson Commission, but rejected.

The alternative is a rapid industrial expansion to soak up the extra labour, but South Africa is a peripheral capitalist country, and lacks the level of accumulation necessary. The result is enormous dislocation and extreme unemployment, with all the implications for nutritional levels and morbidity that accompany this.

Migrancy, and its cause, underdevelopment, are locked in a vicious spiral. There are social problems — children without one or both parents for long periods, illegitimacy, prostitution, and the social pathological problems such as delinquency and drunkenness.

But the economic and nutritional problems are perhaps worse. One of the most serious consequences of labour migration is that the one group of people who are likely to be progressive and innovative, and therefore indispensable to progressive health and agricultural programmes, ie the young men and women, are absent from the place they are most needed.

Apart from the absence of those young men and women able and willing enough to introduce agricultural, nutritional and health innovations, migrancy exacerbates existing problems. Already too large a population of both humans and animals have been pushed into inadequate land areas, forcing them to overwork the soil and overgraze pasturage; now, women, who are often unable to clear new fields, continue to work overused ones in the already impoverished soil.

The rural population is therefore caught in a downward spiral of intensified underdevelopment; the absence of the potentially progressive young and the accompanying decline in agricultural productivity means that economic self-sufficiency slips even further away. The balance swings decisively away from home-production to reliance on cash remittances from migrants and food bought in the trading store. The influence on health is massive.

This pattern of increasing erosion of the nutritional status of South Africa's rural black population, so vividly portrayed in the 1930's, continues into the present, but I wish to end by looking at the corroborative evidence from Quin's thesis on the Pedi in the 1950's. He also bemoans the loss of traditional food supplies and its effect on nutrition:

'Whereas nature balanced the food supply of the Pedi, "civilization" has created a condition that hovers between mere existence and starvation and which has manifested itself in a problem of gross malnutrition.'

He attributes this decline to the restriction on land, the change in food habits that was influenced by the arrival of the money economy, and he places much blame at the door of the trader. He argues that the trader soaked up any surplus crops that would otherwise have been hoarded against times of shortage. The Pedi apparently sold the bulk of their crop to meet cash requirements (tax, clothing, lamps, etc), only to be faced with having to buy it back, at increased prices, later in the hungry season. The trader's demand for some of the most nutritionally valuable crops, such as beans, was such that almost the entire crop was sold, and not locally consumed.

In a Chamber of Mines report the same bleak picture emerges around the period of World War II. The rural black population had by then reached a point where it was manifestly failing to feed itself; the remainder of the pre-colonial, pre-capitalist economy had long since been shattered, and was now in its death-throes. Both men **and women** were leaving rural areas, many of them permanently. Thus emerged the urban consequence of the destruction of pre-colonial economy in the homelands: a massive housing shortage in the cities, in part overcome by the emergence of large and well organised squatter camps to house the surplus population, who felt they had a better chance of survival in the city than in the homelands.

The picture I have painted of the changing historical patterns of food production, diet and nutrition in South Africa is indeed gloomy, and for many black people, trapped by legislation and enforcement in our homelands today, the position is probably worse. The person who is committed to the social, economic and health development needs of the majority of South Africans is therefore confronted with almost insurmountable odds. The causes of the problem are deep lying and structural. Perhaps a starting point in the struggle to change them, however, is to analyse those structural conditions, to determine which is cause and which is effect and, in laying bare the means of oppression and exploitation to which the people are subject, make a small start on the long struggle to overcome them.

Migrant workers returning home when their contract is over — amongst other causes the drive for labour sowed the seeds of destruction amongst the successful black peasantry in the 1870's

*** Pictures by courtesy of Luli Callinicos, researched for her book** Gold and workers

. . . present conditions

Ina Perlman

'It's a mystery to me how people in the homelands survive. Updating figures of the Institute of Social Research at Natal University's we found that an average family of five should not have been able to survive in the homelands in 1982 without a cash income of at least R92 per month, over and above whatever they can grow or gather. Compared to this the average household in the homelands received a cash income of R49,60 per month in 1982/83.

The average person is lucky to get a daily bowl of mealie meal with or without some wild spinach (mirogo) or other vegetable the family can grow. Meals are almost entirely without protein, for eggs, milk, meat and even bread are all luxuries.' ***Ina Perlman, Operation Hunger***

Mrs Ina Perlman has been running Operation Hunger since January 1981 when the project, then under the Institute of Race Relations, set out to provide temporary emergency feeding for 15 000 people. In 1985, five years later, the project fed 662 000 people, mainly children, with one cup of specially-formulated

protein stew with or without a dollop of non-essential mealie meal porridge each day. This year the programme is faced with requests from 370 000 more people, including, for the first time, a request from an urban community in Port Elizabeth.

'The thing that I always try to impress upon people is that malnutrition is a very long-term malady which has grown hand-in-hand with the destruction of the black subsistence economy.

'The recent drought is the final blow and although the present Government's forced removals and "black spot" clearance policies dramatically exacerbate the problem, its roots go back many decades before National Party rule,' comments Mrs Perlman.

For instance, during the Boer War African farmers from areas in the Ciskei and Transkei which are now totally denuded, were the main suppliers of fresh produce to the British soldiers. In Natal during the 19th century the black sugar cane farmers vied successfully with their white counterparts. In the aftermath of the Boer War the Orange Free State and Transvaal were devastated by the scorched earth policies of the British army. Fundamental to rebuilding these economies were African peasant producers, often share croppers.

The causes of rural under-development are dealt with in the article by David Webster.

Three generations later, in 1980/81 figures published by Tanya Vergnani of Stellenbosch University show how inadequate those cash wages are and to what extent food production has declined. In that year some three million black children throughout South Africa were so poorly fed that they had clinically diagnosable malnutrition. This means that 43% of all black children had symptoms such as patches on their skin, thin, ginger hair, swollen knees and ankles due to muscular wasting. Some 45% of adults also have 'frankly diagnosable malnutrition'.

'A black child of over six today is only a survivor,' says Mrs Perlman. Some 55% of all African deaths are those of children under the age of five. For the malnourished illnesses such as measles, diarrhoea, chest complaints can be fatal. Amongst the white population, 7% of deaths are those of children under the age of five. For the 'coloured' community the figure is 45%.

Mrs Perlman then goes on to talk about the relationship between malnutrition, brain damage and consequently education.

'Drop-out rates show that the maximum drop-out rate in rural areas takes place before the Std two level. I'm convinced that a large part of this is due to brain damage.' *The consequences of providing food to children* at school illustrate this point.

'The first batch of two-year old children who were part of a malnutrition prevention programme started by nuns in Venda reached school last year. Their physical size is unbelievable — they're bigger than Std 2's and 3's who are five or six years older than they are. Their mental performance is dramatically better.

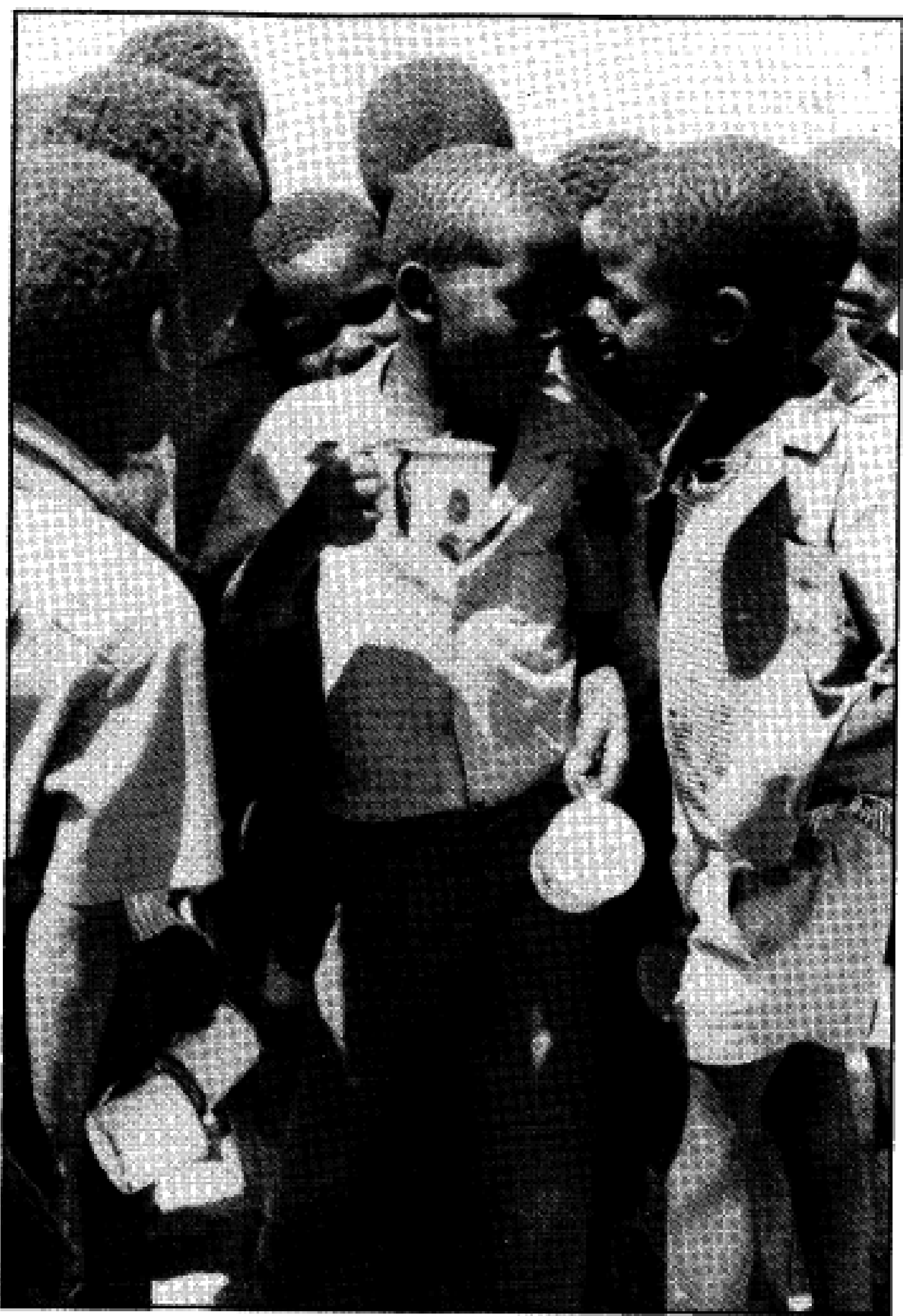
'One of the first letters I ever had from a headmaster at a school where the children were being fed said that he'd had a complaint from the teachers. They were actually having to teach the children! They were no longer dealing with lifeless, listless little creatures.

