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Eastern Cape Stay-aways
Labour Monitoring Group

Unity in the Struggle?
Alec Erwin

South African Labour Bulletin

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The South African Labour Bulletin

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Miners' Relief Fund

The National Union of Mineworkers Strike Support Group was established to render support to the mineworkers during their recent strike. The Group comprises various organisations, trade unions and individuals.

Support is urgently required for the hundreds of mineworkers dismissed during the strike.

Material support - food, blankets etc. - is needed.

Any form of support will be welcomed.

All those able to offer support contact:

NUM Strike Support Group
5th Floor,
Lekton House,
5 Wanderers Street,
Johannesburg 2001.

Research Officer

The South African Labour Bulletin is looking for a Research Officer to begin work as soon as possible.

Requirements: some research and writing experience; willingness to travel; ability to work collectively; and a commitment to the independent labour movement.

The Job: includes producing topical briefings; collecting interviews and documents; as well as undertaking longer term research projects; some administration.

Please send relevant details and reasons for applying to:
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Editorial Note

In this edition we carry an analysis of the March stay-aways in the Eastern Cape and interviews with trade unionists from the area. The theme which emerges - of divisions within the working class, largely created by the state - will be pursued in future editions of the Bulletin, particularly in respect to Natal. We were to have included a statement from Dennis Neer, General Secretary of the Motor Assemblers and Components Workers Union of South Africa, but he, along with many other unionists and activists, has been detained during the state of emergency.

Another theme to emerge in this edition is the degree to which industrial relations structures and forms of bargaining are coming under increasing pressure. This is the result of the sustained growth of black worker organisation and militancy, and its accompanying politicisation, which is taking place against a backdrop of deepening recession. Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union has resigned from the paper Industrial Council, leaving behind an unrepresentative shell. The Metal and Allied Workers Union chooses to stay in the Industrial Council for the metal industries, whilst dramatically increasing the pressure on particular companies at plant level. On the mines one result of the growth of the National Union of Mineworkers has been to split the negotiating stance of the Chamber of Mines at least for this year.

BTR: The International Factor

BTR is among the 10 largest multinational companies based in Europe. Its holdings include: Cornhill Insurance, Pretty Polly Tights, Heinemann Books and Pan Books. Last year BTR extended its interests in the rubber industry by acquiring Dunlop. Outside of Britain BTR has investments in the USA, Commonwealth countries and in South Africa, where BTR Sarmcol is waging a bitter struggle to deny trade union rights to its employees -

members of the Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU). It now transpires that BTR is also attempting to smash trade unionism in its British factories.

Dunlop workers in Britain have been well-organised for years, and have secured improved conditions and favourable agreements. In 1984 Dunlop was bought out by BTR. The new owners started taking out profitable lines and transferring them to BTR factories where wages were lower, and preparing the way for re-trenchments at the Dunlop plants. At the same time the company has given notice that it will unilaterally renege on a whole set of agreements, the most important of which is the cancellation of the redundancy agreement formerly negotiated between Dunlop and the unions. As a result, severance pay will be reduced by 65%! The unions believe that BTR is doing this in order to prepare for further mass redundancies. They believe that plants in Wales, Liverpool, and the north of England are threatened with closure. Already a large amount of Dunlop's production - eg. shoes and racket covers - has been transferred to the Far East.

In addition BTR head office is refusing to recognise unions. They say that each plant is an independent profit centre and responsible for its own industrial relations, although clearly the general anti-union posture of local managements, the threatened wage cuts, and the cancellation of agreements covering redundancy, production bonuses, wages, leave conditions etc., are being nationally co-ordinated.

There have always been many unions in Dunlop - nine in all - but they have now come together in a joint organisation to defend trade union rights and working conditions. In the process traditional rivalry between craft and manual unions was buried. The unions are to hold a national joint strike ballot (4-7 September) - including some BTR plants as well - as the first step in a campaign to prevent further unilateral action by BTR.

Solidarity with South African workers

When the Sarmcol dispute began, MAWU contacted the British Trade Union Congress (TUC) and the major Dunlop unions: Transport and General Workers Union and General Municipal Boiler-makers and Allied Trade Union (GMBATU) for support. The TUC called on the Minister of Employment to intervene. He refused

- BTR -

saying this would be in no ones interests. The unions wrote to BTR management to pressurise their South African firm into negotiating with MAWU.

BTR's personnel director, Mckittrick replied that "it was invidious for unions in Britain to raise this matter. BTR South Africa was completely independent and acting within its rights." Sometime later Peter Fatharly, the chairman of BTR South Africa and a member of the main board of BTR, was interviewed by the London Sunday Times: he argued that the state of emergency was necessary and it would be unfortunate if change came too fast. MAWU issued a statement which was highly critical: this showed, they said, that BTR has a vested interest in and is a supporter of apartheid, and is willing to see the police used to maintain exploitation. Unless willing to change, said MAWU, BTR should get out as there is "no place for them in South Africa."

As part of a common struggle against the same management, British trade unionists have not been slow to identify with their South African comrades. There was strong feeling expressed when Bernie Fanaroff of MAWU addressed large meetings in the UK convened by the Dunlop Joint Advisory Council of the Association of Scientific Technical and Managerial Staffs and by GMBATU (the majority union in Dunlop), and at the large joint meeting of the nine Dunlop unions. The meeting issued a strong statement of condemnation of BTR and pledged support for MAWU and the struggle of South African workers. These unions undertook to inform their members and to investigate forms of support. For its part, MAWU will be sending a shop steward to address meetings of BTR workers to call for solidarity.

Also on the international front MAWU is referring the issue to the European Economic Community and requesting a hearing to determine whether BTR and Transvaal Alloys are complying with the EEC Code of Conduct. The matter will be raised in the European Parliament by members of the social democratic group. Finally, the United Nations Committee on Transnational Companies will be taking evidence in September on the role of multinational companies in South Africa. MAWU will be present to give evidence against BTR.

(SALB correspondent, August 1985)

NUM Dispute

More than 5,000 members of the National Union of Mineworkers crammed into the Philip Smit Hall in Thabong, Welkom on Saturday August 3 to decide on future action following the rejection of the Chamber of Mine's final offer. Thousands more milled around outside singing and chanting with union banners from the various regions unfurled. The atmosphere was electric with delegates excited and angry. The announcement by the state president that he would repatriate migrants if the international campaign against South Africa continued added a sombre note to the proceedings. The meeting was held in accordance with January's decision of the annual congress of the union that should workers reject the Chamber's offer and decide on strike action, then a special conference should be held to discuss timing and strategy.



Cyril Ramaphosa, general secretary of the union and James Motlatsi, the president gave detailed reports of the present stage of the negotiations. Regional reports indicated grassroots feeling for a strike. Union songs and amandlas punctuated the proceedings. The meeting was interrupted when workers discovered two informers, one carrying a tape recorder in his pocket. They later confessed to union officials that they had been promised R1,000 to spy on the meeting. The intervention of union officials saved the two from serious assault by members as tempers rose. The seven hour meeting lasted into the early hours of the morning. The following decisions were taken:

- * the strike would take place from August 25 but that the union would consider realistic offers from the Chamber.
- * the union withdrew from the Council of Unions of South Africa and pledged to continue its role in the unity talks to launch a new trade union federation by the end of this year.
- * a boycott of shops be launched in response to the state of emergency.
- * NUM warned that it would call a national strike if the state president carried out his threat to repatriate migrants.

History of the dispute

The NUM 1985 wage demands were formulated from the National Congress in January. In February a Conditions of Employment Workshop was held which was attended by at least two shaft stewards from every branch. At this workshop a thorough study was made of existing conditions on the mines and these were compared to the Miners Charter adopted by the Miners International Federation in 1957. The union found that mineworkers' conditions of employment in South Africa were very inferior to the minimum set out in the Charter. In March, the 280 members of the central committee of the union met and finalised the list of demands and elected their negotiating committee for talks with the Chamber. The demands were:

- * 40% wage increase based on the huge profits made by the mining industry.
- * the removal of job reservation with the union being involved in the negotiating process.
- * 44 days' paid leave because of the migratory labour system. Only Anglo American, Rand Mines, JCI and Anglovaal give paid leave (a minimum of 18 days). Gencor and Gold Fields did not have leave schemes for workers.
- * 100% leave allowance in addition to leave pay for 44 days. At the time Anglo American was the only company that paid leave allowance (50% of basic pay).
- * job security - guaranteed jobs when workers return to the mines.
- * income security - no loss of pay when incapacitated.
- * death benefit scheme - operating since 1978 - to be amended. The scheme involves a monthly deduction from workers which is not refundable when they retire or resign.
- * May Day as a paid holiday.
- * reduction of working hours to 96 per fortnight.

At talks in early June, NUM dropped its wage demand to 27%, while the Chamber offered only 14% and refused the union's other demands. NUM's response was to call a dispute on June 14. Four days later a conciliation board was appointed. At subsequent talks NUM reduced its demands to a 22% minimum increase across the board; joint negotiations on ending job reservation; a paid holiday on May Day; 21 days paid leave; 75% leave allowance and 96 working hours per fortnight. The Chamber's revised offer was for a wage increase of 19,6% for

the lowest grades falling to 14.4% for higher grades; 14 days leave; a 50% leave allowance and a 2 hour reduction in fortnightly working hours to 102. The union's other demands were refused. NUM rejected this offer and called a strike ballot at the 18 gold mines and 11 collieries where it was recognised. In terms of the Labour Relations Act, as an unregistered union, NUM was under no obligation to hold such a ballot. The results indicated support for the strike despite the Chamber's doubts as to whether "any valid conclusions could be drawn from the results."

TABLE: Results of NUM Strike Ballot

Mine	Yes	No	NUM membership	Black workforce
ANGLO AMERICAN				
Vaal Reefs West	5157	nil	5610	13513
Vaal Reefs East	4819	nil	3767	12176
Elandsrand	3830	43	4021	7414
Western Holdings:				
Holdings and Saaiplaas Divisions	2947	63	6493	10688
Welkom Division	11519	850	12641	24032
President Steyn	11607	466	*6368	*19347
Western Deep Levels	5428	141	9739	20971
Arnot	902	nil	706	1015
SA Coal Estates	1340	7	700	2700
Kriel	1063	2	1300	1400
Total	48612	1572	51345	113344
ANGLOVAAL				
Hartebeesfontein	4691	nil	3000	18000
GENCOR**				
Marievale	892	nil	440	1240
TNC	559	33	551	1090
Matla	855	50	1400	2440
Total	2306	83	2391	4770

* The union did not ballot at one of the four shafts.

** Union membership figures are one month old.

Source: Financial Mail 19.7.85: relied on NUM for voting statistics; and for union membership and workforce figures: Anglo American, Anglovaal and Gencor.

- NUM dispute -

As the countdown continued for the strike set for August 25 renewed negotiations took place between the union and the Chamber on August 21. The union reduced its demands to 3: 22% across the board, two hours off for May Day and a commitment by the Chamber to negotiate with the union on the removal of job reservation, after its negotiations with the white unions.

The NUM received promises of support from the unions party to the new trade union federation. In additions other groups - such as the Catholic bishops - urged the Chamber to settle. The Chamber's industrial relations advisor, Johann Liebenberg had declared that the Chamber's offer would not be improved further. However, events took a dramatic turn on August 22 when the mining houses produced seperate offers to the NUM:

- * Anglo-American Corporation, which would be the worst affected by any action, offered additional wage increases amounting to 2.8% and representing an overall rise of between 16.9% and 22%. In addition they offered a 10% increase in holiday leave allowance.
- * Rand Mines offered an additional R4,00 a month on their collieries and a 10% increase in holiday leave allowance on its gold mines.
- * Gold Fields and Anglovaal offered a 10% increase in holiday leave allowance.
- * Gencor refused to make any offer.

This development is significant and could conceivably lead to the break up of the Chamber of Mines as the national bargaining unit for the industry and the beginnings of bargaining at company level. A number of factors have made possible such a response. Firstly, Anglo would be hardest hit as most of the NUM's membership is concentrated on its mines. Secondly, the gold price, which is set in dollars, has ensured super profits for many of the mines as the rand continues to fall. The Chamber of Mines gold producer members achieved a spectacular 38% increase in total profits for the first six months of 1985, against the comparable period for 1984. Total profits, including investment and sundry revenue, rose from R2,490 billion to R3,451 billion. That the mineowners could afford to increase their offer was acknowledged even by pro-capitalist sources. (Ken Owen in Business Day 29.8.85) Thirdly, the offer may be an attempt

photo: NUM Special Conference, 3.8.85



- NUM dispute -

to split the mineworkers working for the various employers, as well as to cause divisions among the different grades of workers. Fourthly, the state of emergency may also have contributed to the revised offer of some of the mining houses since a mines strike would exacerbate the country's economic problems at a time when confidence is already low. On August 28, as the rand reached an all-time low of 35,30 US cents, the Minister of Finance announced that the Government would suspend trading on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange until September 2. In a statement he said that these measures were necessary so that South Africa could continue to meet all its international obligations.

The individual offers were referred to the rank and file. Meanwhile tensions mounted on the mines. The union accused mine managements of harassment and intimidation. Death threats were received by the union's vice-president, Mr Elijah Barayi; an NUM regional secretary, Mr Paul Nkuna, was picked up on August 8 by the security police and questioned for four hours concerning the strike; a full-time union official, Mr Kenny Mosime was also picked up by the security police from his home at 3 am. on August 8 and interrogated for four hours about the strike; mine managements have been purchasing arms and ammunitions for possible use during the strike. There are also claims that some mines have purchased hippos for use against strikers. Despite the official postponement of strike action, about 300 workers picketed outside the hostel complex at Kloof Gold Mine (owned by Gold Fields of South Africa) on August 25 to protest their company's refusal to improve its wage offer. Police were called and several miners hospitalised or arrested.

On August 28 the NUM again met the Chamber. Rand Mines improved its offer in line with that made by Anglo American Corporation. JCI, which is not involved in the dispute, nonetheless agreed to the same terms. These offers were recommended for acceptance by the NUM leadership. The union then announced its intension to call out its members working in seven mines owned by Gold Fields, Anglovaal and Gencor, and where the union is recognised: Kloof, East and West Driefontein (Gold Fields); Hartebeesfontein (Anglovaal); and Matla, Transvaal Navigation Collieries and Marievale (Gencor). The NUM warned, however, that any action taken by these companies against striking miners would be followed by solidarity action on all mines since these companies had now "made themselves the enemies of all miners."
(Marcel Golding, 1.9.85)

Report: NUM Strike, September 1 - 3

Between Sunday September 1 and Monday night September 2 when the strike was in its crucial phase, it would appear that at least 23,000 and up to 30,000 workers took part in some form of strike activity. By Monday morning there were reports that on some mines the strike was being physically suppressed. By midday Tuesday the strike had been reduced to a hard-core of 5 mines, involving 10,500 workers. The employers now began to dismiss en masse. At this stage the union announced it was suspending the strike; it was applying for an interdict to prevent the mines from evicting mineworkers without a court order; and it was to apply for an Industrial Court hearing to rule on the legality of dismissing workers engaged in a legal strike. There were at least 80 arrests and a minimum of 30 injuries (the many reports of clashes between workers and mine security or police did not specify the numbers injured. Injuries may therefore be greatly in excess of our figure). It appears that as many as 1,800 may have lost their jobs (subject to current legal moves initiated by the NUM). This followed two days of industrial action which affected a total of twelve mines owned by Anglovaal, Gencor and Goldfields, who had decided not to match the pay offer made by the other members of the Chamber of Mines. [for background see the account given elsewhere in this SALB]

Late on Tuesday, September 3, Gencor and Goldfields agreed not to evict striking miners. Despite this undertaking Gencor proceeded to dismiss and evict miners from Marievale Gold Mine. On Wednesday, September 4, the National Union of Mineworkers obtained an interim interdict restraining Gencor from evicting mineworkers from Marievale pending the outcome of the proceedings at the Industrial Court, which is due to sit at the end of September. However, by Thursday night Gencor had "interviewed" and dismissed 967 miners who, the company claims left the mine "voluntarily". On Thursday the NUM submitted affidavits stating that its members had been forced out of the compounds at gunpoint. A court order was obtained compelling Gencor to allow workers to return to their accommodation.

Reporting on the strike was difficult, with the union and management making claims and counter-claims that were hard to reconcile. Independent monitoring was especially difficult

- mines strike -

with management and the police sealing off entire mines, and completely restricting access. Members of the Labour Monitoring Group who were trying to make an independent assessment of the situation were detained for a short period by mine security at Goldfields' Deelkraal mine, along with a member of the union and an international journalist.