'One of the first places where we started providing food was at a resettlement camp called Tsetse in the Northern Transvaal. When we first began I was able to drive up there at midday and I would see lifeless, exhausted little beings shuffling home after school. Now I'll do anything to avoid being there at 12. If they see my car they dash out with all the energy and vitality of normal children. I'm always afraid I may knock someone over. Inevitably after we've started a feeding programme we're confronted some three months later with a request for sports equipment.'

The poor quality of food is a serious problem, the complete lack of any food at all is even worse. Mrs Perlman says that from their experience only 10 to 20% of children have anything to eat before they go to school in the morning, and then on top of that they usually have to walk five kms to get there. So most children sit through five hours of school on an empty stomach.

'A hungry child cannot concentrate. It's likely he's asleep by 10 am. And when that's over there's the five km walk home again. If the child is lucky enough to have a mother who has a seasonal job she may not be there, but

In 1985 662 000 people each received one cup of specially formulated protein stew every day from Operation Hunger



Ten to 20% of children do not have anything to eat before going to school in the morning. On top of that they usually have to walk about five kms to get there.

in the evening there'll be a more healthy meal. If not a grandmother may provide a bowl of mealie meal after school. In the evening water is added to the dregs in the pot to make a thin tasteless soup.

In 1986, hopefully, Operation Hunger will be able to find the funds to respond to all the requests facing it and feed over one million people. But, when one hears how decisions have to be made about when to set up feeding programmes, one realises that there must be millions more starving people. Mrs Perlman explains:

'We never approach a community to offer food. We only respond to requests — and then only to whole communities in extreme circumstances, not as a general rule to families or individuals in need. When we get a request we talk to the local clinics, we look at available statistics for the area and so on. If we find that 30 to 40% of the children at school have malnutrition we can assume that the rest are not getting proper food either. If over 60% of the people in a village are employed, say as migrant workers, then we reckon that the whole village, through kinship networks and a spirit of sharing, will be alright. But now the problem is that more and more of the villages have 50% or less of their potential labour force employed. And in those circumstances the communal pot isn't big enough to go around.'

Once it's established that a community needs food Operation Hunger enters into a partnership with the adults to provide food for the children. The community must undertake to administer the programme and to provide such things as firewood and water. Both can be difficult because sometimes it takes three or four hours walking to reach a supply of decent water. In some areas fuel for fires is also a problem. And then, if the community can, they undertake to provide the dollop of mealie meal that goes with the protein stew. The community choose how to administer the food, for instance through a school or clinic.

'In some areas, school children are the elite as many parents cannot afford the school fees. So we have a problem reaching all children and especially those who are too young to walk,' Mrs Perlman adds.

To cope with these problems Operation Hunger has started using a tactic that was adopted in the War on Poverty programme to eradicate poverty in the Southern States of America. It involves the use of a surrogate granny. With the drought and the failure of seasonal labour jobs, more and more mothers are leaving the rural areas in search of jobs in the urban areas. Grannies and children are left at home. The grannies are encouraged to bring the very young to the clinics to be fed. They themselves receive a meal if they are prepared to bring one child that is not their own.

Mrs Perlman is convinced that feeding is a vital part of rural redevelopment. 'Operation Hunger has always said that feeding and development go hand-in-hand. We have to break the vicious cycle of hunger that keeps a mother worrying about where she's going to find the next meal for her children. In breaking that cycle you bring mothers together again as they administer the schemes on a roster basis and you remove the anxiety. There is not one group in our programme that has not come to us within three or four months to ask for help in establishing a communal vegetable garden, or a sewing cooperative, a brick-making cooperative or whatever. After that they start hammering away on pensions and other issues.'

Operation Hunger has funds set aside for community development. 'But we dare not break into them to meet additional requests for feeding,' explains Mrs Perlman. 'We have promised that we will assist with vegetable gardens and development projects. To break the cycle of starvation we must spend the money that we have set aside for this purpose.'

Operation Hunger has discovered that under 'intensive dry farming' techniques which do not depend on rain and which use maximum water conservation methods, a three hectare plot can feed 250 families and yield enough to provide each family with R50 in cash each month. It costs R15 000 to set up such a plot and to provide it with a borehole for irrigation. Mrs Perlman comments; 'We could have developed 250 such plots on the money that was paid to 15 Australian cricketers at R250 000 each'.

In conclusion Mrs Perlman says; 'I've never come to terms with the mystery of rural survival. It can only be because of that untranslatable notion of *ubuntu* — its a mixture of love, caring, compassion, sharing and the much-extended family network.

'There is hope for the future. There must be change somehow in which there's got to be a reapportionment of land and resources and a state in which the well-being of people are the most important aspect.

'In the meantime we are trying to create educable people who are capable of responding to whatever education is brought to them.'

photo: J Gogo Khoza

Buntu Mtenyana

ubuntu abantu abeLungu

Mr Buntu Mfenyana is a socio-linguist who is particularly interested in the origin of *ISINTU*, the African way of life. Sash went to see him to find out more about the meaning of the words *ubuntu*, *abantu* and *abeLungu*.

'If we want to consider the origin of the meaning of *ubuntu* we must separate the prefixes and suffixes that surround the root NTU, or what to the Sotho's is THO.

NTU is an ancestor who got human society going. He gave us our way of life **as human beings.** It is a communal way of life which says that society must be run for the sake of all. This "human" way of life requires cooperation, sharing and charity. There should be no widows left alone, or orphans — they all belong to someone. If a man does not have a cow, then give him a cow to milk. There should be no poor person *ohlelekileyo* (a deprived person).

This way of life demands cooperation in hunting, food-gathering and so on. It includes the quality of negotiating with others and trying to accommodate others.

People and whites

Aninka Claassens

From her experiences as a Trac fieldworker in the rural areas, ANINKA CLAASSENS comes across some notions that black people have about white people . . .

In South Africa there have been many different ways of naming people: Europeans, Makgowa, Natives, Bantus, whites, abeLungu, blacks. Most of us recognise that *abeLungu* is a Zulu word for white people and that *abantu* is the Zulu word for people. Learning Zulu I had always used *abantu* in that sense, people; people in a crowd, people of the world. But I began to notice that this can cause confusion with Zulu people. *Abantu* sometimes has another meaning, which is black people, white people not being included. It is necessary to specify who is in the world before one can continue to call everyone there *abantu*. Otherwise when you mention that one of these *abantu* is called Oliver Twist people look sceptical — *abantu* don't have names like that.

It's sad really to have to say *abantu nabaMhlope*, 'people' and whites; particularly when the word *abantu* is a personification of the quality *ubuntu* — meaning human behaviour, compassion, humanity. It is however not all that surprising — whites have used the word *Bantu* to mean black people and there has been a terrible shortage of *ubuntu* in white people's behaviour towards blacks.

AbeLunge on the other hand seems to have a wider meaning than just 'white people'. A farm worker from Piet Retief district earning R25 a month, describing his life and conditions of employment said, 'We are the people (*abantu*) who live on the farms. It is alright about the whites *abaMhlope*, we agree that we live here on the farms with them, but let them give us money for our work. A white man has become an *umLungu* because of us. However much money he has, it is we people (*abantu*) who do the work'. (*Translation of taped interview with Aron Mlangeni, April 1982).*

The next time I heard *umlungu* in a strange context was at Kwa Ngema. Kwa Ngema is a farm owned by a black family, called Ngema, also in the Piet Retief district. It is a rich and beautiful place where the people grow mealies, beans, potatoes and sun-flowers. There are Ngemas living there as well as tenants.

One of the tenants, in talking about his life at Kwa Ngema referred to the *abeLungu*. 'Which *abeLungu*?' I asked. 'The Ngemas, the Ngemas are our landlords, they are the owners of the farm. They allow us to live on the farm, in exchange we must help them with work when they ask us.' This is a system of labour tenancy similar to that which was the norm on the neighbouring white farms. It is still in practice on many white farms, but unofficially. I asked the tenant why he had chosen to come to Kwa Ngema rather than make a similar arrangement with a white *umLungu*. He replied that the system was the same, but that life at Kwa Ngema was much better, because he was treated with *Ubuntu*.

What can you reply to an old farm worker who says, 'Tell me, *ntombazana*, how do these farmers feel when they see our children's bellies swelling up with hunger, and we have worked for them all our lives?' I said I did not know. She said, 'But you are a white person, you must know how they feel, and what they think about.' She asked the question as part of a long conversation. It was not a rhetorical question. She was deeply interested.

(Translated taped interview with Alice Kunene in April 1982)

The prefix UBU refers to the abstract. So *ubuntu* is the quality of being human. It is the quality, or the behaviour, of *ntu* society, ie, sharing, charitableness, cooperation. It is this quality which distinguishes a human creature from an animal or a spirit. When you do something that is not humane then you are being like an animal.