The Strike

GENCOR

* Transvaal Navigation Collieries (TNC) was the first mine to take action, with up to 1,500 on strike by midday Sunday. The returned to work Tuesday afternoon after reports of teargas and rubber bullets being used.

* Matla Collieries, with up to 2,000 workers on strike, returned to work on Tuesday to prevent splits amongst the workforce. There were reports of 24 dismissals.

* At Marievale up to 1,200 workers took action from Sunday night. On Tuesday afternoon the union claimed 300 workers had been bussed out. Management claimed that the figure was 128 who "had left voluntarily". On Wednesday management announced it was interviewing the strikers and seemed set to dismiss a total of 67 workers.

* Beatrix, near Welkom, was the site of bitter conflict. Mine security used teargas and rubber bullets to disperse a meeting of some 1,000 workers on Sunday, with seven injuries reported. Thereafter up to 7,000 workers struck. On Monday morning shaft stewards were detained and later expelled from the mine. Management announced 87 dismissals for "intimidation". Workers spoke of being forced to go underground by dogs and sjamboks, and of go-slows at the workface.

* At Blinkpan Collieries up to 1,500 workers took action from Sunday night. The union later claimed that management were attempting to starve workers out of the hostel, a claim denied by Gencor spokespeople. Blinkpan restarted production on Tuesday afternoon. Koornfontein, a coal plant, also took action.

* At Stilfontein up to 400 workers took action, but information was very difficult to obtain. At one hostel workers met to discuss strike action before the 8.00 pm. shift on Sunday night. At 7.45 pm. 2 shaft stewards were arrested and the workers were escorted to work by mine security. There are claims that rubber bullets were used by mine management, and 6 casualties and 55 dismissals were reported on Wednesday.

* St Helena, with a total compliment of 9,000-10,000, took action on Sunday night, when it was claimed the nightshift did not work. While management reported that all was normal on Monday morning reports were received of continuing action.

ANGLOVAAL

* The Anglovaal spokesperson was very reluctant to admit any sort of action on their Hartebeesfontein mine, but did finally agree that 15 people had been dismissed for not working. The union claimed that up to 2,000 had taken action on Sunday night, and that 100 workers were being held in isolation and a further 80 had been arrested.

GOLDFIELDS

* West Driefontein was the site of an attempted strike by members, with one shift reportedly being missed on Sunday night, but by Monday morning management states that conditions were normal.

* Kloof was the subject of conflicting claims. It appears that a strike was attempted on Sunday night, but that management removed the union leadership. While management claimed that no action took place, 23 miners from Kloof appeared in court related to actions on Sunday night.

* Deelkraal was not one of the mines originally targetted for action, but had the biggest strike. Management confirmed the strike action, which may have affected up to 7,000 workers. It was Goldfields threat to dismiss up to 5,500 workers which prompted the swift legal action by the NUM. There are confirmed reports of injuries as rubber bullets and teargas were used against workers on Monday night. By Wednesday all but 700 were back at work. The 700, management claimed, had left the mine voluntarily the previous day. It is not clear whether they will be allowed to return to take up their jobs.

Assessment

1. The relatively small size of the strike (compared to last year's wage strike of 70,000 for instance) resulted from the following factors:
 - (a) The NUM had already achieved a large part of its demands and settled with Anglo American, JCI and Rand Mines - which together account for over half the industry.

- (b) Over 80% of NUM membership is concentrated on the mines that settled. NUM presence is only just beginning to be felt outside of the Anglo American mines. According to Chamber of Mines figures there are only 12,267 paid up recognised NUM members on Gencor, Gold Fields and Anglovaal mines combined. (NUM puts the figure at 18,000.) Whilst NUM's signed up membership is certainly much larger, the low numbers for which the union is recognised is a clear indication that organisation on these mines is still in its initial phase.
 - (c) Some mines in the Anglovaal - Gold Fields - Gencor groups had been involved in struggles earlier in the year resulting in dismissals and selective re-hiring. It may be that on such mines as Hartebeesfontein and East Driefontein the NUM was still recovering from these earlier blows.
 - (d) There is considerable evidence that heavy security measures initially prevented strike action taking hold and spreading in some mines, and later played a part in breaking successful strikes, particularly at Beatrix.
 - (e) The union experienced extreme difficulty in maintaining contact with its members on the mines. For the crucial first day of the strike NUM headquarters in Johannesburg was unable to receive incoming calls. In the union's opinion this was too much of a coincidence to believe the story that it was a "technical fault". In addition mines were roadblocked and effectively sealed off during the strike.
2. The strike was not a major trial of strength between the NUM and the employers - the majority of both had settled before the strike began. [see 1(a) and 1(b) above] In an assessment of the gains and losses for the union the following points can be made:
- (a) Of the seven recognised mines which were called out 3 (TNC, Matla and Marievale) struck successfully, 3 (West Driefontein, Hartebeesfontein and Kloof) took some kind of action, and 1 (East Driefontein) did not respond. However, the largest strikes (Beatrix and Deelkraal) and other actions (Blinkpan, Koornfontein, St Helena) took place spontaneously in "illegal" spillovers outside the recognised mines. (Stilfontein is recognised but was not called out by the union. There are two implications: that organisation is still only partial on some mines where NUM has recognised members, and

that NUM stands to make membership gains in the spill-over mines.

- (b) The strike highlighted the importance of solidarity work. A support organisation was mobilised at short notice to provide practical assistance.
- (c) In the end the strikes were broken in the face of intransigent managements which were willing to dismiss thousands of workers before they would meet the union's claim. Ultimately only the organised power of the workers themselves will put an end to these practices. Towards this end, and to boost recruitment, the union can point out that were it was strong (on the Anglo mines) higher wages have been achieved. In the meantime, however, the union has decided to test the legal situation. Its application to the Industrial Court has wide ranging implications:
 - (i) NUM will argue that all strikers - including those on mines where there is no recognised membership - were involved in a legal strike: all those workers face a common management, are subject to the same conditions of work and are therefore a party to the dispute. The employers argue that the dispute is only with NUM on the mines where it has recognised membership.
 - (ii) NUM will argue that if the Labour Relations Act provides for procedures leading to a legal strike, this should imply a legal right to strike without facing instant dismissal.

After the 1984 legal mine strike, when many workers were killed, injured or dismissed, Cyril Ramaphosa commented that if this was how management responded to a legal strike there was little point in going through the procedures. A further point was made by one NUM organiser: that going through the procedures for a legal strike alerted management as to which mines would be hit first. The outcome of the NUM's application to the Industrial Court will have considerable implications for the future direction of industrial relations in South Africa.

- 3. For the Chamber of Mines the strike revealed important divisions amongst its members:
 - (a) In the short-term the decision to present a split offer may, in part, have been a tactical move to disorganise

the NUM, to force a strike where the union was weakest.

- (b) It is as likely that the split offer represented real differences between Anglo in particular and the other mining houses. Does this mean the end of centralised bargaining and a move to company level bargaining? If so, does this also herald the beginning of the end of the industry's monopsonistic labour recruiting policy? Such speculation seems premature given the industry's historical dependence on cheap labour.
 - (c) From NUM's standpoint the aim in 1986 will be to re-establish uniform minimum conditions throughout the industry. The starting point for next year's wage demand will be the higher rates established with Anglo-American. Thus it may be that Gencor, Anglovaal and Gold Fields - who have won this round - are merely storing up problems for the future. They will be faced with demands for wages to be increased by a greater amount than the demands facing Anglo. They will almost certainly face a larger, more organised NUM presence on their mines, and the economic climate may be a lot less favourable than at present, when the mining houses are reaping windfall profits as a result of the weak rand.
4. While there was violence against strikers, the action of security and police was low key by the standards of the industry. The reasons may be:
- (a) an acceptance - albeit reluctantly - on the part of managements that trade unions are now a fact of life;
 - (b) the international attention focused on South Africa;
 - (c) the present political-economic crisis - one result of which has been the collapse of confidence and the rand and the foreign debt crisis - and a desire not to exacerbate the situation;
 - (d) NUM's threat of solidarity action on the mines where it is more strongly organised.

(William Cobbett, Jon Lewis,
Labour Monitoring Group, 5.9.85)



MAWU and the Industrial Council

For the third successive year the Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU) a FOSATU affiliate, has refused to sign an industrial council agreement. The employers' final offer was rejected as inadequate: an increase of 17c per hour (giving R1.90 per hour) on the minimum rate for the lowest grade of workers and guaranteed increases of between 14c per hour for workers in the lowest grade and up to 24c per hour for workers in higher grades. MAWU, together with the other member unions of the Co-ordinating Council of the International Metalworkers Federation (in the metal industry these are MAWU, SA Boilermakers Society, Engineering Industrial Workers Union, Steel Engineering and Allied Workers Union, Engineering and Allied Workers Union. The Electrical and Allied Workers Union and the Electrical and Allied Trades Union - which are soon to merge - has also cooperated with the IMF unions) put forward the following demands:



- * a minimum "living wage" of R3,50 per hour and a 50c across the board increase;
- * May Day to be a paid holiday;
- * employers to double their contribution to the industry's pension fund. This to be invested in black housing;
- * four weeks paid holiday (presently 3 weeks);
- * maternity leave.

The following demands were made in response to mounting retrenchments:

- * increased overtime rates to curb overtime working
- * a reduction of 5 hours on the working week to 40 hours
- * retrenchment pay calculated on the basis of 4 weeks wages for every year of service.

In the end the other IMF unions reluctantly decided to sign the agreement. This was to ensure that the agreement was extended to cover unskilled workers so they at least received the improved conditions offered by SEIFSA (Steel and Engineer-

ing Industries Federation of South Africa). The IMF, however, warned that unions would be seeking better rates by pressuring certain companies to negotiate at plant level.

At the same time, MAWU has brought a case against the Hart company in the Industrial Court in an attempt to establish the legal right to negotiate improvements over and above the conditions set by the Industrial Council. Meanwhile MAWU members began taking direct action after deadlock was reached in the Industrial Council.

On July 15 over 1,200 MAWU members at 5 Siemens plants struck in support of a demand for a R1 across the board increase. Siemens dismissed its workers although all but 40 had been reinstated by the end of the month. The 40 were suspended on full pay pending findings on charges of violence and intimidation to be investigated by 2 mediators (one from management and one from the union: all but 14 have now been reinstated, 9.9.85). The union condemned selective rehiring, and what they see as intimidation of shop stewards. Siemens did agree, however, to a minimum increase of 16c per hour, 2 cents above the amount set by the Industrial Council. The company also agreed to negotiate increased merit increases for every worker. MAWU has certainly not dropped its demand for plant-level bargaining: "Siemens and other multinationals must negotiate with the representative unions in good faith or face the fire," declared MAWU Transvaal Secretary, Moses Mayekiso.

On August 27 MAWU requested Transvaal employers to give an unconditional, written undertaking to open direct negotiations with the union independently of the industrial council, or face strike action. Mayekiso said the union would declare a dispute with more than 120 companies if they failed to give the undertaking within 10 days.

Three Years of the Industrial Council

In early 1983 when MAWU joined the Industrial Council for the Iron Steel Engineering and Metallurgical Industry, it was with the following principles:

1. That MAWU organises at the shop floor level and that MAWU is committed to the principle that shop floor bargaining is fundamental. Industry wide bargaining may be supple-

- mented but can never take the place of shop floor bargaining on all issues including wages and working conditions.
2. That MAWU is democratically controlled by its members and that the union will be represented primarily by elected worker representatives. These representatives will be mandated at all stages of negotiations by the union's shop steward councils.
 3. That MAWU will represent all its members regardless of race.
 4. That MAWU will not be party to any agreement or actions by the Council which MAWU's members do not agree with.
 5. That MAWU will withdraw from the Council if necessary.
 6. That the union understands that the Council will not attempt to limit or discourage shop floor bargaining. In addition MAWU will insist on facilities for reporting back during negotiations. (SALB 8.5, p48)

Only by holding to these principles, the union believed, could MAWU guard against the dangers of co-option and bureaucracy. The decision to join the Industrial Council came after the unsuccessful strikes of 1982. The problem was that "although the strike wave assumed industry wide proportions the strikes themselves were fragmented. Workers in different factories did not unite in their demands." (SALB 8.5, p49). For MAWU the task now was to unite its membership across factories, and to mobilise on a national level behind a common set of demands. This was necessary in order to challenge the power of the employers, solidly united behind SEIFSA. It was envisaged that MAWU would use its position on the Council to push for improved minimum conditions in the industry as a whole, whilst continuing to fight for further improvements at plant-level. Above all else the Industrial Council was to act as a focus for national mobilisation.

In 1983 a Labour Bulletin article (SALB 8.5, Webster) warned that in joining the Industrial Council MAWU would face two problems. First, the complex technical nature of the Industrial Council's proceedings might give rise to a division of labour which distanced the negotiators from the rank and file membership. Second, MAWU was joining the Council from a position of weakness. It would be outnumbered by the conservative CMBU (Council of Mining and Building Unions) and could be outmanoeuvred. As regards the latter point the reverse has, in effect, taken place. According to MAWU National Organiser, Bernie Fanaroff, negotiating jointly on the Industrial Council

in alliance with the other IMF unions has both strengthened the IMF and has begun to undermine the sway of the CMBU. In particular, the largest metal union, S A Boilermakers Society, has moved away from the CMBU to identify more closely with the other IMF unions as that grouping began to constitute an alternative to the CMBU unions. This development would have been unlikely had the major emerging union - MAWU - remained outside of the Industrial Council.

Similarly MAWU has taken steps to prevent a division between technical negotiators and the worker leadership. Union officials and the union executive - the latter made up of workers - are present at Council negotiations. In addition MAWU has attempted to involve, on a continuous basis, its National Negotiating Council made up of the chairpersons of all the factory shop stewards committees. This has meant hiring halls in the vicinity where Industrial Council talks are being held, constant report backs, and a system of continuous mandating.

What are the gains which have accrued from membership of the Council? According to Fanaroff these gains have been largely indirect. He believes that higher minimums have been achieved because MAWU was willing to hold out and prolong negotiations. Improvements in the administration of the Pension Fund and benefits offered, he believes, were linked to Industrial Council participation. Also Fanaroff argues that MAWU's hardline in the Industrial Council, combined with its commitment to worker control has attracted the support of workers. Thus new factories have been organised, particularly in Pinetown, and in the case of Highveld Steel and Samancor membership has increased rapidly as a direct result of plant-based pressure to challenge inadequate Industrial Council agreements. At a time when retrenchments in the metal industries are running at approximately 2,000 per month (this does not include closures or natural wastage), MAWU has consolidated its membership: over the period 1983-5 paid up membership (on stop order) has increased from 20,500 to over 35,000.

How successful has MAWU's declared strategy been: to use the Industrial Council as a focus for national mobilisation whilst still pressing for improvements at plant level? Since 1983 each Industrial Council settlement has been followed by pressure for factory level improvements. In 1983 improvements of between 11 cents and 20 cents per hour were achieved, and in

1984 between 10 cents and 40 cents. This affected 35-40 out of 200 MAWU factories. Evenso, of the large engineering companies (eg. Metkor, Amic, Gencor, Haggie, GEC and Siemens) only Barlow Rand has broken ranks to officially sanction plant bargaining. Last year, however, Siemens negotiated service increments with MAWU, a disguised form of wage bargaining. The success rate for local agreements has been greatest in Natal where the union is faced by smaller independent companies.

In many ways, Fanaroff argues, the Industrial Council is an optical illusion: "metal employers will insist on bargaining jointly at a national level. Whether we are in or out of the Council we have to unite and mobilise generally at the same national level. It is a slow process but this is now happening, as shown by the increasing mobilisation and participation of our members each year over the last three years. The Industrial Council is not the issue, but it provides a focus for building membership and co-operating with other unions. These are the necessary preconditions for mobilising nationally to effectively challenge SEIFSA and win a living wage for all metal workers."

(Jon Lewis, August 1985)

Postscript: As we go to press 370 workers employed at the Brits plant of the German multinational company, Robert Bosch, struck in support of their demand for plant negotiations and a R100 across the board increase. The company dismissed all the strikers, but following a sit-in at the plant and all night negotiations, all the strikers were unconditionally re-enstated and an effective minimum wage of R3,00 per hour was agreed. According to a MAWU press release this settlement and others soon to be signed are a major step forward for unionisation and better conditions in the border areas.

PWAWU Deathblow to Industrial Council?



On August 19 the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union, a FOSATU affiliate, announced its resignation from the Pulp and Paper Industrial Council. The union cited the following criticisms:

- * The Council is not a successful democratic, national bargaining forum. It has been unable to agree to the union's reasonable demand for a R2,00 per hour minimum wage. Only one company - Sappi - would have been forced to increase its minimum rate.
- * The employers have used PWAWU's presence on the Council as an excuse not to deal with the union at plant level. In the case of Nampak this meant renegeing on previous undertakings.
- * The Council excludes meaningful worker participation.
- * Three artisan unions - S A Electrical Workers Association, Amalgamated Engineering Union, and S A Boilermakers Society - have a say which is out of all proportion to their small membership in the industry.
- * The Council is run by a cosy grouping of employers and conservative union officials. Little has changed since the Council was unashamedly whites-only.
- * The Council secretary's dealings with black members and officials of PWAWU have been unacceptable in tone and content.

In mid-1984, after consistently rejecting Industrial Council membership, the NEC of PWAWU applied to join the Council, after discussions held by the Pulp and Paper Shop Stewards Council. The immediate reason for this change of policy was the refusal of Sappi and Mondi managements to negotiate further outside of the Industrial Council. Plant level negotiations had previously taken place at Nampak and Carlton mills. In addition to the 4 employers and the 3 artisan unions, Nsibande's National Sugar and Refining and Allied Industries Employees Union was also represented on the Council. At the time of joining the Council, PWAWU represented 40% of the 10,000 workers in the industry. Despite being by far the largest union, PWAWU was allocated only one seat, alongside unions which between them represented a few hundred workers. In 1985 this was increased to 3 seats, still a minority representation on the union side even though the union's membership is now 60% of the workforce.

PWAU set the following conditions upon joining the Council: a fair allocation of seats - no union with less than 15% of the workers in the industry to be represented; the proceedings to be translated; plant level bargaining with the majority union; and for the constitution of the Council to be renegotiated. Most of these were not achieved.

Late last year annual wage negotiations for 1985 deadlocked with the PWAU demanding a 35c per hour increase and R2,00 per hour minimum and the employers offering between 18c for the lowest paid and over 50c for artisans. Consequently negotiations devolved to plant level, but with employers now refusing to negotiate on anything but the wage issue outside of the Industrial Council. Wage settlements were achieved with Mondi (25c), Carlton (29c) and Nampak (25c) - which secured a minimum above the R2,00. There was reluctant agreement with Sappi whose workers accepted the original offer of 18c per hour but called for a concerted push at Industrial Council level to raise the minimum rate (R1,38 in 1984; R1,65 offered for 1985).

Since there was no agreement for 1985, the previous agreement expired on December 31, 1984 and there has been no valid agreement since then. This being so the PWAU argued that the Industrial Council's continued levy on workers (2-3c per week) was now illegal. Together with the employers' levy these deductions finance the work of the Council. The Registrar of Trade Unions has given the Council until September 11 to explain itself.

On July 19, at the last meeting of the Council, PWAU again received no support for its latest proposal of 25c per hour and a R2,00 minimum (Nsibande's union was not present). Following the meeting and on the recommendation of its pulp and paper members the PWAU NEC announced its decision to withdraw from the Council. Furthermore the union called for the dissolution of the Council under section 34(1) (d) of the Labour Relations Act which provides for: "Cancellation of registration of industrial council" ... "whenever the registrar has reason to believe in respect of an industrial council that" ... "one or more of the parties have withdrawn from the council and the council has by reason of that withdrawal ceased to be sufficiently representative." There are no precedents for such an action and the argument would revolve around the interpretation of "sufficiently representative".

For its part the PWAU is clearly representative of workers in the industry. Out of 18 mills, PWAU has a majority in 14 and only 2 important mills remain outside its orbit: Sappi Springs and the large Sappi Ngodwana in the Eastern Transvaal. Despite this, the Industrial Council may not collapse immediately, and there may be attempts to gazette an agreement over the heads of the union and the majority of the workforce. But this could not be extended to cover non-parties and therefore would have little real force.

In resigning from the Council, the union did not close the door to national-level negotiations. But it believes that a national negotiating forum for the industry must be built from scratch with PWAU. The question of registering as an industrial council for reasons of enforceability etc. is a practical consideration.

The question remains as to why PWAU was unable to use the Industrial Council as a lever to raise conditions in the lowest paying mills? Firstly, the bureaucratic style of the Council, the union argues, was hostile to emerging unions. Second, there was no common ground with the other unions. Finally, despite the fact that Sappi stood out as a rogue employer, the employers as a whole remained united in the Council. Their strategy was simply to take the lowest wage in the industry and declare that the legal minimum. For the present then it is the employers who are united around their class interests.

Meanwhile the union's strategy is to continue legal steps to have the Council dissolved. The Pulp and Paper Shop Stewards Council will meet in early October to draft a set of wage demands for 1986 for the industry as a whole. In order to win these demands the union is mindful that organisation has to be extended - particularly in the low paying establishments and pressure has to be increased at plant level.

(Jon Lewis, August 1985)

Sasol: "Putting Profits before Workers' Lives"

On Monday August 12 an explosion in Sasol's Middelbult mine in Secunda left 30 dead and 29 hospitalised. Middelbult is a modern mechanised mine and reputedly the "world's most productive coalmine". Doubtless the labour of the miners employed there contributed towards Sasol's R412 million profit in 1984. The Chemical Workers Industrial Union (CWIU) which represents 60% of the 8,700 coalminers condemned the high level of accidents in South African industry, and particularly on the mines and charged that companies put profits above the lives of workers.

Immediately after the explosion workers refused to go underground. As a result, on the Wednesday, many workers received written warnings and were threatened with dismissal. The union is taking up their grievances. Workers also claim that, although modern equipment for testing for methane gas is supplied, often safety procedures are ignored in the interests of increased production. Ironically Middelbult has recently received a 5-star NOSA safety award.

A further complaint is that there is no adequate compensation for death and injury. Mineworkers at the Sasol mines have no insurance cover, provident or pension funds. When accidents occur their only compensation comes from that provided for in the inadequate Workmens Compensation Act. Given poor wages (minimum wages at Secunda collieries are R182 per month on the surface and R203 underground), the union argues that the lack of decent compensation shows a serious disregard for the welfare of miners and their families.

These mines form an integral part of Sasol's "coal to oil" operation in Secunda. As the union organised in the conversion plant, so miners started to organise themselves into the union as well. The big breakthrough came in November 1984 after the mass sackings of conversion plant workers for supporting the stay-away. In the face of management intimidation thousands of miners joined the union in solidarity with the sacked workers. By December a majority of miners were unionised and a steering committee had been established. This played no small part in softening Sasol's original stand on the sackings.

(see SALB 10.5)

The miners main grievances included:

- * unfair disciplinary action by white supervisors.
- * underpayment for overtime working.
- * compound conditions (the vast majority are migrants).
- * the failure to renew contracts of particular workers. This was an attempt by management to circumvent disciplinary procedures. The union has now won an agreement that there will be no terminations or dismissals without a full hearing.
- * wages. Although there were no formal negotiations this year, the union was clearly able to exert pressure on management for improved wages. For the first time Sasol broke with Chamber of Mines' rates and granted an average 22% increase.

Although management has now agreed to recognise shaft stewards, union officials are still not allowed into the compounds and meetings have to be held in the township of eMbalenhle. Sasol management even refused the union's request for use of the mine recreation hall for a service to mourn the 30 dead workers. To honour the dead miners and to emphasise the whole question of health and safety, Sasol workers planned commemorative services for Friday August 30.

In Sasol conversion plant workers demanded a two hour stoppage, and eventually negotiated a 1 hour late start for everyone to enable them to attend services held in the hostels. On the mines workers negotiated 2 hours off for the morning shift to allow them to attend services held in the 3 mine compounds. Meetings were well attended and at one shaft the afternoon shift refused to go down and instead attended the commemorative service.

The CWIU also called on its other factories to take some kind of commemorative action. Despite the short notice over half of CWIU's 80 factories took some kind of action: ranging from lunch time services to short stoppages.

In the aftermath of the Middelbult tragedy CWIU is pressing management on two fronts: for a system of adequate compensation and for the recognition of health and safety stewards. After all the safety of workers' lives is so important a matter to be left to management. The union has declared its intention to make 1986 a year of health and safety.

(SALB correspondent August 1985)

CCAWUSA: 10 Years



The Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union of South Africa celebrated its tenth anniversary in August this year. Formed in 1975 on the initiative of the National Union of Distributive Workers (NUDAW) and the National Union of Commer-

cial Catering and Allied Workers (NUCCAW) - both affiliates of the Trade Union Council of South Africa - as a parallel union, it is presently the second largest union party to the formation of the super federation, with a membership of 50,000.

Emma Mashinini, general secretary since the inception of the union, recalls the leading role played by Morris Kagan and Ray Altman in the formation of the union, "They realised in the early days the need to organise black workers and encouraged the formation of a union." Dulcie Hartwell, general secretary of the National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers played a leading role in the establishment of the Durban branch.

The first stores the union organised were OK Bazaars and later Checkers in the Transvaal. They remain union strongholds. A major problem in the early days of trade unions was the struggle against liaison committees: "They were management dominated structures and undemocratic. We had to fight them because management tried to frighten workers about the union," said Mashinini. The union used these liaison committees and transformed them into democratic structures.

Although the union was the parallel of NUDAW and NUCCAW there were major differences according to Mashinini, "We were never dominated like other parallels were by sister organisations. We had a good working relationship with them and this continues today. Also we were never affiliated to TUCSA."

At first CCAWUSA, NUDAW and NUCCAW were in a federation called the Association of Distributive and Allied Workers Union but this was dissolved in early 1980 when the other two unions merged to form NUDAW. The relationship between the unions is

good and joint negotiations often take place, according to Mashinini.

Transvaal is the biggest branch of the union with over 20,000 members. There are nine other branches in all the major centres of the country with 33 union officials. Each branch operates autonomously from one another since the union is not tightly centralised. The union only had 1,000 members in 1977. Its rapid growth took place during 1982 with the successful strike wave in the retail sector. The strikes were characterised by a high degree of solidarity, discipline and level of organisation amongst the workers. Substantial wage increases were won in a sector notorious for low wages and bad working conditions. The union rapidly gained recognition and has over 15 agreements with the major retail chains in the country.

In an area where CCAWUSA leads the way, a maternity agreement was signed with Metro Cash and Carry which won working mothers protective rights when pregnant. In addition the union has been fighting the Foshini Group on part-time employment.

CCAUSA has over 200 shop stewards nationally. The union is affiliated to the International Federation of Commercial, Clerical, Professional and Technical Employees (FIET) which has over 8 million members in 229 unions in 86 countries. Mashinini is the vice-president of the Africa section of FIET and chairperson of the Southern African region. CCAUSA is also a member of the International Union of Foodworkers (IUF) with Sidwell Malgam, a CCAUSA shop steward, as chairperson of the South African Coordinating Committee.

In 1984 the union opened the constitution to "coloured and Indian" workers and at the August conference this year it became non-racial. Although there are other unions operating in retail - Federation of Commercial Retail and Allied Workers; Retail and Allied Workers Union (Pretoria) and Retail and Allied Workers Union (Cape Town) - CCAUSA is by far the largest. Mashinini insists that CCAUSA remains committed to one union one industry, but that the door is always open to all.

(Marcel Golding, August 1985)

Trade Union Unity

The announcement that a new trade union federation is to be launched on November 30 brings to an end four years of discussions on trade union unity. The unions that have agreed to launch the new federation are: Federation of South African Trade Unions' nine affiliates (130,000); the National Union of Mineworkers (100,000); General Workers Union (12,000); Food and Canning Workers Union (25,000); Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union of South Africa (50,000); Cape Town Municipal Workers Association (12,000); the eleven unions affiliated to the United Democratic Front (40,000: the most important being South African and Allied Workers Union and General and Allied Workers Union); and the nine affiliates of the National Federation of Workers (12,000: also a UDF affiliate). Together these unions represent a paid up membership of 380,000 and a signed up membership of over half a million.

The five principles accepted by all the unions and on which the federation will be based are: non-racialism; one union one industry; worker control; representation on the basis of paid up membership; and cooperation at a national level in the new federation. This is a major step forward for the trade union movement, although a number of unions which were involved in the earlier discussions have decided not to join the federation.

The labour scene has changed dramatically since the first unity talks were held at Langa on August 8 1981. More unions have been established and the number of unionised workers has more than doubled. Most significant was the establishment of the National Union of Mineworkers in 1982, and which now claims 230,000 signed up members of which 100,000 are paid up. The issues and union alliances have also shifted as the political conditions changed. Registration, for example, which led to bitter division between FOSATU unions and others, is now a non-issue for the vast majority of unions. Membership of industrial councils remains the subject of debate but differences among trade unions have not prevented cooperation and unity. There is broad agreement on the need for democratic strong shopfloor structures, worker control, industrial unionism, and political action (the forms this should take - particularly political action - remain to be debated). Economically,

- unity talks -

the recession has forced unions to consolidate factory structures to protect hard-won gains. Politically, repression has increased with mounting struggles in the townships, culminating in the state of emergency, the detention of activists and the banning of the Congress of South African Students. The nature of the economic and political crisis necessitates union cooperation in order to ensure a unified response.

The new super federation brings together the most organised workers in the strategic sectors of South Africa's economy. It constitutes a powerful force on the shopfloor and will also, no doubt, play an important political role. Labour's political prominence was heralded by the November stay-away, the memorial stoppages over the death of Andries Raditsela and the support given to the boycott campaign protesting the state of emergency.

History

The unity discussions started in August 1981 in Langa. The meeting rejected the state's attempt to control the union movement. All the unregistered unions argued that registration was a mechanism of control and that cooption was likely. The registered unions argued it should be seen as a tactical issue which would permit protection and that cooption could be resisted through strong shopfloor organisation. Very little was achieved between the unions. At the April 1982 talks MACWUSA/GWUSA were the first to leave in protest over the issue of registration. In July 1982 MACWUSA/GWUSA; SAAWU; OVGWU (Orange Vaal General Workers Union); BMWU (Black Municipal Workers Union); SATWU (South African Transport Workers Union) and GAWU presented a list of seven principles which were considered imperative if unity was to be established: non-registration; shopfloor bargaining; non-racialism; federation policy to be binding on affiliates; worker control; participation in community issues and the rejection of reactionary bodies nationally and internationally. All the unions could not agree on all of the principles and the talks deadlocked.

In April 1983, at Athlone, a steering committee was established. At subsequent meetings differences re-emerged, especially in October that year when MACWUSA/GWUSA, SAAWU, GAWU and CUSA (Council of Unions of South Africa) failed to provide the necessary information to assist the committee in the demarcation discussions. There were also divisions over general and

industrial unionism. Exacerbating these tensions were accusations of competition and poaching.

As the recession took effect all unions were badly hit by re-trenchments but it was the industrial unions which best weathered the crisis. This seemed to substantiate some of the criticisms of the industrial unions that the general unions had weak structures. In fact the argument for industrial unionism had been won by the March 1984 meeting, with the general unions agreeing, in principle, to industrialise. However, there was no agreement as to time span or means by which this could be achieved. At the March meeting, the feasibility committee announced that some of the unions in the talks were not "ready or able" to participate in the federation because they had not provided information on membership which was necessary for industrial demarcation to proceed. These unions - SAAWU, GAWU and MAGWUSA (Municipal and General Workers Union) - were offered observer status which they refused and left the talks.

By the end of 1984 three distinct groupings had emerged within the independent labour movement: the core of the "unity talks unions"; the unions affiliated to the United Democratic Front; and the emergent black consciousness unions in AZACTU (Azanian Confederation of Trade Unions, an affiliate of National Forum), which had never participated in the unity talks, mainly because many had been established only after the unity talks were initiated. The core "unity unions" were distinguished by the fact that they were industrial unions and, with the exception of CUSA, refused to align themselves to any political tendency. (CUSA dealt with the matter by affiliating to both UDF and National Forum). By contrast the majority of the UDF and National Forum aligned unions were general unions and unregistered.

By far the largest and best organised grouping was the "unity unions". The group was by no means monolithic with three broad tendencies co-existing: non-alignment to ensure worker control and independence ("workerist"); support for UDF and more active political involvement; and among some CUSA affiliates a residual attachment to the principle of "black leadership". (At CUSA's annual conference in late 1984 there was already disquiet over the direction of the unity talks). Over-ruling these political differences was a common commitment to unity on the basis of industrial unionism, democratic shopfloor structures and worker control.