The prefix *abe* is the plural of *umu* which refers to a person. So *abantu* are the people of *ntu* society.

Strictly speaking it's not possible to refer to the people who came in 1652 with a different way of life and took our land, as *abantu*. We distinguish those who came after 1652 with the words *abeLungu* or *abaMhlope*. This distinction could not have carried on if the new arrivals had shared the land and way of life in a humane way.

AbeLungu refers to people who are privileged. If I were to arrive in a Mercedes Benz and wearing a suit, people would say *umLungu oMnyama ufikile* a black privileged person has arrived. The root *hlope* simply means white. So *abaMhlope* are white people.

Today the meaning you give to *abantu* depends on the context in which you use it. If you go into a hall in which a riot has taken place and three black people and three white people have been killed you will simply say six people are dead (*abantu bafile*). Later you may distinguish between their colours. But if you are saying that people are suffering because of the high rents then it is implied that you are talking about black people because white people are privileged, they appear to be quite okay and without any problems.'

A new kind of banning order?

While banning as a form of silencing people remains on the statute book, it has been less frequently used in recent years. In 1980 due to world pressure it was dropped, with 11 people banned at that stage. Now it has cropped up again in another guise.

Once again it is a question of playing with words. Since the State of Emergency was declared, some 65 people have effectively been banned, under restriction orders.

These people ironically are included in the statistics of those 'released' from detention under the State of Emergency regulations. On their release they were issued with orders similar to the one published below... The penalty for breaking these orders is a fine of R10 000 or 10 years in prison.

SCHEDULE

Conditions of release of Mr X

The said MR X shall not without the permission of the Minister of Law and Order, during the period from the date of his release, for as long as the Reguations promulgated by Proclamation R121 of July 21 1985, issued in terms of the Public Safety Act, 1953 (Act 3 of 1953), remain in force —

(1) absent himself from the magisterial district of JOHANNESBURG;

(2) take part in any manner whatsoever in the activities or affairs of any of the following organisations:
- MEDIA ADVISORY AND RESOURCE SERVICE (MARS);
- COMMUNITY RESEARCH AND INFORMATION CENTRE (CRIC);
- SOUTH AFRICAN STUDENTS PRESS UNION (SASPU);
- JOHANNESBURG DEMOCRATIC ACTION COMMITTEE (JODAC):
- ANY TRADE UNION;
- ANY YOUTH ORGANISATION; OR
- ANY ORGANISATION RELATED TO THE BLACK COMMMUNITY IN THE MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT OF JOHANNESBURG.

(3) enter the premises of any school or other educational institution;

(4) (i) prepare, compile, publish or disseminate in any manner whatsoever any publication as defined in the Internal Security Act, 1982 (Act 74 of 1982);
(ii) participate or assist in any manner whatsoever in the preparation, compilation, publication or dissemination of any publication as so defined;
(iii) contribute, prepare or compile in any manner whatsoever any material for publication in any publication as so defined;

(5) attend any gathering —
(i) at which any form of State or any principle or policy of, or action or contemplated action by, the Government of the Republic of South Africa is attacked, criticised or discussed;
(ii) at which any local authority as defined in section 1 of the Black Local Authorities Act, 1982 (Act 102 of 1982), is attacked, criticised or discussed;
(iii) of pupils or students; or

(6) enter the premises of FREEWAY HOUSE in De Korte Street, Braamfontein or KHOTSO HOUSE in De Villiers Street, Johannesburg for any purposes whatsoever.

photo: Gill de Vlieg

Some personal observations on the 'disinvestment' campaign

. . . Sheena Duncan

I visited the United States twice in 1985, for four weeks in July and then for three weeks in October.

Both visits were made at the invitation of American churches and most of my time was spent talking to church groups although there were also meetings at Universities and with secular groups of various kinds. I was not in the States on any kind of campaign of my own but to respond to requests for factual information about South Africa.

Inevitably at all meetings I was asked what I thought about disinvestment and economic sanctions because this is at the forefront of the campaigns against apartheid wherever these are centred.

I did not find these questions easy. It is a complicated subject and difficult to think through. There are no glib answers and there are most serious consequences to be weighed in the balance. It is also a question to which the answers may change according to the developments at different times.

It is necessary to clarify the different terms which are used.

Economic sanctions are those sanctions which may be legislated by governments, such as the oil and arms embargoes and embargoes on new bank loans to the South African Government. There are sanctions which may be imposed by private institutions such as the refusal of international banks to roll over South African loans following the State of Emergency and the disastrous Rubicon speech made by President Botha in August.

There are also economic sanctions which can be effected by ordinary people such as consumer boycotts of South African produce. Trade unions which refuse to unload South African goods in foreign ports are imposing a form of economic sanction. There are many different examples.

Divestment

The campaign for divestment is a call on American shareholders, particularly, the large investors such as pension funds. City and State governments, churches to divest themselves of their stock holdings in companies which do business in South Africa.

This campaign has a twofold purpose. It is designed to raise awareness about apartheid and the situation in South Africa and it puts considerable pressure on companies to exert political pressure towards the dismantling of apartheid.

Disinvestment

The campaign for disinvestment calls on companies which have operations in South Africa to withdraw by selling off their South African interests and by cutting their ties with South Africa. Shareholder divestment is of course one of the pressures which might lead a particular company to disinvest.

Motivation

There is a whole variety of different motivations behind these campaigns. The most evident are, **firstly** a very strong feeling of moral revulsion about apartheid. This is deeply felt and is all the stronger because South Africa claims to be a civilised Christian member of the community of western democracies.

Terrible crimes are committed against human beings by governments all over the world but apartheid is seen as being a legislated, deliberate and evil racism defended with lies and hypocricy by South African spokesmen and apologists.

Many Americans do not wish to profit from apartheid and see their financial involvement in the South African economy as strengthening and perpetuating the apartheid regime.

Secondly, there is a real concern for the people of South Africa which shows itself most clearly in the work American churches have done on South African issues. Many people are convinced that civil war is inevitable in this country unless sufficient non-violent pressure can be brought to bear on our government to face change before we enter into a long-drawn-out Lebanon-type conflict.

This concern for South Africans usually (but not always) extends to encompass concern for the white minority which is seen to be tragically bringing about its own destruction through its intransigence,

Thirdly, there is a certain amount of guilt for the racism which held sway in the States for so long and which still rears its ugly head too often and most painfully.

South Africans often use the phrase 'punitive sanctions'. I never heard Americans speaking about punishment or revenge.

White South Africans often accuse those pressing for economic sanctions in other countries of doing so because they seek violent revolution and believe that economic collapse will hasten the violent overthrow of the present government and its replacement by a revolutionary government.

There may be people who have this motivation but I certainly never came across them. These arguments were never used to me and are very far from the thinking of all those with whom I worked.

Strategies

It is in this area that I found myself embroiled in the most argument. In the churches there is a clearly thought out purpose behind the pressure they are seeking to exert. They want to put sufficient pressure on American companies doing business in South Africa to force businessmen to put pressure on the administrations in Washington and Pretoria for real change. This is why the churches have singled out certain important companies as primary targets for their divestment campaign.

The same cannot be said for all the different organisations involved. Too many people are calling for total disinvestment without thinking through their strategies. They have no answer to the question 'what then?'

Likewise, some of those working for economic sanctions have a carefully thought out strategy which focuses on a specific area in order to exert maximum pressure but others have no clear direction and no idea about what they aim to achieve.

The South African arguments

South African businessmen and lobbyists are doing themselves a disservice. They argue that black people will suffer most from economic sanctions and that change can only come about through economic growth. They claim that the benefits of economic prosperity will break down the walls of apartheid and will inevitably be distributed among the whole population. They claim that economic recession slows political change. This is demonstrably untrue. It is in times of economic growth and prosperity that apartheid has been entrenched. In periods when the profits are rolling in, white businessmen switch off their interest in political developments. It is only in times of recession that there is a sudden concern for human rights and political 'power sharing'.

The apartheid structures are built on the needs and the plans of big business interests, the pass laws, migratory labour, the reserves/homelands policy were all designed to satisfy the demands of profit-making and the need for cheap labour.

It is only the threat of economic sanctions which has led to a new concern about black unemployment. We did not hear those voices raised as South Africa's pattern of industrial development created a structural unemployment problem which is now estimated to be between 21% and 25% and which will be around 41% by the year 2000. Until recently we never heard them complain about the removals programme which exacerbated unemployment by taking people's land from them.

Those South African companies which are now investing their money in other countries have no right to talk about black unemployment. Their concern for job creation falls short of actually creating new jobs with their own money in their own country.

It must also be noted that not all sanctions cause unemployment. The oil and arms embargoes created thousands of jobs in this country. Bans on the sales of some kinds of technology to South Africa might prevent the destruction of jobs which so often goes hand in hand with mechanisation.

The structures of apartheid ensure that unemployment and poverty are concentrated in the homeland areas — out of sight and out of mind. We had not noticed white anxiety about the plight of that 54% of the black population which was officially resident within homeland borders by the year 1980 until economic recession made unemployment, retrenchment and redundancy a possibility for everyone, including white people, in workplace and management.

In many ways all the arguments are now irrelevant. Our government has ensured that South Africa is no longer a profitable place in which to invest and it is on considerations of profitability that boardroom decisions are made. However it is worth noting that it was the threat of economic sanctions and the first steps taken to make them a real possibility — President Reagan's Executive Order, the Banks actions on SA loans, the Commonwealth decisions on SA, the European Economic Community's moves, various unilateral actions by individual governments — which finally brought about a total break between the interests of business and the interests of the South African government. This is of crucial importance.