- unity talks -

In early 1985 there were rumours that SACTU (South African Congress of Trade Unions, largely suppressed during the 1960's) had intentions of reviving itself internally and that this move would be supported by SAAWU, GAWU, MWASA (Western Cape) and the Clothing Workers Union. The commemoration meetings planned in different parts of the country fuelled the speculation, but any such intention was denied by the unions concerned and by SACTU, which urged maximum unity within the new federation.

Re-alignment

In May all the unions were informed of the progress of the unity talks and invited to a meeting on June 8 and 9 to discuss the draft constitution for the federation. The widening of the unity talks to all unions was a result of pressure, within FOSATU particularly, and to ensure a wider legitimacy both within South Africa and on the international plane. The successful May Day Committee involving all the unions in the Transvaal raised hopes of unity at the impending talks at Impelegeng in June. Preceding the talks there was a regional meeting on the East Rand between FOSATU affiliates and other unions in the area. Invited for the first time were the black consciousness unions.

At the Impelegeng talks differences emerged over the question of non-racialism; the demand to be party to the redrafting of the constitution by unions not previously involved; the timing of the launch and the process of mergers and formation of industrial unions. The meeting allowed all unions to state their positions. AZACTU and UDF aligned unions agreed on the questions of timing and the drafting of the constitution, while they differed on non-racialism. AZACTU argued for an "anti-racist" position which left open the possibility of blacks only constitutions for member unions. The industrial unions were clear: they wanted the federation established before the end of the year on the basis of the five principles.

A credentials committee was established to check the bona fides of all the unions and to prepare for the launch. Subsequent meetings were not attended by AZACTU. The UDF unions decided to enter the federation. Since then the NUM has withdrawn from CUSA because of the latter's "lack of seriousness towards the formation of a federation of all emerging unions." CUSA, a participant in the talks for the past 4 years, with-

drew from the feasibility committee and will not be entering the new super federation. In a carefully worded statement CUSA said that it was still committed to trade union unity. Explaining its attitude to the talks, CUSA said it took exception to the "present conditional invitations extended to some of its affiliates and thus ignoring CUSA as a federation." It added that because of the oppressive and exploitative system of apartheid, black workers have reservations in participating in talks which do not enforce the principle of black leadership.

AZACTU is now also outside unless it accepts the five principles. In an attack on the feasibility committee, Mr Pandelani Nefolovhodwe, co-ordinator of AZACTU, said that the letters informing the confederation's affiliates of their exclusion from the talks came as a surprise to him: "It is now becoming apparent that a certain clique has been trying to make unity its own property through caucuses and under-currents." This leaves CUSA and AZACTU outside the new federation. Whether their common black consciousness heritage is enough to overcome organisational differences (industrial versus general unionism) and make possible a merger remains to be seen.

Amongst the new federation unions discussions to establish "one union one industry" are underway: between Sweet, Food and Allied Workers Union and Food and Canning Workers Union, and between Transport and General Workers Union and General Workers Union. Although the general unions in the new federation have accepted that they must industrialise, they see this as a long and complex process. To the industrial unions it seems much simpler.

The new federation will certainly enjoy wide support and legitimacy as the most representative organisation of black workers in South Africa's history. Nonetheless, the CUSA - AZACTU grouping will continue to represent approximately 100,000 - 150,000 workers. The organisational strength is in CUSA, concentrated mainly in their industrial unions: chemical, food, construction and transport. In each of these sectors - except perhaps for construction where CUSA's BCAWU is dominant - there is potential for competition with the federation unions. Nonetheless, the present political-economic crisis provides the objective conditions for united action by the two groupings. Indeed, this would seem to be imperative if attacks by capital and the state are to be successfully resisted.

(Jon Lewis, August 1985)

BCAWU Strike at Pilkingtons

On May 20 the Pilkington Tiles factory reopened and its 460 workers returned to work ending the month long strike which resulted in the closure of the factory. For the workers this was a major victory and came after months of struggle and strike activity. The recognition of the Building, Construction and Allied Workers Union (BCAWU), a CUSA affiliate, to which the majority of Pilkington workers belong, was a major advance after management had refused to grant the union recognition although it had obtained majority membership two years earlier.



Early organisation

Pilkington Tiles produces ceramic tileware for the building industry. Its workforce is largely female and they work under extremely bad conditions. Supervision, according to shop stewards, is tight and abusive making conditions unbearable. Originally a total of 514 workers was employed.

The BCAWU started recruiting at Pilkington Tiles in early 1980 but its organisation only accelerated in 1984. This was largely because of management hostility to unionisation and fear of the part of the workforce. Pilkington like many other firms has been dramatically affected by the recession and retrenchment, and the demand for a full working week became a major issue which workers had to fight. It was the first major test for workers and their handling of such issues assisted them in understanding the value of organisation and unity on the shop floor

On November 8, 1984, at 4 pm. management informed the workers that they intended retrenching some of them the following day. This incensed workers since no adequate notice was given and nor were they consulted on why this was necessary. In protest they downed tools and refused to work until management had given reasons for their action. The following day when they returned, workers gathered inside the factory and refused to work. They elected a delegation to speak to management. After

heated discussions management eventually accepted the workers' proposal that short-time be introduced instead of any retrenchments. At midday they returned to work. This proved to the workers the importance of organisation and unity and enabled the union to consolidate its position in the factory.

In early February the company's chairman from England visited the Meyerton plant and workers thought it an ideal opportunity to air their grievances. One of the major complaints was the low wages. Once again in support of their demand for an increase they downed tools on February 13. The strike lasted until the 16th and although workers managed to speak to the chairman the offer they received was way below the R2,00 per hour demanded. Instead the company offered an across the board increase of 20 cents per hour with a further 33 cents for workers with 20 years' service and more.

Union membership increased dramatically and although the union repeatedly requested recognition the company delayed this. As one of the shop stewards explained: "management kept on saying that some auditors should be found to verify union membership, they were not satisfied with the union's accounts."

Strike

On both the wage increase and the question of union recognition workers were not happy with management's response. To demonstrate the union's support and workers' anger a petition was circulated with the worker's demands, which included:

- * 50 cents increase per hour;
- * 45 hour working week (because they were working short-time);
- * recognition of the BCAWU;
- * disclosure of the company's financial statements to the workers' representatives.

Management was given five days to respond to the petition before any other action was taken. After management ignored their demands the workers decided to strike on March 26. On March 27 a meeting was held with management, when the workers were informed of the company's problems, which included:

- * production had decreased in comparison to previous weeks;
- * the company is still producing more tiles than it could sell;

- BCAWU -

- * as a result of the recession there are fewer new buildings;
- * absenteeism had increased.

In response to the demand for a full week, management agreed that short time should be changed in such a way that all black employees would work equal hours. This was to be achieved by working a system of flexi-time in certain departments.

In addition it was agreed that once union representivity was proved talks on recognition could begin. Management was, however, prepared to meet with the union at regular intervals. They also agreed to pay the hourly staff for loss of earnings during the strike. But at the same time management insisted that for the company to be efficient it was necessary to have temporary transfers within or to other departments. At face value this seemed a reasonable proposal but workers were only to discover later exactly what this meant. The strike ended on March 28.

Victimisation

In line with the proposal to transfer workers to departments where they were most needed, management selected the union's most active and influential people isolating them from the rest of the workforce, a direct response to the "guerilla struggle" that workers had been engaging in. Management's handling of the situation caused immense bitterness and exacerbated the tensions and suspicions in the factory. It was clearly an attempt to disorganise the union and instill fear in the workforce. In particular, a shop steward, Ezekiel Mnguni, suffered at the hands of management. They transferred him on April 18 from the engineering department to the packing section and from there to digging trenches. This was clearly harassment since Mnguni was a competent welder and although he agreed to do other work so as to avoid being retrenched, he was being asked to do a variety of tasks which many of the white artisans were not being asked to do.

Mnguni felt he was being discriminated against. Management then held an inquiry into why he was refusing to carry out instructions. The findings of the committee chairman were that Mnguni had disobeyed a lawful instruction and that this was a serious offence which required his immediate dismissal. He was informed that he could collect his pay at the wage

office. Mnguni's fellow shop stewards requested an appeal which was granted on the proviso that it was heard by a neutral party and that he would remain dismissed pending the outcome of the appeal.

However, the workers were not interested in the niceties of the matter and on April 19 all but 24 decided to strike. On the Monday workers came to the factory as usual but refused to work. Instead they stayed outside. From reports management did not know what to do. This demonstration of worker solidarity with their dismissed comrades, management found extremely difficult to deal with. They distributed a notice informing the workers that this was an illegal strike and that they would be dismissed if they did not return to work by 9.15 am. But the workers ignored the warning.

On April 24, after 5 days, with the dispute unresolved the police were called in. Aaron Nthinya, general secretary of the union, explains what happened: "Four police trucks and three smaller vans arrived. Without any warning they started to arrest the workers and forced them into the trucks. All 490 workers were arrested and taken to Meyerton police station. Management denied they called the police but the workers said they did.

The workers were held from 12 pm. till 8 pm. They were released on condition they did not go near the factory premises. In addition they were told to appear in court on April 29. Meanwhile, the union tried to get the company to the negotiating table. At first this proved difficult but later the company decided to withdraw charges against the workers. The dispute was then placed in the hands of the union and company lawyers. The unions demands were essentially: to get all the workers reinstated unconditionally and that Mnguni be given an arbitration hearing, and that the union be recognised.

The union was able to get an undertaking from the company that while negotiations were still proceeding they would not employ new staff. However, Pilkington Tiles was not prepared to meet the demands. Instead they proposed to re-employ only 325 of the dismissed workers over a period of eight weeks. For the company this was an ideal opportunity to restructure and rationalise. While they accepted that Mnguni should have an arbitration hearing they were not prepared to pay him until such time as the arbitrator's decision was known. In addition they wanted

an undertaking from the union that the existing wage structure would not be varied and they reserved the right to transfer workers from department to department. With no settlement in sight the factory was shut down. The dispute dragged on for one month with union lawyers making most of the representations.

Throughout this time the union assembled the workers every weekend to hear report-backs. According to the shop stewards spirits were high and workers were very confident that they would get their jobs back. After almost a month of negotiations an agreement was reached. Those workers that were not taken back were pensioned early. The remaining 420 were reinstated over a period of 9 days (20 to 29 May), although the company was not prepared to pay earnings for the period the factory was shut. The company undertook to apply the last in first out principle when re-employing workers. In addition there was to be no increase in wages until February 1986. The recognition of the union was to be granted.

The settlement was certainly not a wholesale victory for the union. But it ensured that the union was not entirely destroyed. For Mnguni the settlement meant that he would not be re-employed but that severance pay would be given. In addition he has first option of work should the company require more staff.

For the company the strike meant lost production and a fall in profits; for workers it meant an immediate loss in wages. The strike was a test of power and organisation between the employer and the workers. In the end the union survived, the workers gained in confidence, and organisation was consolidated.

(Marcel Golding, August 1985)

SACWU: AECI Struggle Continues

On July 18 this year, 600 South African Chemical Workers Union (SACWU) members at the AECI Chlor Alkali and Plastics plant at Ballengeich, near Newcastle, returned to work ending, temporarily, their seven-month battle with the company. The dispute forms part of SACWU's struggle to obtain increased minimum and equal wages for all workers employed at the various subsidiaries of the AECI group. This year alone the AECI group has been hit by four strikes at various plants, the most notable being the solidarity strike in February at the Modderfontein Explosives plant after a blast killed fifteen workers.



Organisation

SACWU started organising AECI, the chemical, explosives and paint conglomerate owned by Anglo American, in 1979. This is still the union's stronghold with approximately 8-9,000 members in the AECI factories. The union started organising Hollander Electro-Chemical Industries in 1981 (as Chlor Alkali was known at the time) and signed a recognition agreement in July 1983 after obtaining a majority of the 830 workers employed at the plant. In 1984 Hollander was incorporated into AECI's chemical division as part of a rationalisation programme and the name was changed. The company is the second biggest exporter of carbide in the world.

The other union at the plant is the Mine Workers Union which represents 58 white workers. During August last year both unions were invited by the company to discuss wages and conditions of employment. According to Manene Samela, national organiser, the union expected management to bring wages and conditions into line with the rest of the AECI factories. He adds that in principle the company accepted this when the union was recognised: "but they kept on talking about their losses."

On October 8 1984 SACWU submitted a demand for R161 per month increase across the board to bring the wages of Chlor workers

into line with other AECI workers. The MWU demanded a 25% increase. According to Samela, Ballengeich artisans earn more than at other plants whilst the lower grade workers earn less. In 1984 the minimum wage at Ballengeich was R339 per month compared with R363 at other AECI plants.

Separate wage negotiations commenced between the company and the unions on November 21. At this meeting management outlined the company's financial losses for 1984 and its budgeted loss of R2,2 million for 1985. On November 22, a further meeting was held between the company and SACWU but there was no progress. The union rejected the company's offer of 9,5% and refused to reduce its demand.

On December 29 SACWU again rejected the company's offer but revised its demands: a basic wage increase of R100 across the board; leave bonus of 75% of the basic wage for the first three years of employment and 100% thereafter; annual leave for three weeks for the first five years of service and four weeks thereafter; and a standby allowance of 20% of the basic salary. The union also raised demands for an acting allowance, merit bonuses and study leave - but did not pursue these.

AECI refused the union's demands and a dispute was declared. A conciliation board application was made on December 27 which was approved on January 30 1985. On February 28 the conciliation board met for the first time. The MWU accepted the company's offer, but agreement could not be reached with SACWU. Because no agreement could be reached the conciliation board was postponed until March 18. When the board reconvened, neither party had revised their position. The company argued that unless there was an improvement in the economic situation they would seriously have to consider partial or total closure of the plant.

On February 20 all the company's black workers struck in support of the union's demands. Threatened by management that the strike was illegal, the workers returned to work. On March 21, a ballot was held and the legal strike commenced again on March 22. A week later the management issued a return to work or be fired ultimatum which the workers heeded. The union, however considered the company's action an unfair labour practice.

Production then continued as normal until June 3 when workers

again went on strike in protest against the 1985 wage increases. On the day of the strike all the morning shift workers gathered in the canteen at 7 am. and refused to work. The afternoon shift followed suit.

Strike ballots were also organised at other AECI plants, where the union organised, for a possible sympathy strike. The company argued that the latest strike was illegal. Samela explained that the June strike was part of the same dispute as the one in March and that workers had merely suspended the March action to protect their jobs and the union was still committed to equal conditions of employment.

The company's interdict application restraining the union from calling for sympathy strikes was turned down and the judge ruled that intermittent strikes were legal. No ruling however was made on the legality of sympathy strikes.

The union, however, called off the sympathy strike action. Meanwhile management continued to publish bulletins explaining its position and urged workers to end the strike. On June 19 Chlor Alkali fired 110 workers - all from one department - and started recruiting scabs - mainly from the nearby "coloured" and "Indian" communities - a temporary measure to continue production.

The SACWU accused the company of trying to foster divisions in the union and creating racial tensions by employing these scabs. AECI denied this. To counter this action the union solicited the support of the United Democratic Front and the National Forum. Both made press statements while the National Forum also issued pamphlets and engaged in house-to-house campaigning to discourage scabbing. This proved very effective as scabbing virtually stopped.

In one of the many memos sent out to workers, management tried to convince workers to end the strike:

Many employees in South Africa today are agreeing to accept smaller wages in order to protect their jobs. By so doing these employees have still got some money to feed their families and pay their bills.

The company issued an ultimatum to return to work on July 12. Negotiations between the union and the company continued and

the union decided to return on July 18. Samela maintains that they did not return because of the ultimatum but to ensure that the 110 dismissed workers would receive retrenchment benefits due to them when the company closed down their department.

AECI offered the Chlor workers a 9,5% increase; a minimum wage of R373 backdated to April; a further increase to R430 from January 1986 and to R445 from July 1986. The union rejected the offer for January 1986 but eventually settled for the 9.5% backdated to January 1985. Also included in the settlement package, it was agreed that workers in categories A-F with less than 3 years' service would receive an additional 3 days annual leave; shift allowance of 2.4% on basic salary as well as a holiday bonus equivalent to 75% of basic salary. The union also insisted that the company accept in principle that all AECI workers should receive equal wages. Samela added that the union will in future propose wages and conditions of employment jointly for all AECI factories.

On July 18 the strikers returned and the 110 dismissed workers were reinstated. Retrenchment proposals are being discussed for the workers who will leave because of plant closure at the end of August. The agreement signed in July also gave preference to retrenched workers if there were vacancies.

According to Mr Mike Saunders, chairman of Chlor Alkali; the company spent over R1 million to keep the factory going during the strike. For SACWU it was an important short-term minor victory. Its organisation within the AECI group as a whole has been strengthened. In January the battle begins again.

(Marcel Golding, August 1985)

Philippines: Women Workers in Free Trade Zones

The Bataan Export Processing Zone lies on the shores of Manila Bay on the southern tip of the Bataan Peninsular. The main industrial complex is surrounded by high walls and wire fences. All workers have to carry identity cards and have to queue while they are security checked in and out. The industrial zone is governed by its own laws which are enforced by its own armed police force with its own intelligence service and network of spies. Most of the 16,000 workers in the zone are young women who have come from poor rural villages. Most of them have not worked in factory jobs before and have never had contact with unions. For this reason they are expected to be "passive" and "docile" employees by company managements. In its newsletter one garment company, IGMC (Intercontinental Garments Manufacturing Co., British owned), explains, "Regarding Filipino women labour, most foreign manufacturing experts have this to say: they are very adaptable, of good temperament and generally quite cheerful. This is why they are much sought after as garment makers." Yet it is these young and inexperienced Filipino women who have now produced one of the most highly organised and militant workforces in Asia.

Building unions

Some of the rural traditions the women are used to have been used by some companies to help keep out unions. One worker, Elena, said, "In our factory the manager came from Pampanga, and most of the workers came from the same place. He would prefer to recruit workers from Pampanga. Girls would be introduced to him by their aunties or relatives from that place and he would take them on. But they would then be bound by what we call Utang Na Loob, a kind of loyalty, a province or even village loyalty to the personnel manager."

Yet with conditions hard in the zone women found themselves, often to their surprise, organising together inside their factories. Usually women would talk secretly at break times. Rosie remembers first hearing about the idea of a union, "Some workers talked to me secretly in the canteen during the break time. They ask if I am happy with things in the factory. They say it's good to join together to fight for your rights, to

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have a union. Some of them were friends I knew. I could see the conditions in the factory so I supported them straight away. They had paper to collect names so I signed and I helped to persuade other workers."

Even so it could take a long time to build up the union. It took Clarita, now a union leader in the same factory as Rosie, three years to decide to join: "I used to work with my father in the fields before I came to work in a factory here. I never imagined I would become a union leader. For three years I was a quiet worker but conditions got worse. One day I saw one of the workers in my section crying because she needed to take leave, because of family troubles. But they just wouldn't let her go. Then later my cousin in another section got ill. I took the paper she needed signing to get her benefits. The manager just screwed up the paper. That made me mad. So I got some of my friends at work and said let's go together to some union seminars and help each other work with the union."

Intimidation

Although workers are forbidden to strike in the zone, they do have the legal right to form unions. But it is not easy. Companies will go a long way to avoid having to deal with a union. They will try to intimidate workers or buy off the leaders. This April, workers in the Manila Glove Company were making their fourth attempt to form a union. Manila Glove is owned by a parent company based in Chicago and makes industrial gloves. It employs 300 men and 1,100 women and pays the lowest wages in the zone. One of the workers said, "Our managers have always bullied us. In the sympathy strikes our factory stayed working. The managers made us. The workers wanted to join, but we were scared. The first try to form a union was led by some of the men. But they gave in to bribes of money and promotion. The second, exactly the same thing happened, and it was the same the third time. This time it is the women who are organising. To start the union we got a petition and people signed secretly in the rest room. The management has already tried to bribe some of the officers on the adhoc committee, but they won't accept these offers. The management has said that if we form a union they will move to Malaysia. The assistant supervisor has been trying to persuade workers against the union. She goes from dorm (dormitory) to dorm and room to room saying that they will lose their jobs if they

join the union. She has even sent telegrams to workers' parents. Some of our parents came to the factory. At first they were agreeing with the management, but then after they talked with their children and heard our side they understood and agreed with us. We are confident we will win the election. We hold meetings every day. 500 or more have been coming. Some of us have been training in union organisation so that we are ready for when the union wins recognition. We will show the company that the brochure descriptions of Filipino women are just to attract investors. Now they will see we can fight." The women won their union.

Yellow unions

The unions which gained early recognition in factories in the zone were often those ready to co-operate with the management. Managers have found that "yellow unions" are often the most effective block a company can have against effective worker organisation developing in their plant.

When workers in Lotus Shoes wanted to join a more militant union federation they found themselves in an extremely hard struggle. The Lotus factory produces the popular "Nike" sports shoes which they export to the Middle East and Europe. There are 1,200 workers in the factory, 70% of them women. Lisa, a stitcher in the assembly section explained, "the union federation we are affiliated to, the FFW [Federation of Free Workers], never does anything about our conditions, and never supports workers who complain about these things. We decided to take our union out of the FFW and affiliate to the ADLO-KMU [Association of Democratic Labor Organisations] because it seems to do more for the workers. We asked the management to hold a certification election in order to change our affiliation [this has to be done while the collective bargaining agreement, which has been signed by the management with the union federation, is still in force]. But the management did not want us to change our affiliation and would not co-operate. So in the end we went on strike."

This was in June 1984. The workers kept a constant picket outside the factory, but when the strike was declared illegal the company was able to use the zone police to try and break the union action. One of the male workers in the plant said, "On one day [June 8] the company wanted to take out finished goods

for shipment. The picketline refused to allow the van out of the factory. We formed a human barricade across the loading bay, mostly of women. The military were brought in with a fire truck and used a waterhose and their truncheons to break our picketline. I was frightened. The police were pulling out women then they reached me and hit me. I blacked out. When I recovered I saw other workers wounded."

The military were used again. This time they removed the picket and banned the workers from entering inside the zone area. Lisa recounts the workers' response: "At midnight we moved to get back into the zone. We did it by crawling through the drains under the fence and into the zone. Yes most of the women did this. I was frightened, but we were all together. Inside the zone we hid ourselves in the darkness and waited. Then at about 7.00 am. when the factories opened for the morning shift, when workers come into the zone to start work, we came out of our hiding places and set up our picketline again. Back up went our banners. The military were amazed and angry."

The strikers completely refused to give in and even managed to persuade some strike breakers to join the picket line. Finally with the yellow union demoralised and clearly with little support the management agreed to a new union election. Unsurprisingly there was an overwhelming vote to affiliate to ADLO-KMU.

Sympathy strikes

The workers in the Bataan Export Processing Zone have gone beyond just forming unions. They have achieved an extraordinary form of solidarity between factories in the zone and developed something which was completely new in the Philippines, the "sympathy" or "indignation" strike. These strikes involve a zone-wide stoppage of workers. The first of these mass actions came in June 1982 when seething discontent rose to the surface in the zone as workers saw a brave attempt to strike by the union in one factory, the Japanese owned Interasia Co., brutally smashed by the zone police. Leaders of unions in other factories had already started to meet to discuss the harassment of the Interasia strikers. Now concern turned to outrage. The next day workers in the zone acted. Adelina, a worker in the British owned garment company IGM, relates what happened in her factory: "The shop stewards stood up and ordered us to turn off the factory lights and the machines. The

whole factory went quiet. Then we all walked for the doors, even the non-union members joined us. There were 900 of us. We are going on sympathy strike. Even the management walked out of the plant - they thought there must be a fire! As we came down the stairs the company guard tried to close the door and lock us in. But the women forced the guard out of the way. We all came out clapping. We formed a line. Everyone was shaking with fear and excitement. We marched in our neat line over to the Interasia picket. When they saw our ordered march they clapped us."

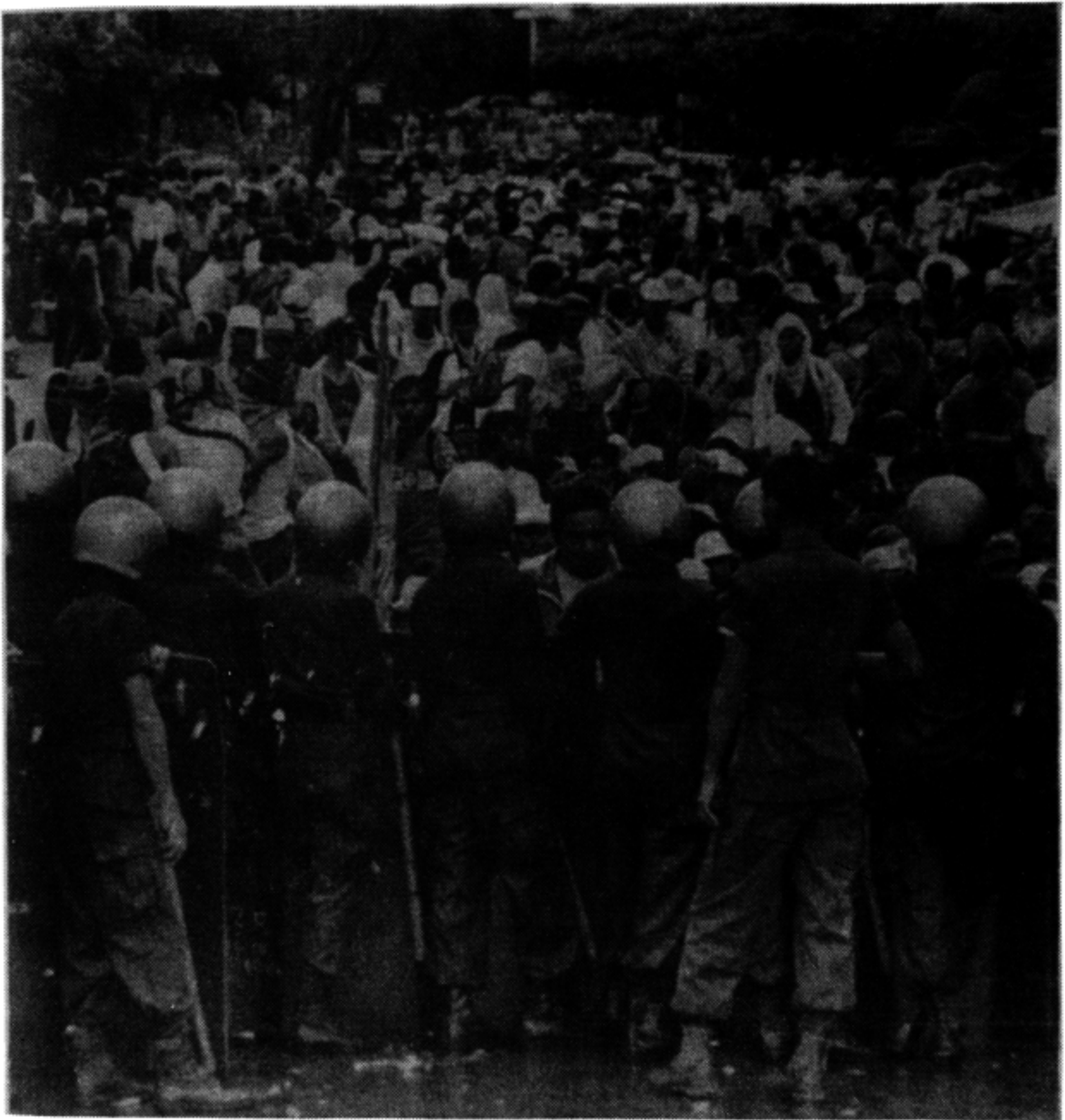


photo: police confront workers in Bataan

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"The other workers were all so impressed with us they said that we should lead the march to the zone administration building. We said other workers should lead, but they all shouted no it should be us. So we led the march. We had to pass back past our factory. Our managers were amazed to see us. They couldn't believe it". 20,000 workers had stopped work.

This show of solidarity shook the authorities and they forced the Interasia management to negotiate. This decision caused serious strains between the companies and the zone authorities, but it showed the workers that they could ignore the zone labour laws with impunity if they organised strongly enough. Out of this sympathy strike an interfactory alliance emerged, which was eventually formalised into AMB-A-BALA (Bataan Alliance of Labour Associations). This alliance was to coordinate union activity in the zone and maintain the sense of solidarity achieved in the strike.

Marines

The next mass stoppage happened in October 1983, after women in the British owned Astec Electronics (owned by BSR) went on strike for union recognition. Like the workers at Manila Glove their earlier attempts at forming a union had been bought off by management bribes. When a strong union did emerge the company started sacking people. The women protested with a walk out. Rumours spread around the zone when it was heard that the military had appeared at the picket line and physical attacks had been made on workers. By the end of the day-shift thousands of workers turned up to give their support to the Astec strikers. This time with the zone police stood battle-trained marines. "The police had made a line where they said: Anyone beyond this point gets shot. They also had teargas," said Adelina, "This didn't put off our workers from coming. Some of them brought masks from the factory to wear against the gas".

It was when the IGMC workers arrived again in their organised lines to the clapping and cheering of the other zone workers that the police fired off their gas. The military also fired bursts of armalite fire over the heads of the crowd, causing panic to break out. Nevertheless it did not end the work stoppage. With such a show of strength from the workers of the zone, and crucially their ability once more to bring production in virtually every factory grinding to a halt, management was

forced to negotiate. (Astec left the zone shortly afterwards).

Last summer the 11 union leaders at Interasia, still engaged in bitter dispute with their intransigent management, were fired. As the Interasia workers came out on strike the union officials were banned from entering the zone area, and for a while the zone took on the appearance of a besieged fortress as the military barricaded the entrance points. It was a particularly bloody attack on the picketline when zone police took turns beating workers who already lay injured and helpless that resulted in a third mass "indignation" stoppage. Thus by January 1985 a zone which the government boasted would never have a strike had been hit by three general strikes in three years, each involving up to 20,000 workers.

The authorities have now decided they must act. Despite the fact that there is already an array of laws forbidding striking in the zone, the new Administrator, Cayetano, has drawn up a draconian new anti-strike law. Intended to create "the ideal labour relations policy in the export zones" this law will not only ban strikes, but slowdowns. Moreover unions that do organise industrial action will lose their rights to represent workers, union leaders will lose their jobs and be barred ever from being employed in any factory in the zone. The Cayetano Bill signals a new determination by the Marcos regime to crush the extraordinary labour militancy which has developed among workers in the Bataan Export Processing Zone. The workers have already given their answer to the Cayetano Bill. This April 26 there was a mass protest walkout in the zone. Three days later 10,000 workers left their factories to march two days to the provincial capital to protest against the bill at a May Day rally.

(International Labour
Reports July/Aug 1985)



Company Unionism: The JMCEU Revisited

At its AGM in July the Johannesburg Municipal Combined Employees Union (formerly the Johannesburg Municipal Coloured Employees Union) lived up to its long history of collaboration with the employers. This was made easier by the fact that the executive is drawn from higher grade white-collar members despite the fact that 50% of union members are manual workers. (see SALB 10.5)

The Chairman's address started well with an announcement that the racial limitations on membership had now been removed from the union's constitution. The fact that the Municipal Sports Club was still exclusively for whites was bitterly attacked: "...the fight against the evil system of apartheid should be fervently pursued on all levels." However, when it came to the question of the union's response to the government's reform strategy, the Chairman clearly supported the "new dispensation" and the provision for a local authorities "own affairs":

The main aim of this dispensation is to grant the various race groups a greater say and power over decision-making in their own local affairs. We shall therefore examine how this measure will affect us as employees of local government in employment and promotion. The union's contention is that the shackles of apartheid which retarded the progress of our members have now been broken... We can now demand that preference of employment promotion be given to our members to serve their own communities. We should therefore adequately equip ourselves to take over those responsibilities which were previously denied by the evil laws of apartheid.

On the bread and butter issues the leadership also failed to represent members' interests. The demand for a 15% increase was met with a blank refusal by management on the grounds that the government had decreed that increases be withheld until the economy showed considerable improvement. Despite the fact that there were doubts as to the legality of the government's authority in this area, the municipal unions decided not to proceed with the wage claim in the present financial climate. By contrast the 1985-6 budget increased the general secretary's salary from R17,961,52 to R26,000,00. (SALB corres., July 1985)

The Question of Unity in the Struggle*

Alec Erwin

The last few years in South Africa have seen events and developments that at the least pose questions about political strategies and at most may require fundamental and innovative re-evaluations of these policies. As economic conditions have worsened so important political developments have taken place. The state is attempting new directions of reform. The UDF has grown as a national organisation and the independent trade unions have survived and strengthened despite the recession. These organisations have to deal with both the state and widespread popular protest and unrest.