The Black Sash has for years criticised businessmen for doing nothing whatsoever to resist apartheid policies and programmes. Businessmen have sometimes lifted up their heads to say that they do not approve of apartheid but they have not taken action to oppose it or to prevent its excesses.

It is most welcome that the unholy alliance between business and government has at last been broken and that the private sector is now doing its best to find ways of pressurising the government for real change. It is welcome that some businessmen are seeking to negotiate with those in whose hands future government will lie.

On past evidence I do not believe that this would have happened had pressure not been exerted on them. And will it last if that pressure is removed?

It is for these reasons that I am in favour of strategic, selective, economic pressures, carefully thought out, carefully monitored, and adjusted according to the observed effects.

It seems to me that these may be our last hope for avoiding a long-drawn-out civil war which would result in total economic collapse.

Have you made your peace ribbon?

Members page

Sheena Duncan has been invited to West Germany to receive the **Prize for Freedom** *awarded by* **Liberal International,** *a human rights organisation, in recognition of the work of the* **Black Sash.**

Above, Su Trathen releasing balloons to commemorate Human Rights Day, December 10, 1985. In the background, Dawn Ingle.

Ethel Walt and friend clasp hands at the Prayers for Peace meeting at Orlando Stadium

Right, Molly Sklaar helps with the cooking at the International Youth Year festival held at Wits in December last year

Mamelodi massacre

Glenda Webster

An incident which took place in Mamelodi outside Pretoria on November 21, 1985 is a tragic example of the attitude of the South African Police force to their black compatriots — irrespective of whether these latter are bellicose black youth or peaceful parents using passive means to make their grievances known. Some police, if not most, it seems, actively seek confrontation and the opportunity to shoot. They do not try by all ways and means to avoid incidents that cause injury and death.

In the incident in Mamelodi, thousands of women had arranged a march to present a list of grievances to their mayor Mr Ndlazi, including, prophetically, one about the removal of white police and the army from the township. The march which proceeded in compliance with police requests ended in chaos and disaster with 13 people, including a baby, dead and many more injured.

Mr Peter Soal of the Progressive Federal Party investigated the events which led up to the massacre at Mamelodi. His party collected affidavits from township residents who were present or involved in the march. Four of these affidavits are reproduced below to provide a description of the incident.

On the basis of his findings and because of the current situation of unrest, Mr Soal called for a permanent judicial enquiry to investigate all 'allegations concerning the police'. Mr Soal's call, subsequently repeated in Parliament, remains unanswered. An accusation that his statements about the Mamelodi massacre were 'untrue, unfair and malicious' are currently the subject of litigation between himself and Mr Louis le Grange, the Minister of Law and Order.

However, after considering Mr Soal's report and its affidavits, I cannot help coming to the conclusion that the police did not try to avoid an incident, and the assessment of one township resident (see affidavits) is quite correct: 'the manner is which the police conducted themselves . . . was . . . violence provoking'. Furthermore their behaviour was very likely to cause injury or death.

Choice of weapons is the first factor which leads me to this conclusion about police behaviour.

The question of what weapons police use to disperse a crowd had already been thrown under the spotlight because of the massacre at Uitenhage that took place exactly eight months before on March 21. In that incident 20 people were killed as a result of gun shot inflicted by police fire. It led to a Commission of Inquiry chaired by Justice Donald Kannemeyer. It's findings and recommendations were published in June 1985.

In his report Mr Soal highlighted some points made in the Kannemeyer report that are applicable to the Mamelodi situation. For instance, . . . the Internal Security Act no 74 of 1982 provides that 'firearms or other weapons likely to cause bodily injury or death shall not . . . be used to disperse a gathering until weapons less likely to cause such injury or death have been used . . .'

What exactly took place before the police started firing into the crowd at Mamelodi is not certain. It appears teargas fired by the police caused the crowd to flee in panic (they had not expected police conduct of this sort). As they were running they were shot with 'weapons likely to cause injury or death'. How much warning they had, if any at all, before the teargas was fired is also not clear.

Furthermore, with regard to the weapons used, Mr Soal points out that since the march was openly planned on the Tuesday and publically arranged on the Wednesday, it is highly likely the police knew about it. They had time before the Thursday of the march to be 'properly equipped' as recommended by the Kannemeyer commission with 'machinery' that would not cause death or injury should it be necessary to disperse a crowd.

- This leads then to the second point, the question of whether the crowd was 'riotous' and whether 'certain exceptions' prevailed which justified the use of 'weapons likely to cause . . . death'.

Assuming the affidavits to be accurate, then crowd behaviour was orderly and acquiescent with police demands wherever possible. Its intention was entirely peaceful — the marchers sat down to negotiate with the police to get permission to proceed with their march when asked to do so. They handed over their placards and banners which stated their peaceful intentions. They allowed a police vehicle to lead their march in spite of the fact that they were requesting the removal of police from the township. They avoided incidents of violence, and prohibited children from joining the march.

Police behaviour on the other hand, was contradictory. Once again, assuming the affidavits to be accurate . . .

- the marchers were told they were allowed to sing. Then in the end, according to some affidavits, they were told that if they did not stop singing they would be shot.
- — In the beginning the police led the marchers, in the end the marchers were surrounded by army trucks on the ground while a helicopter hovered overhead.
- — The police had assured the marchers that if there were no incidents of stone-throwing etc, and if banners were not used, there would be no police retaliation. People assumed that if they kept their side of the bargain, the police would keep theirs. Marchers were therefore shocked when the police started firing.

Other information in Mr Soal's reports reinforces the conclusion about deliberate police provocation.

Mr Ndlazi, the mayor, mentioned at a Press conference the next day that he had abandoned attempts to address the crowd on November 21 because the loud-hailer the police offered him was defective and he could not be heard beyond the first few rows of the crowd.

In the end one is left with one's suspicions. If the police are innocent, then why not appoint a judicial commission to prove it?

Affidavit

I, E M, an adult male resident of Mamelodi East do hereby make oath and state that:

1 On Tuesday November 19 1985 there was a meeting of residents and a resolution was made by the over 4 000 residents of Mamelodi who attended the meeting — to declare Thursday as the marching day to the administration building to present their grievances. The first grievance was to demand the withdrawal of the white members of the S A Police from the township, as well as the Defence Force. The second was for the lifting of the restrictions concerning funerals. The third concerned house rentals, because of confusion over amounts to be paid — specifically with the 99 year lease. A delegation was elected to speak as well as to present the written grievances to the town council, specifically the mayor. The delegation consisted of 10 people, led by Mr Louis Khumalo, president of the Mamelodi Parents Association.

2 On Thursday November 21 1985, I went to the meeting point at 7 am at the YMCA. Already there were 5 000 to 8 000 people gathered there. I looked for Mr Khumalo, who was nowhere around, and then went to his home. I was told he'd gone to his work at the pharmacy. It was closed. I drove around looking for him for 15 minutes. The situation was calm but tense, with no incidents. I drove back to Mamelodi East. It was near 8 am. At the bridge crossing the Apies river about eight to 10 Casspirs and a number of light police vehicles had blocked the marchers from crossing the bridge into Mamelodi West. I parked my car in a yard and joined the marchers. The people were sitting, being addressed by a police officer. The crowd was I estimate 40 000 to 50 000, since they covered the area from the bridge to the YMCA. I went next to the officer and what he said was: that the marchers could march because he recognised their legitimate grievances, but on his conditions, namely — there should be no banners or placards; the marchers would be led by the Casspir; and no overrunning the Casspir would be allowed; and any violence would result in shooting; and the people could sing as they marched. Then the march started. At one stage the crowd was stopped in order to confiscate banners. One banner said 'Let us speak without shooting', and another 'Respect our elders — they are not fighting.' The rest of the march proceeded without any incident.

3 At the administration block there was already a crowd hemmed around by Casspirs. Most of the people were sitting and most of them in front were adult or elderly — since the parents had asked the youths to stand back. There was a man in a red shirt standing on the Casspir addressing the people — he was apparently an interpreter, previously used by the police at the bridge. I crossed over to in front of the hippo and sat down by the robot pole. I saw a woman helped on to the hippo and she tried to address the people with the police megaphone, but it seemed to be malfunctioning. At that point a yellow Sierra car came from the entrance road and made a U-turn in front of the casspir. A high-ranking officer got out and spoke to the officer on the Casspir for a minute or two. Then he went back into the car. At that point a police helicopter was hovering above the crowd. No-one else tried to address the crowd and they were still just sitting expecting to be addressed. About a minute or two after the car had left, without any warning — and I could have heard one, as I was sitting about six metres from the Casspir — the shooting suddenly started. I ran away around the south of the admin block, and saw the interpreter with the loudhailer also running. I ran towards Denneboom station. The Casspirs were following the crowd, still shooting teargas and other ammunition. An elderly man was bleeding on his right leg and could no longer run and was helped into a kombi with other elderly people. As I went to the East, police and soldiers were still chasing people everywhere. There seemed to be no violence from the people. About seven kilometres away they were still chasing people, now only apparently shooting teargas. Near my home, my wife and kids were standing inside a yard at a corner. A police car raced past and threw a teargas at them. I saw a car parked near the mortuary with two bullet holes through it, and I learned that it had happened that morning. I saw or heard of no petrol-bombing or stoning of policemen or councillor's houses on that day, and I am not aware of any such actions from that day till this. I also believe that the number of deaths officially reported as a result of the shooting that day, is not yet correct, because there are still a number of people missing that cannot be traced.

Justice Donald Kannemeyer, left. Were his recommendations flouted in Mamelodi?
photo: Colin Urquhart, Eastern Province Herald

Affidavit

I, M M, aged 36 years, a resident in Mamelodi East, do swear under oath and say that:

1 I was present on November 21, 1985 when the residents of Mamelodi marched to present their grievances to the Mayor Mr B Ndlazi, at the Administration Offices of Mamelodi.