However, re-evaluations of political strategy come from organisations not from papers presented at academic conferences. The purpose of this paper is to try and chart certain guidelines to the debate and analyse what is needed. Ideally this requires a scholarly and rich historical work. This paper makes no such pretence although I believe the arguments can be sustained and enriched in more detail. The attempt made here is exploratory and schematic. My only defence is that broad and coherent debates rather than piecemeal organisational sniping is needed at present.

Liberation, nationalism and populism

Political processes are complex but my concern here is to try and chart general guiding points within which more detailed analysis could be accommodated. It is useful, therefore, to define the starting point as being an examination of those political activities concerned with liberation - in short liberation politics. By liberation I mean the changing of a regime through extra-parliamentary or military means or any combination of these. A regime is a particular state apparatus shaped and defined by certain basic programmes unacceptable to the majority of the people.

* First presented at the ASSA Conference, UCT, July 1985.
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Liberation politics is therefore, more wide-ranging within the society than would be parliamentary politics based on voting at elections. In this sense it impacts on many aspects of society, however, it need not necessarily be revolutionary in the sense of actually transforming production, consumption and other social relations within the society. This is a very important consideration governing liberation politics which I shall try and deal with.

If liberation politics is concerned to remove a regime then it seems an important imperative arises. What we are concerned with is a situation where conventional warfare is not possible and where any military action is more significant for its political rather than its military efficiency. The imperative that therefore, arises is that liberation politics is concerned with a battle for legitimacy. This will be explored in more detail later in this paper. Liberation politics is concerned to destroy the legitimacy of the ruling regime and its state apparatuses so that it cannot successfully govern and must abdicate.

If liberation politics is concerned with a battle for legitimacy then it can only succeed if it is able to mobilise the greatest possible support amongst the people of that country (and on the international arena, as will be examined later). Liberation politics therefore requires conditions that will give rise to such mass mobilisation and must adopt political practices and forms that facilitate and build upon such conditions. The conditions and the forms of politics interact with each other.

The historical circumstances in which this possibility arises are rich and varied. Yet three broad situations can be defined and are appropriate for examining the situation in South Africa. All three are concerned with a struggle and politics within the geographic borders of a nation and in that sense are nationalist. However, there are important distinctions.

The first form could be defined as national defence. This is most likely to arise in a situation of conquest or a client nation relationship. The distinguishing feature is that an existing nation or nationality can be defined and that definition is generally accepted. Given the historical processes that have given rise to nation building the definition may be far from definitive and this in itself has certain political

implications. In attempts to mobilise around the nation the imperative of stressing the nation must arise. Resort to invoking the past be it real or mythological becomes an important part of the political process. Whilst such a process may achieve mobilisation against a regime it has inherent in it elements that are reactionary in that both past and existing class interests are fixed and protected by the symbolism of the nation being defended. The nation is also in large measure a reaction to the exogenous threat of the other nation that has imposed the regime. National pride and identity is a mobilising force but it also sails very close to the winds of racial stereotypes and outright racism.

The second form could be defined as nation building. Again this will arise in the face of an exogenous threat. For our purposes the clearest form of this is the process of colonisation that occurred in the 19th century. In this process new geographic borders were imposed forcing together previously distinguishable societies. To successfully resist the colonial power required unity between these societies as their disunity was all too often the very mechanism for achieving colonial conquest with relatively limited forces. It was necessary to undertake a process of nation building. What is important in this process is that the nation is being constructed with reference to the future rather than the past - the past being a source of division rather than unity. Attempts to build a nation also give rise to a modernising tendency - use of phones, telexes, written word, newspapers, road, railways etc. In fact to match the colonial power they have to adapt to its ways. This gives rise to a stress on education, change and adaptation. It is also likely to place leadership in the hands of those who are most mobile and most versatile in the new ways. This can give rise to alliances between the new elites and the peasantry in order to break the power of old feudal type orders whose interests lie in the older fragmented societies. Inherent in nation building, therefore, is a certain radicalism since old ways are being changed and the regime is exogenously imposed. It is also likely to be closely associated with populism as a political form.

Populism is the third form that could be defined. Here the distinguishing feature is that the regime cannot be typified as having been exogenously imposed. This is significant because externally imposed regimes are a massive source of mobilisation

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by virtue of their being external. An endogenous regime, therefore, must have peculiar and clear-cut features if it is going to be a sufficient catalyst to cement together different class interests. What these features are is complex but there are essential ingredients. There must be some principle of organisation of the regime, eg. military rule, racism, divine rule, cult dictatorships. The regime must deny significant democratic rights to the majority of the population and accordingly rule by overt repression. The regime must be exploitative of the majority and restrictive to the workings of capitalism. Such regimes create the conditions for an alliance of classes whose economic interests differ but who find common cause against the regime.

Nation building draws on populism since it is unifying societies that are themselves divided by class interests. The two, however must be distinguished as the political task of building a nation is not identical to that of cementing a class alliance within a nation.

The imperative of unity

Liberation politics can take one of the forms outlined: national defense, nation building, or populism. These forms impose upon political activity certain imperatives and shape the basis for mobilising mass support. The purpose of drawing the distinction is precisely because it will shape the basis and programme of mobilisation in general terms.

For a liberation movement to succeed it has to harness the political power that arises out of the energy, courage and willingness to sacrifice of the vast mass of the population. These capacities are dictated by the oppressive and anti-democratic nature of the regimes opposed. If a liberation movement succeeds in inserting itself as the symbol of that courage, energy and willingness to sacrifice it acquires considerable power. It also establishes its own moral legitimacy as it erodes that of the regime.

The liberation politics being examined is in essence oppositional deriving its mobilising capacity from the power of the regime. The regime by its oppressive actions sparks popular resistance.

To establish a centrality for the liberation movement in the

political process requires a unity of purpose and conformity in the target of that purpose. This unity becomes a powerful imperative moulding political action. What is, however, crucial is that unity must occur around clearcut points of mobilisation in defence of the nation, building a nation to drive out a colonial regime or a popular alliance against an anti-democratic ideologically defined regime.

Such unity with the purpose of undercutting the legitimacy of the regime has to suppress and subsume more complex interests be they class, regional, religious or tribal. In the case of certain of these interests their suppression can in fact lead to and generate a certain radicalism. This is particularly true where those interests - religious, tribal or regional - are associated with an old order. This would also tend to lead to a coincidence of particular interests between a rising bourgeoisie and the working class and for the peasantry. For this reason nation building and populism are likely to generate more radical practices than is nation defence.

However, a problem has usually arisen when one or another or all of a radical intelligentsia, working class or peasantry have gone further and questioned private property and the capitalist economy. Such questioning now begins to strike at the roots of any popular alliance - be it nation defence, nation building or populism. The usual way out of this politically is to present a two stage argument. The first stage will deal with the oppressive and anti-democratic regime and the second stage can address itself to issues of economic equality, production and consumption. Such a formulation appears to make sound political sense. Elimination of a repressive regime requires maximum unity - everyone can see this, so in most cases political parties representing workers or peasants have themselves accepted the formulation.

The suppression of class interests for the sake of wider unity also militates against debates and practices related to the transformation of the economy and society. The requirements of the struggle impose an imperative of unity which imposes practices unrelated to transformation. This point might be more clearly made if we look at one situation where the requirements of the struggle impose the need for unity but where practices related to transformation become essential.

The stress here is on the notion of a political practice. This

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implies the form in which political - in its widest sense - activities are carried out. This form has to be regularised into institutional ways of functioning.

Guerilla warfare of a sustained kind (rather than irregular units behind enemy lines) could be encompassed within nation defence, nation building and populism. Its success depends on the unity generated by these forms. However, to date such wars have only successfully been fought by and within a peasant population. To successfully wage such a war within the peasantry certain political practices have emerged. A significant guerilla army needs - in addition to men and arms - good information, protection from better armed government forces, mobility and of great importance, a regular food supply.

These requirements could be exacted by coercion but this is unlikely to be effective on a large and sustained scale. Rather it is the support and the loyalty of the peasant population that will be needed. If the tasks of providing information, protection and food are to be carried out they will require collective action based on voluntary participation. Voluntary participation requires people to be involved and informed on their actions. In addition, the war situation is going to require innovation and imagination for the successful protection of these tasks. It is likely that new ways of producing equipment, administering, health and education will arise.

These requirements of guerilla warfare become the basis for political practices based on involvement, democratic participation and innovation in production and consumption. They are practices that are necessary for the immediate struggle but they are also practices that address the whole problem of transforming society.

Particularly where the peasantry has had to fight landlordism, such as in China, then the political practices imposed by guerilla warfare have transformed productive relations and led to fairly thorough going socialist transformations. This example raises very important considerations about how the form of a struggle can shape its practices and programmes. The imperative of unity can subsume class interest and side-step transformation yet in particular circumstances the form of the struggle may of itself raise the issue of transformation to a position of centrality.

Generally, however, the broad based, transitory and oppositional nature of the struggle imposes limitations on their ability to develop detailed programmes.

It is therefore necessary to look at one other major determinant of the struggle in the contemporary context.

The mantle of legitimacy

In the contemporary context liberation politics will also be crucially shaped by international reactions. The international arena has undergone important changes as the 20th century has progressed. Trade and the activities of the multinationals (MNC's) have cemented the world's capitalist economies into a highly integrated system. This has also meant a dramatic development in the communications networks between countries. As part of these developments international, political and economic organisations have evolved (eg. United Nations, IMF, World Bank, ILO etc).

Within these organisations a complex interplay of political forces arises. The rise of a significant socialist block of countries after 1945 has increased the significance of these international organisations as East and West vie for influence in the non-aligned and Third World countries. Virtually all countries are, therefore, woven into a fabric of economic and political relations. An almost instantaneous communications network carries news into the international organisations to be used in sustaining one or other political position.

A liberation movement that is attacking the legitimacy of a regime cannot ignore this international arena - in fact it could almost be said to be crucial. The support or possibly more correctly the lessening of resistance that a liberation movement can achieve depends upon how it is perceived in international forums. There is a battle for morality or legitimacy between liberation movement and ruling regime. To take an example. If the MNC's perceive a threat to their economic interests arising from the actions of a liberation movement then their ability to support the ruling regime and invoke the support of their home government depends on how the wider public perceives that regime. Here the image conveyed by the international media and the decisions taken by international organisations are very important.

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Likewise certain parameters govern the search for support by the liberation movement. It cannot easily identify itself with one or other of the big power camps as this will alienate the social democratic, non-aligned and Third World countries who are important in shaping decisions of international organisations. It is also likely that for similar reasons the socialist block would not give unequivocal support to a liberation movement that could not establish legitimacy within the Western countries as this would have detrimental consequences for socialist diplomacy in the international arena.

In fighting the battle for the mantle of legitimacy in the international arena a fine balancing act is called for by both the regime and the liberation movement. For the liberation movement such a fine balancing act militates against a clear-cut and detailed political and economic programme.

If a country is economically significant in the world economy then the factors are heightened. Since such countries often affect surrounding economies their significance is further increased. There is a built-in conservatism in the perceptions of the super powers when it comes to political developments in this particular grouping of countries. This conservatism arises out of the wider implications of dramatic and new models of either capitalism or socialism.

This battle for legitimacy must - short of complete external and internal schizophrenia - impose certain imperatives on political activities within the country. Firstly it is again another momentum toward unity and the deferring or suppression of class interests. Transformation and even practices addressing transformation pose problems in the international legitimacy battle. The international organisations within which much of the battle has to be fought do not deal with transformation. They deal with development within existing parameters - if they tried to do otherwise then their role in a predominantly capitalist world would be neutralised.

Secondly, the role of the international media becomes crucial. There is no doubt that the media can shape impressions. Political activity becomes judged by its news worthiness. Here the interests of the media itself become paramount. The media are looking for news but they are not politically neutral. In the main they are hostile - with more or less intelligence - to

anything that they style as socialist.

Liberation politics is, therefore, in very large measure concerned with a battle for the mantle of legitimacy in the eyes of the international arena. This interacts with the forms of political struggle internal to the country reinforcing and creating a momentum toward unity based on relatively uncomplex principles of mobilisation. There is also pressure toward political activity that is newsworthy and practices that address transformation will not have a ready audience.

Thus far the argument has been that liberation politics can be based in one of three possible political terrains - nation defence, nation building, and populism. These share common elements but are distinguishable in the imperatives they broadly impose upon political activity and practices. Secondly, that each of these three forms imposes the imperative on unity around a central and relatively uncomplex mobilising principle. This defers and subsumes other political and class differences - the mobilising principle is in a sense a lowest common denominator but is of such a nature that it invokes and releases popular energy, courage and sacrifice. Thirdly, liberation politics is in essence an attack on the legitimacy and authority of the ruling regime and in the contemporary context this battle will in large part be fought in an international arena. This reinforces the imperative of unity. Finally, the political practices that address the problems of transformation are only likely to arise in particular forms of struggle.

South Africa

I will make no attempt to deal with a political history of South Africa here. The purpose is only to draw out certain themes that are elucidated by the arguments above. This serves to provide some basis for events in the present with which the paper is more concerned.

There have been a number of organisations and movements involved in liberation politics in South Africa. The All Africa Convention, the Non-European Unity Movement, the Communist Party and the Pan Africanist Congress have played roles. However, the African National Congress and the Congress Alliance stand as the largest and most national of the movements and to simplify the argument I will focus on them.

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The advent of the 1948 Nationalist government rapidly strengthened the popular alliance and in the 1950's the political form swings heavily to populism. There was still in existence a significant peasantry that were both heavily oppressed and prepared to take up resistance. The overtly racist laws introduced and the complete disenfranchisement of all blacks, enforcement of the Group Areas Act and the resulting restrictions on an emergent black bourgeoisie all reinforced an alliance across classes.

The government's direct interference in all aspects of the economy and its heavy handedness even alienated elements of the bourgeoisie. Their support was mobilised around the argument that apartheid was economically irrational and that it would jeopardise international links.

The struggle in South Africa was an amalgam of populism and nation building as the apartheid regime set about creating a particular ideology to justify its repressive practices. The racial divisions and Bantustan policy made nation building one essential basis for mobilising whilst the racist and anti-democratic policies of the regime cemented a popular alliance. The part played by the bourgeoisie has to be fairly carefully understood since as will be argued later the apartheid policies were integral to sustaining cheap labour structures. However, the overt racism of the regime was too much for elements of the bourgeoisie making them at best fellow travellers in the popular alliance until the advent of the armed struggle.

The intransigence, racism and callousness of the apartheid regime lent a certain morality and legitimacy to the armed struggle in the eyes of the international community. Through active diplomacy the ANC managed to win the legitimacy battle and during the 1960's and 1970's a remarkable process of isolation of the South African state took place. It was remarkable because of the size of foreign interests in South Africa and its peculiar wealth.

The apartheid regime itself provided the mobilising principle both internally and externally. Apartheid invoked a liberation politics that was based on the imperatives of both nation building and populism. Apartheid was so abhorrent that it provided a very simple and powerful basis for mobilisation. So powerful that it strongly reinforced the momentum toward subsuming class interests. To have raised differing class inter-

ests during such a struggle would have been divisive and divisive forces take on some of the stigma attached to apartheid.

The economy and class alliances

In the 1980's, however, we have to come to terms with very significant changes. South Africa has gone through at least two decades of unusually high economic growth. This has massively increased the working class in quantitative significance and very nearly eliminated the peasantry as a productive class. The bourgeoisie of all races and even to an extent the petty bourgeoisie have done relatively well out of economic growth to the extent that the state is now seeking class based alliances to sustain the regime. Legislation suppressing or restricting economic rights on the basis of race is being eliminated. The bourgeoisie are seeing the crude racism of apartheid as inimical to their interests, particularly on the international front and are openly supporting government reform based on class interests.

Liberation politics is subject to new pressures. Economic growth and the state's attempt at reform place pressure on the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeois elements of a popular alliance to break ranks. In tension with this is the fact that the state's political reforms remain based on race so that nation building is still of paramount importance. Rampant apartheid, if we might call it that, cemented both populism and a platform of nation building. Economic growth and political reform are weakening the cement of populism. The attempt to fragment and balkanise South African society also poses new challenges to the process of nation building which if it is to succeed has to actively break down divisions not accommodate them in a loose unity.

These developments pose an important question. This is a problem confronting all liberation politics. When is liberation politics no longer liberation politics but rather a process of negotiating. If the arguments that have gone before are correct then that crucial point arises when the mobilising principle is diffused and refracted by reform. This weakens the cement of the alliances that are needed. Energy is diffused and leadership begins to divide.