2 At the bridge that connects Mamelodi East and West, next to Tsako Thabo Secondary School, the Mamelodi East women (mothers and elderly women) converged as police in hippos blocked the road.

3 Residents, through spokesmen, negotiated with the police to allow the march. This was permitted on condition that marchers carried no placards or stones. The residents complied and handed over the placards bearing messages 'DO NOT SHOOT', 'WE ARE FOR PEACE'. These were loaded onto the hippo.

4 The move by the police to allow the march and to lead the residents, was positively received by the residents. The latter tried by all means to ensure that children did not join the march as the matter was now in the hands of their parents. The marchers were well behaved and there was no incident.

5 Residents from all sections of Mamelodi joined the march: mothers, fathers, young adults and the elderly. It ceased to be a march by women when everyone joined. The marchers repeatedly sent children away.

6 Next to the stadium the marchers stopped. Talks on whether to utilise the stadium, taking into account the turnout, followed. The decision to proceed to the office was adopted. The march proceeded to the administrative offices.

7 At the open space adjacent the offices, thousands of Mamelodi residents waited to present their grievances and to be addressed by Mr Ndlazi. At this point hippos had surrounded the march and some parked on the road towards the offices amid the residents. The meeting was peaceful without an incident. We were so close to the hippos that we could read the name tag of policeman 'VAN DEN BERGH'.

8 The spokeslady climbed on the hippo to read out the grievances, and then stepped down.

9 Mr Ndlazi surfaced from the hippo and tried to address the residents. At this point the helicopter that was circling the marchers zoomed past as Mr Ndlazi spoke and the residents shouted for him to speak louder as they could not hear.

10 Mr Ndlazi instead of proceeding with his talk, went inside the hippo and the helicopter hurled a teargas canister. All hippos started firing teargas to the marchers and people choked, fell to the ground, tramping on each other as police repeatedly fired at residents who ran in all directions for cover.

11 Elderly people choked and fell and the able bodied tried to assist, but police teargassed us as we were trying to assist.

12 At this point the residents were uncontrollable, the situation was chaotic and the people ran in all directions. Teargas and gunshots were being fired by the police.

13 The assessment in Appendix 1, highlights my reading of the events on that day.

APPENDIX 1

1 The already tarnished image of the police, and the frail police community relations, have been dealt a heavy blow by police action and handling of the residents' march on November 21, 1985.

2 The manner in which police conducted themselves when residents peacefully sought to register their grievances with the Mayor Mr B Ndlazi was most deplorable, brutal and violence provoking. The actions engendered community anger and bitterness that will live in the minds of the residents for many years to come.

3 Loss of life could have been avoided if the police did not open fire or teargas the residents.

4 The police should have escorted the masses in the same manner they did earlier on, because that way they managed to lead the residents peacefully until the procession reached the meeting place.

5 The pamphlets that police distributed in the community later, not only displayed the insensitivity of the police towards a grieving and hurt community, but also showed lack of community caring.

Affidavit

I, F K of Mamelodi, being duly sworn, make oath and say as follows:

1 I am a permanent resident living at the above address in Mamelodi.

2 I am a married woman aged 46.

3 On Thursday, November 21, 1985 at about 11h00, I went to the meeting about the high house rent. While we were there, the helicopter threw down teargas. The police started to shoot. I ran away. I saw a black policeman shooting down a boy. I took the arm of an old man to help him. A Casspir passed us. The police inside shouted to me: *Vandag gaan ons die kaffers doodskiet. Julle sal vandag kak!* I just ran off to my home.

Affidavit

I, C S, do hereby make oath and state that, I attended the meeting on Tuesday November 19, at the YMCA in Mamelodi at which we all agreed to ask the mayor to talk to the police to request that the white police withdraw from Mamelodi and that the restrictions on funerals be removed. The meeting was attended mainly by women, thousands in number. The meeting also resolved to hold a work stay-away and peaceful march on Thurday 21, (a banner was prepared

stating our peaceful intention.)

On Thursday morning we gathered and marched together with the police in attendance from East Mamelodi to the administration offices. There were no incidents of violence. At the offices we gathered outside and the police were there, in many armoured vehicles. The police asked us to stop singing. The people in front stopped, but those far away couldn't hear. We never saw the mayor. Then through a black interpreter, using a loudhailer, we were ordered 'If you don't keep quiet in three seconds, we are going to start shooting.' At this stage most of the crowd in front were women and there was no stone throwing or violence from the crowd.

Then teargas was dropped from the helicopter overhead, at the back of the crowd, and people started running. I was trampled by the crowd and knocked unconscious. When I came round there was a dead woman lying next to me, bleeding from the nose. I could still hear shooting in the distance. When I left I saw another body of a young boy, a teenager, lying in the street between Denneboom Station and the offices. He had blood on the back of his neck and lower back. I saw the police collect the boy's body.

Sash member KATHY JAGOE, is also editor of the bulletin published by DPSA, Disabled People of South Africa. The group is a national organisation of people of different disabilities and cultures who have come together to work towards changing issues which affect them. This article highlights some disturbing figures.

Briefing on violence

DPSA is very aware that violence is one of the major causes of disability in this country. Violence can result not only in the initial impairment, but often if the injured person does not receive the correct medical treatment, preferably immediately, an injury which could very easily result in a life-long disability.

At this point there are no available figures on those disabled in the violence of the last two years. There are not even adequate figures of those injured. However, there *are* figures of those who have died.

January 1984 — end 1984 .... 175 people died

September 1984 (Vaal uprising) — end 1984 .... 149 people died

January 1985 — December 4 1985 .... 791 people died

Since State of Emergency (July 21 — December 4 1985) .... 457 people died

First month of media blanket (Nov 2 — Dec 4 1985) .... 99 people died

August 1985 .... 163 people died

Killed by security forces (Jan 1 — Oct 31 1985) .... 360 people died

Daily death rate since State of Emergency .... 3,44 people died

Daily death rate before State of Emergency .... 1,67 people died

September 1984 — December 4 1985
TOTAL .... 940 people died

(Figures issued by SA Institute of Race Relations)

Firstly, we think it is important to note that while much of the violence has been blamed, in some quarters, on coverage by the visual media, the month of November 1985 (the blanket started Nov 2) showed the second highest figure of deaths since the State of Emergency (August '85 being the highest).

Secondly, Frank Bird (in his study on loss and damage) estimates that for every one serious disabling injury there are 10 minor injuries. It has been estimated by people working closely with those injured in the unrest that for every 10 seriously injured people one person has died.

Therefore, if one were to look at this picture in the light of a 1:10 ratio (death:seriously injured), one would estimate that **at least 9 400 people have been seriously injured due to violence in our country in the last (almost) two years.**

DPSA does not know how many of these people will be permanently physically, sensorally or mentally disabled.

The destabilisation of Moutse

After decades of peaceful and relatively prosperous co-existence amongst people of different ethnic groups, an area in the north eastern Transvaal called Moutse has become a place where beatings and bloodshed are the order of the day. Details of this have appeared frequently in the Press this year. And it is all thanks to the South African government with its apartheid ideology which according to a Moutse resident, is 'alive and kicking in Moutse'.

Combining Trac press releases and public addresses given by Aninka Claassens and residents of Moutse, GLENDA WEBSTER reports on this first Government atrocity of 1986.

The Government's true intention for the country can be seen quite clearly in its attitude to the 120 000 residents of Moutse. In spite of all it may say to convince overseas creditors, bankers and others about how things are going to change, how they actually are being *entrenched* is very cruelly obvious in Moutse.

On January 1 1986 the South African Government went ahead with the incorporation of Moutse's 66 000 hectares into the KwaNdebele homeland. This took place in spite of five years of protest, petition and pleading from the people of Moutse. It is a move which, moreover, flies in the face of the Government's own stated policy of separate development on ethnic lines. For the residents of Moutse are Sotho, and with their inclusion into KwaNdebele that homeland's Ndebele group will become a minority.

Thus, on January 1, 120 000 black people were extricated from the map of 'white' South Africa simply by moving the boundary around them. This means that the Moutse area will become 'independent' along with the KwaNdebele homeland of which it is now part, on December 4 1986.

And this is the bone of contention. For against the will of its residents, the area of Moutse has been granted as a reward to the KwaNdebele homeland for its willingness to take independence, and the consequences of that are these:

Firstly, the people of Moutse will lose their South African citizenship. This is the purpose of the government's homeland policy — to carve up the black population into many small units separate from white South Africa which will be left unthreatened by a black majority to control the bulk of the country's wealth, its army, its police and other matters considered to be 'general' affairs. While Mr PW Botha did suggest on September 11 1985 that he was considering restoring common citizenship to all, nothing has happened so far. In the meantime a conversation reported between Mr Botha and Dr van Zyl Slabbert in the *The Star* (Saturday February 15), stated that Mr Botha said 'The independent homelands will stay. We'll sort them (urban black people) out with decentralisation . . . I will not give up self-determination for whites — own schools, own rèsidential areas, and own way of life.'

Secondly, the people of Moutse feel that their area has been selected to bolster up a particularly unviable, unsuitable homeland. So the South African government is reducing its own costs at the expense of defenceless, disenfranchised people. Moutse has been selected, the people say, as the 'soft option' when white farmers from another area nearby refused to give up their land to give KwaNdebele some viable territory. KwaNdebele is probably the poorest homeland. It has no hospital. Some of its Ministers needed literacy classes only a few years ago. There are very few job opportunities. Many of its residents commute daily to jobs in white South Africa, some rising as early as 2 am and returning late at night.