The slower the process of disintegration of the mobilising

principle the greater the problem. The more rapid the process the less the problem since there will not be a negotiating process that divides the popular alliance. This process of division has of course often followed the change in the regime. However, this paper is not concerned to examine that crucial area.

In short, therefore, there is likely to be a point in liberatic politics where its very pressure causes changes in the regime's policies that begin to undercut the very basis of mobilisation within liberation politics. The politics of liberation is itself in danger of co-option.

What needs to be assessed is whether the state can initiate reforms that will sufficiently loosen the popular alliance and redress the legitimacy battle in the international arena. What parameters might govern this in South Africa at present requires an examination of the economy in its present state of crisis

The economy and reform

The exact magnitude and nature of the present crisis in the South African economy is urgently in need of further analysis. This will determine whether the state can introduce political and economic reforms that will alter the material conditions of the black bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie and even a privileged strata of the working class or rural population. If this can be done then clearly the prospects for dividing a popular alliance are that much greater.

On the basis, of past experience of Third World capitalist economies the prospects of incorporating large parts of the working class and/or rural population into a more affluent life style are remote. Yet South Africa is a very wealthy country in terms of natural resources. However, I would argue that it cannot at this stage use that wealth since it is caught in a long term crisis. Within existing policies and conceptions of reform the very best that might be achieved is that it could stabilise and protect existing material interests. In which case the majority of the population including large parts of the petty bourgeoisie and significant strata of the white working class will remain in a precarious economic situation.

This crisis has been long in coming and germinated within the very industrial expansion in South Africa. Gold mining and ear-

ly industrial expansion were built on a structure of cheap labour. The labour was cheap in that the necessary labour time required to reproduce labour was only partly provided within the capitalist sector. By generating migrant labour and keeping families on the land the capitalist sector enjoyed full usage of labour time but necessary labour for reproduction was apportioned between the capitalist and pre-capitalist sectors. This only applied to black labour not to white labour, the latter being very differently located in the system.

What was also of crucial importance was that the production of food as a wage commodity was restricted to white agriculture. Such a situation meant that the cheap labour structure was inherently unstable and destructive of the productive capacity of the reserve areas. This occurred since these areas were unable to develop their productive capacity to keep pace with rising population pressure. The fact that reserve agriculture was largely excluded from markets, denied crucial infrastructural development, the money income from wages was very low and state enforced land tenure policies, all acted to prevent any capitalisation of this sector. The productive base began to disintegrate so that at present the rural areas constitute a dumping ground for the proletariat - the rural reserve army.

Yet despite the eventual collapse of this structure sometime during the 1950's and 1960's a rapid rate of industrialisation was achieved on the basis of low wages, a strong state and foreign investment. This was the era of high apartheid running from the late 1950's to the late 1970's.

In a capitalist economy a wage could be said to have two components. The direct wage paid to the workers and what could be called the social wage. The latter are items of collective consumption provided by the state (although private enterprise could provide certain components). These items are transferred to the workers though a mixture of the state taxing and then providing the items at a subsidised rate or by the worker paying for them out of the direct wage. The balance depends on state fiscal policy and the degree of socialisation of collective consumption. However, either way a part of the burden of the social wage must fall on capital through taxation or higher direct wages.

The overall economic effect of grand apartheid was to restrict

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the social wage to the barest minimum. In fact by taking control of all aspects of the new urban townships the state was able to control and restrict the demand for improved housing, education, health care, consumer durables based on electricity recreation and a number of other items.

So whilst the massive growth in the working class necessitated expenditures on housing and transport, social consumption for the black working class was kept to the barest minimum. This could only be achieved through a strong state based on an uncompromising attitude to resistance - popular or trade union - together with a racist ideology that allowed massive social control. Older areas of social and political mobilisation - Cato Manor, Sophiatown, District Six, North End, Greyville to name but a few - were destroyed. Urban political rights were removed to prevent any base for urban political organisation that could have resulted in greater provision of the requirements of the social wage. Whilst there were costs incurred in achieving such control the overall benefit in minimising the social wage fuelled rapid economic growth.

The direct wage could also be kept fairly low as rapid economic growth and new technology allowed for the production of wage goods at relatively low prices. State price support in agriculture and state corporations in key sectors of the economy plus a relatively stable balance of payments with gold prices moving in the right direction meant economic growth with low inflation. This rapid growth and the structure that had facilitated it has been built on the skeleton of the old migrant labour system. The rural (reserves) area lay ruined in its wake.

However this structure was also not stable for a number of reasons. Firstly, such rapid economic growth itself generated a massive urban working class and a concomitant demand for housing and facilities. Urban deprivation eventually gave rise to popular unrest heralded by Soweto in 1976.

Secondly, the costs of political repression began to increase rapidly. This was particularly the case when South Africa followed American and Israeli "hot pursuit" policies. These are predicated on attacking and destabilising the host countries of guerilla movements. As a result they need conventional and expensive weaponry. Faced by an arms embargo the South African regime diverted massive resources into production for defence.

This drains the state exchequer and diverts resources away from providing for collective consumption.

Thirdly, the system could not withstand the impact of an inflationary jolt arising from the dramatic oil price increases in 1973. State corporations in the basic sectors began to run at deficits forcing price increases that rebounded through the economy. The agricultural price support system had the same effect. Successive inflationary jolts arising out of the state sector were transmitted throughout the economy by its very high degree of monopolisation.

In an inflationary environment the large state apparatus of control becomes a more serious problem since it increasingly had to be financed by means of the printing press so further fuelling inflation. By 1980 these factors were emerging powerfully and the economy seemed to be blooming on a very narrow stem. The world economic recession was to uncover basic structural flaws in our economy.

The state had to confront the harsh reality that demands for collective consumption and political reform can become stronger despite a recession. Demands on the state exchequer were increasing and could not be stopped. The state now also confronted problems in increasing the tax burden of capital, whites and very soon black workers. By drawing on the limited domestic savings pool the state forced up domestic interest rates so further curbing investment. Now large scale foreign borrowing is not only threatened by the disinvestment campaign but the disastrous exchange rate exacts punitive interest repayments. The state is trapped in a major fiscal crisis.

In the private sector the recession has exacerbated a longer standing investment crisis most likely related to the monopolisation of the economy. As a result unemployment has risen to gigantic proportions.

In addition to these problems the balance of payments is causing very serious problems. During the flushes of economic growth and largely in the interests of South African multinationals the regime opened our balance of payments and moved toward a convertible currency. This required a free exchange rate. This has had a number of effects. It has allowed a very large export of capital by South African companies - the real disin-

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vestment we should be worried about. It has curbed growth through fuelling inflation and making machinery imports expensive as the exchange rate has deteriorated. It has also acted to keep interest rates high. The problem is so large that it is most unlikely that the state can halt it because it does not have the foreign exchange reserves to hold the exchange rate

Faced with these problems are reforms possible? The regime is attempting reforms based on market forces, privatisation and an attempt to present itself as a good capitalist economy with normal cyclical problems. There is no space in this paper to fully explore these reforms, their link with the political initiatives both internally and internationally, and new forms of strong state control. However, I would argue that both market related or Keynesian type reforms are unlikely to be successful unless they are accompanied by very substantial low interest foreign aid. The concern of this paper is more with the effects on the political momentum being examined within liberation politics.

Stated briefly the South African economy is in the following position. The reserve areas are no longer capable of significant production and would require massive infrastructural expenditure and suitable land tenure policies to regenerate production. Urban townships are very large, deprived of adequate social facilities and quite clearly degenerating further. It is most improbable that sufficient investment can be generated to meet new entrants to the labour market let alone soak up the unemployed. Furthermore the prospects for reducing inflation to single figures are not good, or if good the prospects for employment are bleak.

Dramatic reallocations of resources would be needed and these will most certainly antagonise powerful economic interests. Such a reallocation would radically alter the basis of state power - its army, police and social base.

What are the implications of this for workers and let us call them the rural proletariat? Firstly it is unlikely that the regime will be able to buy off any significant strata within their ranks. In fact prospects don't look too good for the petty bourgeoisie and small-scale capital. This could give new life to populism and if nation building became an active process then this would reinforce a popular alliance.

However, a larger problem now emerges. If the economic crisis is not cyclical but profoundly structural then any regime which works within existing parameters and structures will not easily - if at all - solve the material problems of the working class urban and rural. More likely the justifiable demands of those groups will be seen as irresponsible and inimical to economic recovery.

For the working class - whose development and actions have been central to forcing reforms - therefore, a new dimension to liberation politics has to be considered and that is its economic programme. Yet as I've argued at length nation defence, nation building and populism as political forms do not easily address the question of an economic programme and for very good reasons.

Drawing the threads together

The passage taken by this paper has been tortuous. Hopefully, however, the threads can be tied together. Anyone seeking political guidelines in South Africa has to come to terms with the nature of a national liberation struggle and the liberation politics associated with it. The argument here has been that such struggles take one of three forms - nation defence, nation building or populism - and that each of these imposes definable imperatives on political activity. Since the concern here was with national liberation struggles that are not in the form of conventional warfare leading to military victory the basic thrust of liberation politics was to undermine the legitimacy of the ruling regime. The three forms outlined will generally set the basis or coordinating principle for mobilising widespread popular support. It follows then that an essential imperative is to achieve a unity of purpose. Unity must be achieved around the basis of mobilisation. This has to be relatively uncomplex and find resonance in the lived experience of the mass of the people - it is effectively a reverse image of the organising principle of the regime.

In a modern situation the battle for legitimacy is in very large measure fought out on the international arena. The imperative of unity and the nature of the international arena generate a momentum that subsumes, suppresses and defers class differences and problems of transformation.

The argument then was that in looking at South Africa the

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struggle has been an amalgam of nation building and populism because of the use of race and more particularly with the post 1948 apartheid ideology. The world's abhorrence of racism and apartheid has generated a very considerable momentum for the political forms of nation building and populism both internationally and internally. Drawing attention to possible differences of interest appear almost traitorous.

Yet there have been very substantial changes in the economy and the wider political economy. The argument was that the economy has profound structural problems which require substantial transformation if the working class - both urban and rural - is to improve its material and humanitarian position. Yet the imperatives imposed do not encourage or facilitate political practices that address transformation and transformation problems would focus attention on differing class interests. The dilemma is an acute one for working class organisation.

Building tomorrow today

The challenge posed is whether political practices can be evolved that retain sufficient unity of purpose amongst a majority of the oppressed to undermine the legitimacy of the regime yet at the same time address the problems of transformation. In the argument presented here this possibility was illustrated by the example of sustained guerilla warfare. However, a closer look at the circumstances of those struggles will show little direct comparability with South African circumstances.

If the arguments of this paper are broadly correct then there is very little discussion of the problem at present. This is not surprising since the starting points are not manifestly clear. However, it may well be significant that one area where some discussion and some public articulation of the problem has emerged is in the independent shop-floor based unions. Their close links with workers must make them aware of problems and their experience of the workings of the economy also make them far more cognicent of economic issues. However, it is the particular form of unionism that they have evolved that has raised the issue more clearly. This unionism is based on shop-floor organisation and democratic participation of worker representatives in control of the union and in negotiation. Worker representatives - shop stewards - are, therefore held closely accountable whilst playing very active roles in negotiations

and within their union structures. This generates effective and militant unionism but it also addresses the problems of transformation since it establishes democratic organisation within the productive process itself.

Can any more general principles be extracted from this? Organisation must start where the problems arise. Representatives must be elected and held closely accountable to those who elected them. This later requires that those representatives play an active role both in controlling the organisation and representing its interests. They must operate on the principle of issue-based mandates and regular report backs and not general or open mandates and irregular report backs. Such practices are the basis for democratic organisation both within the areas of production and of social consumption (the community).

This raises the question of activists who have the time and skills to carry out organising activity. No matter how good their intentions are if they do not work within the procedures just outlined then they will inevitably subvert democratic processes. At present there is a tendency for activists to congregate around the honeypot of popular activity. From the perspective of transformation this is not necessarily wise in addition to its possible insidious threat to democracy.

If problems of transformation are to be addressed then this must occur on a very wide front - cultural activity, health, education, engineering, science, administration, technology. There seems no basic reason why activists involved in these areas should not be undertaking a serious study of how they can be transformed to deal with the problems of our society and where possible to set in motion new practices. Transformation requires a reforming of skills to make them accessible and controllable by ordinary people. The process of breaking down a dependancy on experts and technicians can begin now as a political practice. Such guidelines and practices will not cause the regime to fall but they may be crucial if we are to build a new tomorrow by learning today.

Conclusion

The struggle for liberation from a regime such as that in South Africa requires maximum unity of purpose amongst the oppressed people. The struggle will not be won by a narrow segment. How-

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ever, can the usual two stage argument provide sufficient protection for the working class. The argument of this paper is that the nature of the unity forged in liberation politics of the form of nation defence, nation building and populism suppress class interests and transformation problems. In the South African situation - and elsewhere - a change of regime in circumstances where transformation has not been addressed leaves intact the structure and interests that are so minimal to the mass of workers and rural population. In fact the very change of the regime drastically alters the prospect of opposition organisation because the battle for legitimacy will now be fought on a very different terrain both internally and internationally.

Unity must now be based on the politics of transformation that will secure the interests of the working class and rural population. It must address the problems of the economy and evolve practices that will establish the basis for transformation. This requires analysis and debate so as to locate the nature of any alliances. It also requires acceptance of the centrality of the working class.

Gencor Office Workers – Solidarity with NUM

Comrades,

We, the UCAWUSA shop stewards committee at Gencor do hereby pledge our utmost solidarity with the stance you have taken against the managements of the mines in question. We stand foreshore behind you in all respects in order that you can attain your demands.

We would love to render our sincere sympathy to our comrades who were hospitalised.

At the unity meetings of the proposed new federation report backs were given by the NUM and three regional meetings of trade unions have so far been held in this regard.

INTERVIEW: Union Organisation in Volkswagen

The SALB interviewed John Gomomo, vice-president of the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union (NAAWU) and a full-time shop steward at Volkswagen, Uitenhage in April 1984.

SALB: How did trade union organisation begin in Volkswagen?

Gomomo: From 1967 NUMAROWSA (National Union of Motor and Rubber Workers of South Africa) was organised amongst so-called coloured workers. In 1977 the coloured shop stewards began to help organise African workers. In the process we were able to use the liaison committee to recruit members and organise a union. By the end of 1982 NAAWU and the union structures were firmly established. This followed a general strike and about 30 wild cat strikes.

SALB: What are the union's structures inside the plant?

Gomomo: Within the plant each area elects shop stewards. There are nearly 7,000 workers [in April 1984] and our agreement provides for one part-time shop steward per 250 members. They are allowed one hour per day to move around to deal with grievances. In addition to 26 part-time shop stewards we have 5 full-time stewards. We are currently negotiating to increase the number of part-time and full-time stewards. We are pushing for 1 part-time steward per 100 members and one full-timer per 500 members. The company's position is one part-timer per 200 and one full-timer per 650. Eventually we estimate that to be most effective we should have one part-time shop steward for every 25-30 workers. The main role of the part-time shop steward is to take up workers' grievances and process these through procedures. The issue is taken up first with the foreman. If it cannot be dealt with there the steward goes first to the general foreman, then the labour relations officer. If the grievance is not resolved, then one of the full-time stewards takes the issue to the labour relations manager and eventually to the industrial relations director or a managing director. No full-time organiser comes to the plant. All problems are dealt with by the stewards.

The full-time steward's role is to deal with general issues

- interviews -

rather than individual grievances. We police the agreements, take up questions of job promotion, training, discrimination, new technology and generally counter top management.

Originally there was no agreement on full-time stewards. But senior stewards were spending more and more of their time away from their jobs. Supervisors complained that this was disrupting production, so it was simpler for management to release us full-time. Also after the 1982 strike, management was no longer opposed to full-time stewards. They thought that the shop-stewards had caused the strike and this might be one way of separating the stewards from the workers.

For us the part-time stewards are vital. They work alongside the members. They know what the problems are. They have the same grievances. Whilst we need more full-time stewards as well - this is a difficult job for new guys to do. They need to come up through the structures and gain experience as part-time stewards.

There is the danger of full-time stewards losing contact with the workers. We combat this by keeping in close touch with the factory. The plant is demarcated and part-time stewards in an area report daily to one full-time shop steward. The full-time stewards are called together each day by the chairman of shop stewards. In this way we maintain complete knowledge of every part of the factory and problems can be shared.

SALB: What structures exist to make shop stewards accountable to their members?