Moutse on the other hand has tarred roads, 58 schools, a hospital, established businesses and farms. These will now fall under the administration of KwaNdebele and for this the residents of Moutse, who claim to have built up this wealth after centuries of stable living in the area, will not be compensated.

Thirdly, the residents of Moutse have reason to fear the rule of the KwaNdebele administration which they believe to be corrupt and tyranical. Business licences which are allocated by the KwaNdebele administration are arbitrarily awarded or withdrawn. Moutse residents fear vicitimisation because they have been opposed to incorporation. 'Friends of Skosana (the Chief Minister of KwaNdebele) will be granted the only licences to trade' said one Moutse resident.

Furthermore, the residents of Moutse fear that once the area becomes independent they will be forcefully re-

Victims of the vigilante attack on Moutse
photo Gill de Vlieg

moved. They have reason to believe their land is wanted for industrial development. Their fears are not unfounded. In February, on the second anniversary of the forced removal of the people of Mogopa in the western Transvaal, the Government moved into the village of Uitvlugt in Moutse and removed some of its residents to Immerpan (a year before, also in February Minister Gerrit Viljoen had said that forced removals were being suspended).

For various cultural reasons the people of Moutse fear the KwaNdebele administration. So far the KwaNdebele administration has shown itself to be culturally intolerant and aggressive towards others. One resident of Moutse claimed that women have been beaten for wearing slacks, Christian people are forced by the imposition of a R600 penalty, to participate in ceremonies for Ndebele ancestors. Moutse residents who are Sotho-speaking fear that even their language will disappear under the Ndebele administration.

Finally, and by no means least, the people of Moutse fear the tyranny of the KwaNdebele leaders and their newly-established vigilante guards, the MBHOKOTO. So far Mr Skosana and his Mbhokoto have a fearful track record. On January 1 400 Moutse men were abducted, taken to a hall in KwaNdebele (the infamous Siyabuswa hall) and beaten. Mr Skosana was there to assist in the beatings as a result of which several people died. In the conflict so far over 40 people have been killed and hundreds have been imprisoned and arrested as elsewhere in South Africa, on charges of public violence.

According to signed statements collected by members of the Black Sash the South African police, if not the men themselves, then other white men using SAP vehicles, are allegedly assisting in terrorising the residents of Moutse who resist incorporation.

Apart from the tyranny of the Mbhokoto and collusion at some level with the SAP, the South African government uses its police force to impose its will on the people of Moutse. South African police have allegedly been involved in numerous shootings in which people have been killed. Houses have been doused with petrol and set alight by white men who Moutse residents claim are members of the South African Police Force.

The whole exercise of the Moutse incorporation has been a tragic disaster. It has furthermore alienated the Government from Dr Phatudi, the Chief Minister of Lebowa, a homeland adjacent to Moutse. It has united the Indian, coloured and white opposition in the Tricameral parliament against the Nationalist Government. It has brought to light the Government's true intention for the future of South Africa.

It remains to be seen if Mr Chris Heunis, Minister of Planning and Constitutional Development has the integrity to back down and cancel the incorporation, if not the independence of KwaNdebele itself. According to Miss Claassens it would not be an unprecedented move. In 1985, for instance, the Driefontein community were granted a reprieve (see *Sash* November 1985) and the small community of Makgatho in the northern Transvaal were also reprieved.

COSATU —
a recent addition to the South African political arena

photo: City Press

Elijah Barayi

1985 was an auspicious year for the trade union movement in South Africa. After four years of planning and discussion, several trade union organisations came together under one umbrella to unite some 500 000 workers in the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu). Its aim: to solidify the working class into a united front against the State and the bosses to achieve economic and political justice in South Africa.

At its helm is its president, Mr ELIJAH BARAYI, a man from Cradock. For us in Sash, Cradock is a place of promising political leaders, for Matthew Goniwe, Fort Calata and others came from Cradock too.

They were school teachers working within civic organisations but motivated by the same aims.

With the help of Mrs SHEENA DUNCAN, Sash tried to find out more about the likely impact of this new protagonist in the political arena.

In spite of a gruelling start to the year in which an unprecedented 23 000 migrant mine workers were dismissed, Mr Barayi graciously made the time to answer our questions.

Mrs Duncan: Economists forecast that by the year 2 000 41% of South Africa's population will be unable to find a job in the formal sector. This means that people will depend on the right to operate freely in the informal sector and in small scale agriculture if they are to survive and live full and creative lives.

Operating in the informal sector implies free enterprise. How does Cosatu visualise the future political and economic organisation of South African society where organised labour will be politically predominant but where a large percentage of people will not be 'workers'?

Mr Barayi: We want a society where the workers will play a leading role. This does not mean that we forget the unemployed, the aged and the youth. To build a new society we need to destroy those structures and relations which are today the source of the oppressive conditions. Obviously, the informal sector and small scale agriculture, in so far as they do not perpetuate conditions of exploitation, will be allowed to exist. But, exactly how

the society will look in a post apartheid South Africa will depend on our struggle.

Mrs Duncan: In response to economic sanctions, the South African Government has recently threatened to repatriate black foreign workers. In fact over the last decade there has been a steady reduction of the number of foreign workers who are permitted to come to, or remain in, South Africa. There were approximately 600 000 registered foreign black workers in South Africa in 1974. By 1984 there were just over 300 000.

Black immigrants to South Africa cannot by law be given permanent residence permits. This means that they can never apply for South African citizenship and also that their children born in South Africa are deemed to be foreigners and have no legal right of residence in South Africa.

What is Cosatu's policy regarding immigration by black foreigners into South Africa?

Mr Barayi: Cosatu has no policy on immigration of black foreign workers as yet. But our attitude is that Lesotho, Botswana and the other neighbouring countries are integrally linked to the South African economy. Our brothers and sisters from these states suffer the same fate as we do when they work in South Africa. They are also migrant workers. They have also contributed to the wealth of this land. We are all workers involved in the same struggle against monopoly capitalism and the apartheid state which dominates and destabilises the other countries in the region.

Mrs Duncan: Cosatu has said it will call upon black people to burn their passes if the pass laws are not repealed by June 1986.

Identity documents are now necessary for everyone in modern societies. In South Africa we (of all races) are often required to produce our books of life to collect registered parcels, to collect pensions, UIF benefits, to withdraw cash at banks and building societies and so on.

The Black Sash is convinced that the pass laws must go and that the obligation to carry a pass is a violation of fundamental human rights. Does Cosatu intend to make plans in advance to ensure that when passes are rightfully discarded a system of identification is substituted, eg, by people retaining the identity card which is included in the reference book together with the driver's licence and pensions stamp, before burning the rest of the book?

Mr Barayi: The issue of identification cards, books of life etc is not the issue. It is the very structures and institutions of which the pass laws is one aspect which must be uprooted, We want freedom of movement and the right to live where we wish with our families.

The type of identification we have must be decided democratically by the workers and oppressed people of this country. This can only take place in a free South Africa.

Mrs Duncan: Matthew Goniwe, Fort Calata and other political leaders also come from Cradock. What is it about Cradock that it nurtures the growth of such prominent political figures?

Mr Barayi: Cradock is known historically for its proud tradition of struggle. These traditions are passed from one generation to the next. The lessons of the older generation shape the younger generation. But Cradock is one of many areas that has produced political leaders. Many of them are not known because the media do not publicise them. But in their areas they are leaders.

For myself I do not like to talk about individual leaders. I prefer to talk about collective leadership.

Rural people have their say

NCAR, The National Committee Against Removals, collected the following case studies in which rural people speak for themselves.

- **they tell what happens when people are dismissed from white farms;**
- **they show how rural people, without the legal rights to live in white areas, become 'surplus' people;**
- **they show that rural people go without legal protection, redress against injustice, compensation for loss or injury, reliable access to medical care, and a decent living wage;**
- **they show how the need for housing controls the movement of people or turns them into 'surplus' people.**

- Mr B M (aged 44) worked 24 years on the same farm. He had never worked for anyone other than this farmer. He earned R30 pm, lived with his wife and one child. He had no cattle on the farm. On June 6 1985 he was evicted without written notice, notice pay, leave or leave pay.
- Mr D M had lived on the farm for 52 years. He had built himself a substantial six-roomed house and two rondavels. He had paid for them himself. On October 16 1985 he was given a written eviction order to leave the farm by October 31. Despite a letter from the previous owner of the farm to say that he had paid for his house himself, the new owner of nine months standing, for whom D M's wife worked as a domestic, angrily claimed that he had bought the farm with all its buildings and that D M could not even take the windows, doors or roof. Earlier in the year the owner had forced D M to sell his three cattle. When D M approached an advice office for help, the owner threatened to charge him for grazing fees retrospectively. Lawyers managed to persuade him to let D M take the material and not charge grazing fees.
- Mr A B had to move to Dimbaza (a relocation area in the 'independent' Ciskei homeland) in December 1969 from Great Brak River in the eastern Cape. He was told that he had been living in a 'coloured area' where he had no rights to live. He had already bought his own house in the area. He was given a rail warrant to Dimbaza but was not compensated for the loss of his house.
- Mrs S B was born in the Burgersdorp location. Her husband was born on a nearby farm, but neither could get a house in Burgersdorp location — she because houses are only allocated to men and he because he was not born in a white urban area. The location superintendent told them they could get a house in Dimbaza, so they went there but on arrival no houses were available.

Rethinking economic strategies

That we need economic restructuring to achieve peace is now widely accepted. But what kind of 'economic restructuring'? ALAN HIRSCH, an economics historian of the University of Cape Town, argues that one's vision for the economic edifice of the future depends on one's perception of the problems in the present one. In this article he explains his perception of present problems to show why 'progressive social scientists are beginning to explore the question of economic restructuring in South Africa, a prerequisite for peace and real democracy'.

Alan Hirsch

It used to be only marxists who argued that politics and economics in South Africa were intimately related and that the resolution of political problems demanded fundamental economic change. Liberals said that market forces would ultimately wear down the undesirable features of National Party rule. The Nationalists, of course, refused to accept that there was either a political or an economic problem. In the last year, however, it has become commonplace that political and economic change are linked, and that a new, peaceful South Africa will have to be based on a restructured economy.

A past president of the Cape Chamber of Industries, for example, has argued that, for political stability, South Africa needs 'and must articulate a total programme for economic reconstruction' (*Cape Times* 8/11/85). Harry Schwarz, finance spokesman for the PFP opposition (often regarded as the party most closely representing big business) said recently that 'disorder will continue until government can assert its authority and until there is a change in the political, social and economic structure' *Sunday Times* 3/11/85).

The deputy-governor of the Reserve Bank, Professor Jan Lombard, wrote in October last year: 'In the case of the present South African evolution(sic), economic development has been and remains at least a necessary if not also a sufficient condition for the political reform that seems to be required', and later, 'What the economy requires is a particular strategy of growth based on the social emancipation of the black people of this country' (ASSACOM-1985).

These representatives of business, the PFP and government are, as they probably know, relative late-comers to the economic restructuring party. As early as 1955, the Freedom Charter called for economic restructuring — by means of the nationalisation of the mines, banks and monopoly companies, in a society where housing, education and the right to a job would be guaranteed. More recently, in their 1985 May Day Demands, organised workers in the Transvaal called for a society similar in conception to that called for in the Freedom Charter, although the question of ownership is not overtly broached in the workers' document.

It goes without saying that the restructured economies envisaged by the government, big business and the popular masses and workers differ substantially in conception. Different visions of the new society rest fundamentally on the respective analyses of the faults embodied in the existing society. Before this issue can be taken any further, it is crucial to examine the deep economic crisis which has given rise to this unprecedented soul searching.

The economic crisis

Visible symptoms

• *Unemployment*

Without doubt the central feature of the economic crisis is the existence and continued rapid growth of mass unemployment. In recent weeks newspapers have frequently sported headlines reading 'Job queues lengthen' and 'Bleak employment outlook'. The advent of the new year, with a fresh 250 000 applicants on the labour market has heightened our awareness of widespread joblessness, but not many people understand the full breadth and depth of the problem.

Official government statistics indicate an unemployment figure of around 500 000. This would be bad enough if it were accurate, but the true picture is far worse. University researchers and private consultants have estimated that the true extent of unemployment in South Africa (including all the Bantustans) exceeds 2 000 000 people, with some estimating a figure closer to 4 000 000, or close to half the labour force. What's more, the situation is quickly deteriorating. Since late 1984, South Africa has been losing existing jobs at a rate of at least 8 000 every month.

But the critical issue is the fact that mass unemployment in this country is not just a consequence of the current, very deep recession; in fact, unemployment began to make itself felt more than 20 years ago, at the beginning of the 1960's. Since then the problem has continued to grow, never declining, only expanding more slowly during cyclical booms. The roots of the unemployment crisis are located deep in the soil of the South African economy.

• *Inflation*

The other critical characteristic of the South African economic crisis has been the persistence of double digit inflation since the early 70's. For 13 years inflation in this country has exceeded 10% per year. In 1986, for the first time, it seems likely to pass 20%

Not unexpectedly, the combination of mass unemployment and rampant inflation has savagely attacked the living standards of almost all South Africans, black and white. Only the rich are exempt. Though, clearly, the living standards of salary and wage-earning whites have fallen in recent years, the brunt of the burden has fallen on blacks. In the urban and, even more so, the rural areas of South Africa, poverty wreaks havoc amongst black commmunities. Any reader of *Sash* will have ample evidence of this. Equally evident is the fact

that worsening poverty is one of the chief causes of the current political conflict; the scale and depth of unrest in the Eastern Cape, where unemployment is said to exceed 50% in a large number of places, confirms this unequivocally.

Underlying economic factors

At the first level of analysis, the economic crisis is fundamentally a crisis of growth. There are two central problems: firstly, that the economy has grown too slowly to support its population, and, secondly, that the form that such growth as has occurred has taken has not been of the kind to spread employment and wealth effectively.

The South African economy consists of four main sectors: mining, agriculture, industry and services (including commerce and government). The first two sectors, mining and agriculture, are limited as far as growth is concerned by natural conditions, though it is certainly true that both sectors could be better organised with regard to creating jobs and spreading wealth. The growth of services is largely dependent on the growth of the economy as a whole. The critical sector for any large modern economy is industry, and it is in examining the industrial sector in South Africa that the weaknesses of the economy became clearly apparent.

Between the 1930's and the late 1960's South Africa had its golden age of industrial development. Before the first world war practically no domestic industry of substance existed and, yet, by the end of the second world war manufacturing industry had overtaken South Africa's fabulous mining industry as the most significant economic sector. The 1960's saw the last great manufacturing boom; in the 1970's the industrial slowdown began.

The explanation for the behaviour of the industrial sector is pretty straight-forward. The 35-year boom was based on the replacement of a range of imported goods which could be made here. Local industry focused on the local market, and in this were assisted by protectionist state policies. However, due to South Africa's position in the international economic chain and our relatively low technological capability, import substitution was largely limited to consumer goods (not producer, or capital, goods). By the end of the 60's the limits of this form of import substitution had, more or less, been reached.

Because of the very slow growth of the internal market, predicated on the low living standards of the vast bulk of the black population, the scope of consumer oriented import substitution had become very narrow. Export markets were blocked by political factors and a lack of international competitiveness.

Exporters in the Far East outstripped other countries on the international market. On top of this, South Africa was hit by the oil price explosion and internal political unrest. From the late 1970's South Africa entered a period of steady decline.

Since that time foreign capital has steadily seeped away, somewhat accelerated, but not caused, by the disinvestment campaign. Local capital too began to seek more favourable investment prospects abroad. The manufacturing sector has been devastated with a 15% decline in real output over the last four years. Consequences of the combined political/economic crisis have included heightened unrest, a serious brain-drain and a collapse in international confidence, precipitating us into a seemingly bottomless downward spiral.

The crisis in industry, which has its roots in the limited form of the original industrial boom, now confronts South Africa with a critical question: how do we establish a healthy economy on which a just and peaceful society can be based?

Proposed remedies

1 Traditional government answers

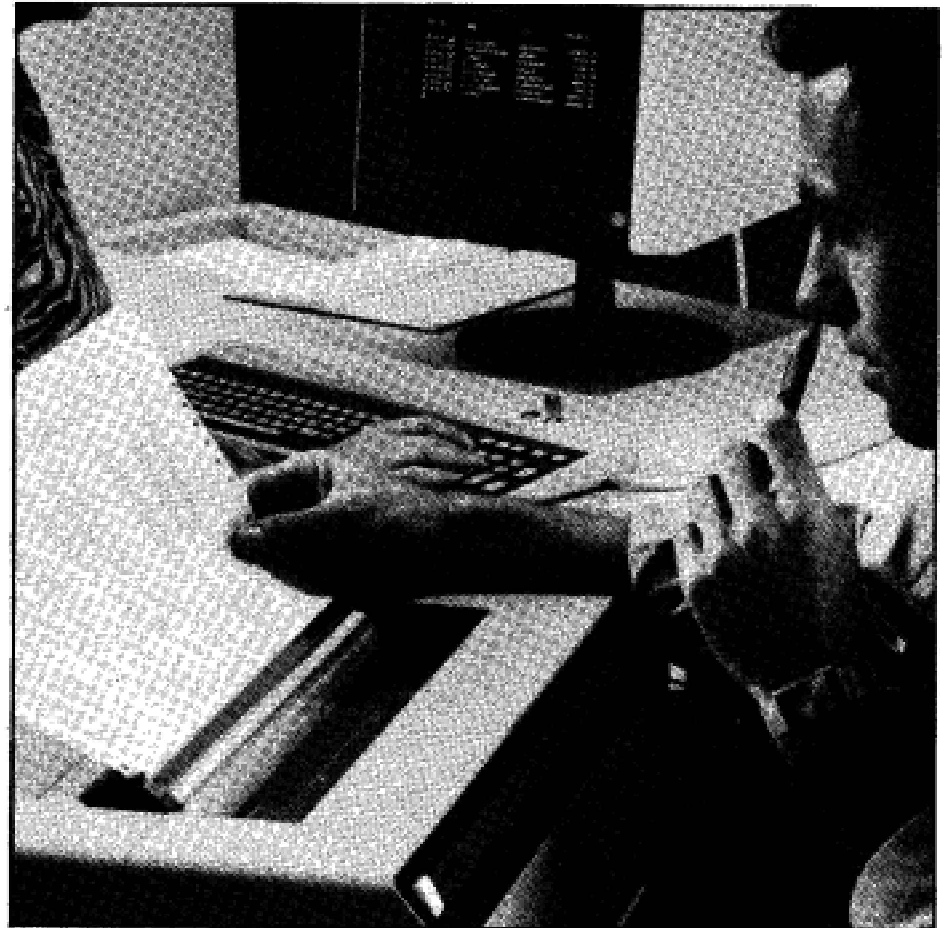
The economic development policy of the government since the 1960's has revolved around a twin strategy of industrial decentralisation and export promotion, policies which meshed into the bantustan political strategy. Industrial development in the 'border areas' and the bantustans, aided by exemption from minimum wage regulations was meant to bolster South Africa's balkanised political structure at the same time as it stimulated economic growth, partly through exports.

The policy, as is now widely accepted, proved to be ineffective and expensive, even hampering growth according to some analysts. The economy remained basically unsound, founded on the export of primary products (minerals and agricultural produce) subject to the vagaries of international markets, and the importation of capital goods.

2 The new regime — privatisation and deregulation

In recent years, desirous of reaching a rapprochement with big business, the government has moved towards the withdrawal of the state from certain fields of economic intervention. The quid pro quo is meant to be increased support from capital for an elaborated decentralisation policy.

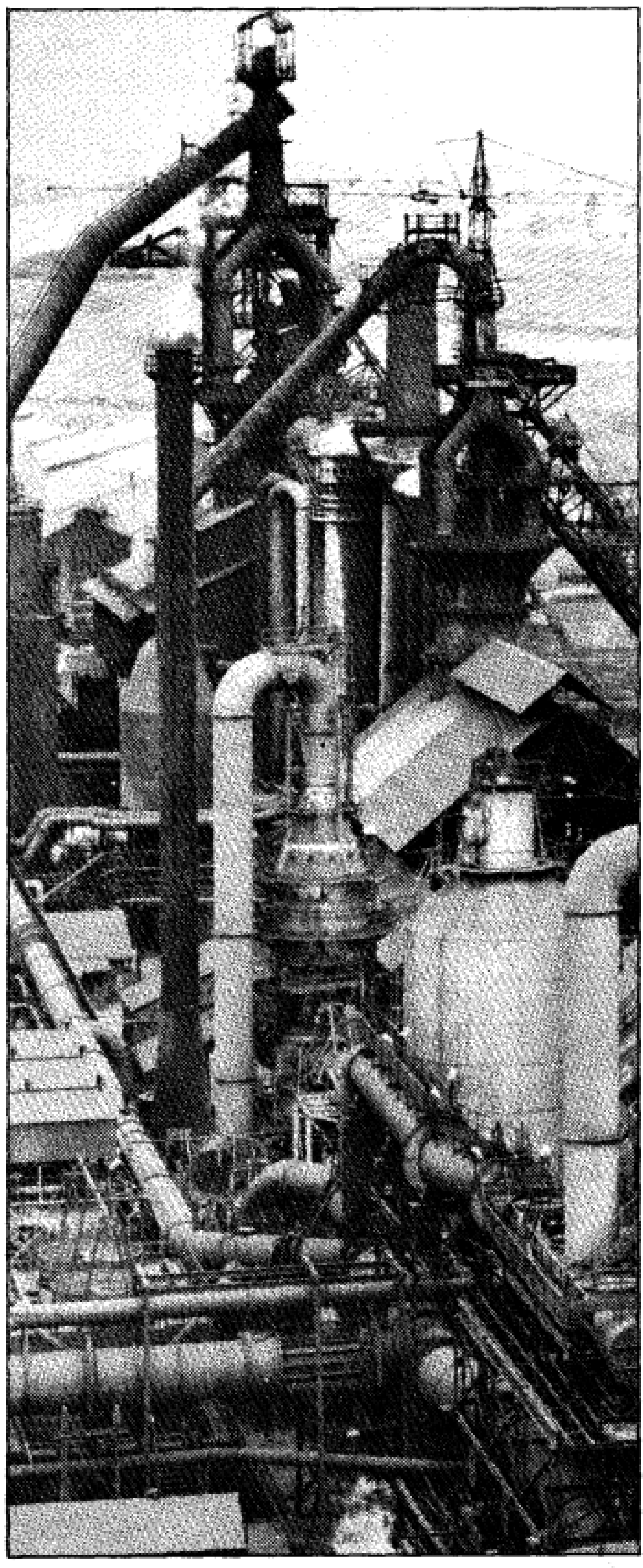
Catchwords of the new economic regime are 'depoliticisation', 'privatisation' and 'deregulation'. The first two terms effectively mean the same thing : handing over state-run economic enterprises into the hands of private capital. The first significant step was selling a large



Computer terminals — Bans on the sale of some kinds of technology to South Africa might prevent the destruction of jobs which so often goes hand in hand with mechanisation

number of shares in SASOL to private investors (who, incidentally, have made a killing at the expense of tax-payers whose money built SASOL). Further initiatives extend from the possible privatisation of ISCOR to the selling off of Administration Board owned beerhalls.

Harold Macmillan recently referred to Mrs Thatcher's privatisation programme (copied mindlessly by our government) as 'the selling off of the family silver' — a fast buck for the government made from selling publicly owned assets. It is difficult, in this case, to disagree with that doyen of British conservatives. Privatisation means little more than giving big business the opportunity to invest in established enterprises built at the expense of the mass of tax-payers.



The privatisation of Iscor — 'selling off the family silver'?
photo: Iscor News

A greater degree of efficiency may emerge, but at the expense of control by representatives of (some of) the people who financed it. There is no inherent reason why privatisation should stimulate economic development.

Deregulation is about doing away with government controls over economic activity. In some cases this would certainly be desirable, as in the instance of influx control. But high on the deregulation agenda are proposals to eliminate minimum controls over wages and working conditions in economic enterprises. Such moves would contribute little to economic development, and much to inequality, dissatisfaction and conflict.

3 Alternative strategies

Current state economic development initiatives, welcomed by capital whose representatives clamoured for places on the government's privatisation committee, are based on the view that state intervention in the economy is a bad thing. The free market will heal our wounds, they would argue. There is absolutely no evidence for this view — many would argue instead that the problem is not state intervention per se, but rather the form and content of state intervention.

In fact, all countries that have developed advanced industrial economies since the second world war, from Hungary and the Soviet Union to South Korea and Taiwan, have done so on the basis of extensive state initiatives. The nature of the modern world economic system makes this a *sine qua non*. A South African reindustrialisation programme would require the concerted involvement of a united, directed government. The current economic meanderings of the government, encouraged in some important respects by big business, are easing us steadily down the descending spiral. Fundamental political and economic change are inseparable pre-conditions for a just and peaceful South Africa.

The state in a democratic South Africa will have to concern itself, simultaneously, with the creation of new wealth and the redistribution of wealth in general. Some very difficult problems will arise: for example, should workers on the gold mines be entitled to decent living wages although this may threaten the existence of invaluable economic assets? On the other hand, would not a broadly conceived economic strategy be able to radically improve the economic and social conditions of mine workers (with regard to housing, education and health) without placing the existence of the mines in jeopardy? Other vital and vexed issues would include rural poverty and unemployment, but unfortunately, specific questions cannot be examined here.

Economic restructuring with regard both to growth and the redistribution of wealth would not only be the moral obligation of a democratic government in South Africa — it would be a political necessity. The consent of the people as a whole would have to founded on economic justice. That is why progressive social scientists today are beginning to explore the question of economic restructuring in South Africa, a prerequisite for peace and real democracy.

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Permanent Peace by Denis Beckett (Saga Press, 1985 — R15 plus GST).
Review by Philip Machanick

When it comes to solving political problems, everyone agrees that the underlying causes must be tackled — not just the symptoms. All too often, the analysis stops there. The problem is identified; the solution is for someone else to work on. Denis Beckett, editor of *Frontline*, has for some time been pushing his view of what the solution might be. This book puts together the arguments he has developed over the last few months, and is claimed to fill some of the gaps.

Beckett's central thesis is that countries which are perceived to work well are generaly democracies. If democracy has solved their relatively trivial problems (by our standards), what should we learn from this? Beckett's reply? We need more democracy, not less.

His secondary argument is that the process by which democracy is introduced is crucial, because conservative and radical alike need to be accommodated, if a conflagration is to be avoided. Indeed, this position is already becoming optimistic: the conflagration is already upon us in some respects. Beckett compromises his arguments somewhat by going all-out to prove the unlikely-sounding premise that the right can be led to believe that democracy is the solution — without addressing the left as well. In any case, in putting a political position forward as the starting point for other solutions — including economic structures — he would have difficulty addressing the left. It is interesting that he and AZAPO could have concluded from vastly different starting points that racial discrimination will become less of an issue once the structures which emphasize it have gone. Of course, AZAPO sees economics as the key factor behind racism.

The process Beckett proposes is that the government must commit itself to full democracy, without artificial racially-based privileges. So far, so good. Where his approach is novel is in the form that democracy would take. There is as much decentralization as possible. A political unit may be a small town, even a suburb. Then, there is another level of government above this. And another. And so on. Up to national level. At each level of government, anything can be legislated, but not all things are practical to administer. For instance, a small town will need to cooperate with its neighbours on issues like water supply.

Different units of 'government' are free to experiment with their own systems. Those which satisfy their communities will survive, those which don't won't. A kind of free market democracy. Although Beckett is somewhat scathing about socialism ('. . . socialists do tend to have a habit of knowing what people want better than people know themselves' — this is unfair; everyone does this to some extent), he is not advocating an economic system, but sees 'intensive' democracy as allowing a diversification of competing economic systems at various levels of government.

The introduction of the system starts at the bottom level. People may at first have racial prejudices, etc, but these are counteracted by the dynamics of the system, which requires cooperation at the next-higher level of government. The reason the approach is put forward as being more likely to succeed than 'evolutionary' reform as the end goal of full democracy is clearly specified. Beckett's arguments about why the government's present approach is increasing conflict are interesting in themselves.

This book will not pass as great literature (the first grammatical error is on the first page). But the author has managed to put his ideas across well enough to add them to the debate. Will this all work? This is not the issue. At a time of almost universal despair, it is a relief to be able to read a political polemic which talks solutions, and not problems. The next step is to take the debate forward on these terms — rather than to take the whole thing apart.

Township youth make their own parks

'The Garden of Peace' Alexandra Township

photos and captions by Gill de Vlieg

'Fame Park' in Alexandra being decorated by the youth