Gomomo: Members also elect 10 members to the branch committee. Every month the branch committee meets with the shop stewards. The meeting deals with branch business - finances and communications from head office. In addition we discuss the state of affairs in Volkswagen and review the activity of shop stewards. Each shop steward must submit a report for every grievance taken up. These are analysed and the effectiveness of each shop steward is discussed.

There is also a quarterly general meeting when the full-time stewards must report back to the membership. Members question the reports and discuss the effectiveness of the stewards. In addition, between times, we hold special general meetings to

deal with problems as they arise. A shop steward in one area can call for a general meeting at lunchtime. All members attend so that the problems of one section are shared by all workers.

SALB: How has the establishment of this strong shop steward organisation affected the structures of supervision in the plant?

Gomomo: In 1981 we negotiated a new code of conduct. Previously the code of conduct had reflected a management perspective. We are still not totally happy with it, but at least now supervisors have to take note of what a worker says and the reasons he gives for any infringement. For example previously if a worker was late supervisors would not give him a chance to explain. Also supervisors now have to go through strict procedures. They cannot discipline a worker without a shop steward being present and without the union being involved.

Originally the attitude of supervisors was very bad. Workers would not tolerate this and demanded that we should be treated as human beings. This was the main reason for the wild cat strikes. In the end the company was forced to deal with the shop stewards in order to sort out the problems. In the meantime the company is retraining the supervisors in an attempt to impress on them that the union is here to stay and they have to come to terms with that.

SALB: The recession has hit the car industry severely. Jobs have gone and managements have tried to reorganise and compete with rival firms. How have the Volkswagen workers responded to these pressures?

Gomomo: Management tells us that they must introduce new technology and cut jobs in order to keep up with Toyota and Sigma and overseas firms. Our first task is to obtain information from these other plants to check the situation. But there is a real problem here. Co-operation is not developed throughout the industry world-wide, and similar levels of organisation do not exist in every plant. To protect our members we have to support unionisation and extend organisation everywhere.

As far as the recession is concerned we started short-time working in October 1982. Workers have suffered and by 1983

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there was a feeling of insecurity about jobs. In February 1983, 183 workers were retrenched. Workers are being moved from job to job. In the face of this, the committee and the shop stewards have given a lead to workers keeping them informed, explaining that this is a political issue. During the recession our task is to fight demoralisation maintain unity and consolidate our bargaining position, so that when the up-swing arrives we can make new gains.

Recently management has proposed to lay off some workers who would be able to apply for unemployment pay so that those that are left could work a 5 day week. A mass meeting of workers rejected this. We stick to the decision to work only four days and every worker remains in the plant.

SALB: Earlier you mentioned the introduction of new technology. How have the shop stewards at Volkswagen dealt with this issue?

Gomomo: In the first place we have demanded access to the company's future plans. This has been conceded. We can see that some areas will be seriously affected. We know all about the argument that the company has to remain competitive in the market. But we insist that every new machine has to be discussed with the union. Also we demand that money saved by increased production should be used for training workers. We demand to see the annual budget for training. This is important to make skilled jobs available to all workers. Management has to justify all promotions to make sure there is no discrimination.

There has been some automation in the body shop with work on the new Audi and a little on the assembly line. Recently we have conceded the need for robotic welding of rear axles. Six guy's jobs are affected here. But manual welding could not guarantee a consistently high quality. We obtained information from the German plants to check if the tests were fair and that the correct pressure was applied. We had to allow this change in order to maintain quality.

Again we have been negotiating over a computerised clocking system. Our position is that we will agree to it if it simply replaces the functions of the original mechanical time clocks. If the company tries to use it for anything new - like con-

trolling the movement of workers between different areas - then we will refuse to use them.

SALB: Trade unions are bargaining over an increasing range of issues - health and safety and job evaluation as well as new technology. At the same time management is trying to establish new structures to talk directly to workers - such as quality circles and safety committees. How have workers at Volkswagen dealt with these issues?

Gomomo: Under the Machinery and Occupational Safety Act management is supposed to appoint workers to safety committees. This goes against our democratic structures and we have told management that we do not recognise such committees. They have now agreed that workers will be elected to the committees. Our shop stewards will be involved and they will coordinate complaints from workers on these matters.

Management has attempted to introduce quality circles. The shop stewards see this as an attempt to by-pass union structures. It is an attempt to slowly draw workers away from the union. We have rejected these attempts. Shop stewards and the branch must be involved in any new structures.

Job evaluation poses a problem. Jobs were originally evaluated years ago. Management wants standardisation. We are afraid that any new system would lead to some downgrading and the union would be blamed for this. We argue that present tasks should not be regraded but that jobs should be grouped into three categories - skilled, semi-skilled (the majority) and unskilled - with three basic rates of pay. We should then have regular meetings with management to evaluate any new jobs that are introduced.

SALB: What role does the union play in the wider community of Uitenhage?

Gomomo: From Volkswagen we demand a list of projects every year to finance improvements in the community. Also through the FOSATU local we are able to exchange knowledge of conditions and improvements provided in different factories. This enables us to push other factories and bring them up to scratch. We also discuss problems of the different factories and unions. The NUTW, MAWU and T&GWU are also represented on

- interviews -

the FOSATU local. Together we can cover the 12 factories in the area. But only 8 of these are strongly organised. Organisation continues a little at a time in the others. We are able to put pressure on other employers indirectly by discussing these questions with our own management. This is one way in which the local supports weaker factories.

INTERVIEW: FOSATU and the "New Deal"

In early 1985, the SALB interviewed the Eastern Cape Regional Committee of FOSATU on its political involvement in the region in particular around the "new deal":

E Cape Region: We started educating members of FOSATU in 1983 when the President's Council proposals went to Parliament, quite some time before the white referendum. Regional FOSATU seminars were held for shop stewards and members of factory committees, who then took discussions back to factory workers. The focus of this educational work was very much on the structure of the new deal itself, how it was going to work, how power would still be concentrated in the hands of the National Party and so on.

SALB: And at the time of the Referendum in November 1983, what activities were you engaged in? FOSATU unions in the Transvaal were calling on bosses to vote no.

E Cape Region: Well, yes we also did that but it is important to realise that there were regional differences in the way the referendum was responded to. In the Eastern and Western Cape the most effort was put into this, as it is in these areas that most of the people directly affected by the new deal live. What also happened was that leaders would explain FOSATU policy at general meetings and factory meetings, but there was no co-ordinated strategy and the initiative really lay with the factory committees.

SALB: Could we turn to the anti-election campaign in 1984 and FOSATU's role in that campaign?

E Cape Region: Our participation started with a process similar to that in 1983, when the new deal was analysed in education seminars with shop stewards, committee members and at general meetings. But our educational activity was not only aimed at members as we felt that it was our duty to educate the communities as well through house visits. Our political role isn't restricted to just the factories, the workers are members of the communities as well.

We spelt out FOSATU's policy on the constitutional dispensation, arguing that it was racist, that people remain divided by race and this goes against FOSATU's non-racial policy. Worker unity is also important, the constitution disunites workers along racial lines. In other words, the constitution is anti-worker in that it tries to divide workers and this could create problems for unions. Another thing we emphasised was that the new deal was undemocratic and that the very structure of Parliament would ensure that no real change takes place as power is still in the hands of the National Party. This goes very much against FOSATU's commitment to democratic procedures. So our emphasis was mainly on the constitution itself and the reasons as to why people should not vote.

SALB: Did your discussions in house visits include the more general question of the role of workers in the political struggle, as spelt out in Joe Foster's keynote address, for example? Were there any attempts at recruiting new members to FOSATU during the campaign?

E Cape Region: No, not really. We were involved in joint organisational work and therefore the emphasis was on the new deal itself. On the question of political education, there was a time problem involved; but we also felt that as we were working with other organisations our emphasis should be on the constitution and not on FOSATU's own political policies or views. We could not push our own particular views when working jointly with other organisations, such as SACOS (South African Council of Sport) or EPCOS (Eastern Province Council of Sport). Nevertheless, the campaign was a great success for FOSATU.

SALB: Who was actually involved in the door-to-door work?

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E Cape Region: There were a range of people involved, often working in shifts; but mainly officials and factory floor leaders. The way it worked was that word would go out to the Branch Executive Committees and then FOSATU affiliates would pull out the people who could be involved. Obviously there were also individual members who volunteered to become involved but it would have been suicide to involve people who could not explain a clear position on the constitution and who would not be able to stand up to opposition for instance from Labour Party members.

SALB: How many persons were involved?

E Cape Region: Roughly 40 people at a time, but it is difficult to estimate. Our work took place mainly over weekends and sometimes there were about 20 people campaigning during the week as well. As we got closer to the elections the campaign was stepped up and there was more activity during the week. In the Uitenhage Local the numbers involved were smaller as it is a smaller community. Here in PE we started off in the northern areas, like Chatty and then slowly moved closer to the central areas like Gelvandale. We probably covered roughly 80% of the houses in PE and about 50% in Uitenhage.

SALB: What kind of reception did you get from the people you came into contact with?

E Cape Region: A lot of people were in the dark, if we did not go to them to explain the new deal there would have been a problem and many more would have voted. But people appreciated our attempts to provide education and it was quite easy to convince people as they were quite opposed to what the government was doing. Especially when it was understood what the balance of power in the new Parliament would be, our arguments were well accepted. A contributing factor was that the parties participating in the new deal didn't campaign much.

SALB: How would you measure the success of the campaign?

E Cape Region: The success lies in the results of the election. We were very satisfied. But there was also a lot of confusion amongst people about the new deal and we were able to play an educative role in explaining the problems with this constitution and the way it would work.

SALB: What about Uitenhage where the election poll was quite high?

E Cape Region: Most of our energy was focussed on PE because most of the potential voters are based here. This might have been a mistake, if we had gone into Uitenhage in the same way the result may have been different. Also, Hendrickse's support and influence in Uitenhage was important in gaining support for the Labour Party (LP) and some people were also scared of losing their pensions if they did not support the LP. Congregational Church support in Uitenhage probably also played a role in ensuring a higher poll.

SALB: Did some of your members vote for the Labour Party?

E Cape Region: Yes, some did vote but I would say that there were very few and only in Uitenhage. Members of the PCP (Peoples Congress Party) and the LP who are also FOSATU members did not have much influence.

SALB: Generally, what is the nature of FOSATU's relationship to the Labour Party?

E Cape Region: Prior to the President's Council there was no relationship and no conflict between FOSATU and the LP. Problems between us and the LP only started when Allen Hendrickse attacked workers at Volkswagen over what he saw as being unreasonable wage demands in 1983. This was discussed at general meetings and workers got quite fed up with this. So workers were already anti the LP and this was strengthened when the LP supported the new deal. We have always been clear on the role of the LP. But workers saw clearly that Hendrickse is no leader for workers. Hendrickse will go to parliament even if just his wife voted for him.

As FOSATU started mobilising around the President's Council proposals, relationships obviously became tense as we were criticising the LP more frequently and meeting up with LP members in our canvassing amongst people.

SALB: Are there still problems in the unions over the LP?

E Cape Region: These are not really serious problems as the issues have been correctly handled from the beginning. There

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have been discussions in general meetings, decisions taken at this level, and workers voted against the new deal. The few people who did challenge policy decisions carried no weight because of the way in which decisions were taken in our structures and in FOSATU nationally.

SALB: What has been FOSATU's relationships to other organisations in the anti-election campaign, particularly EPCOS?

E Cape Region: Contact first began in 1982 when EPCOS experienced problems in obtaining venues and called on other organisations to join in a campaign. FOSATU as a non-racial organisation supported this and subsequently we have had more regular contact with EPCOS, for instance we did some joint house-to-house work around the time of the white referendum, which also included COSAS (Congress of South African Students). This was taken further after the formation of the Eastern Cape Co-ordinating Committee (ECCO) in late 1982, which initially included PEBCO, Gelvendale Civic, UBCO, EPCOS, FOSATU, MACWUSA and some other unions and individuals. It was seen as a co-ordinating body where the campaign against the President's Council could be discussed amongst organisations. The activities of ECCO went through different phases, with some busier and quieter periods and there were some problems. Finally EPCOS and FOSATU decided to work together and early in 1983 the Community Education Programme (CEP) was formed by FOSATU and EPCOS to begin educating people around the elections.

SALB: How was the CEP structured?

E Cape Region: It was a loosely structured organisation made up of worker leaders from FOSATU and individuals from EPCOS. Through CEP joint house visits were co-ordinated, pamphlets were produced to serve an educative function and at the same time FOSATU produced its own pamphlets as well. There was significant participation by EPCOS members and we found that our positions were similar.

SALB: What forms did your involvement with the UDF take?

E Cape Region: Our position was clear, we decided not to affiliate but to co-operate around matters of common interest. We had a joint rally with the UDF just before the election

which was very successful. In fact, the rally played an important role in the success of the campaign as a whole. But we did not canvass together, and in areas where the UDF worked at any time, CEP stayed out so as not to confuse people. There was also an informal demarcation around pamphleteering.

SALB: Do you feel that there were any major differences between the message taken to the community by the UDF and that of FOSATU?

E Cape Region: No, not really, the general principle was the same. However there were technical differences especially when it came to language; for instance, we stressed that the new deal "divides workers" whereas typically the UDF said that it "excludes people".

SALB: How do you see the future? Do you envisage your relationship to EPCOS being consolidated?

E Cape Region: In the unions we have our own activities and our own problems; at the moment we have to deal with widespread retrenchments. So we are actually very busy with day-to-day union activities. But we recognise that the real fight still lies ahead and the effects of the new constitution will only come later. In view of this, our relationship to organisations such as EPCOS remains important.

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INTERVIEW: Trade Unions and the March Stay-aways

On April 11, 1985 the SALB interviewed FOSATU's Eastern Cape regional chairman, Thembinkosi Mkalipi:

SALB: What were the events leading up to the stay-away call?

Mkalipi: Since the November stay-away in the Transvaal, there have been suggestions in Port Elizabeth that we should also have a stay-away. But an official decision was only taken at a PEBCO rally sometime in January. We saw it first in the press.

On February 7, FOSATU and all the "unity unions" had a meeting with PEBCO. We asked PEBCO why they had come now to the unions when the decision for a stay-away had already been made. At the meeting, without caucusing, all the unions took a common stand. We rejected support for the stay-away for the following reasons: the general economic climate and the mass scale of retrenchments would make management use the occasion to retrench even more; the stay-away was mainly directed at the African townships which was contrary to our non-racial forms of organisation and policies - in other words any action had to unite African and coloured and not foster divisions; the general sales tax and petrol increases were national issues and required a national response not a regional one - we emphasised that the impact would be limited - the stay-away is only a demonstrative action, although those who proposed the stay-away thought more could be achieved; we felt that the unorganised workers would be severely affected especially by dismissals.

SALB: Was it also not the case that you did not want to get involved in community politics?

Mkalipi: FOSATU has never refrained from political involvement. Our mobilisation and organisation against the tri-cameral system, our struggle against the community councils and management committees and support in the schools boycott and last year's participation in the November stay-away are adequate examples of FOSATU involvement in political struggle. The issue instead concerns what kind of politics do we as worker organisations get involved in and what alliances do we

forge. As democratic worker organisations we are accountable to our members and believe that adequate discussion and preparation is necessary if any action is to be taken. Above all, the action decided upon must build confidence and consolidate worker organisation; must enhance and clarify a working class political perspective. We are not opposed to the stay-away per se. But every tactic requires careful evaluation of the conditions of struggle and whether it will build your organisation and raise the consciousness of your membership. In the case of the call by PEBCO this certainly did not contain the elements of building and consolidating worker organisation. PEBCO had already made a decision and kept pushing for a stay-away committee to be elected immediately. But the unions insisted that they go back and get a mandate.

SALB: Did you consult your membership?

Mkalipi: There was discussion amongst the shop stewards in various factories. Workers generally did not support the call for a stay-away because the majority were financially hard-pressed and could not afford to stay away from work. Besides, the general economic climate, with a huge army of unemployed, is something managements often use to intimidate workers.

SALB: Was there no alternative tactic that could have been used instead of the stay-away?

Mkalipi: Yes, there was. But the conditions were such that PEBCO refused to entertain them. They wanted a stay-away and that was clear from their press statements and meetings.

SALB: How do you explain the near 100% support for the stay-away in the African townships although the unions did not support it?

Mkalipi: Firstly it is important to understand that while the unions did not support the stay-away, they did not go out mobilising against it. Secondly the general conditions in the townships were such that in the week preceding the stay-away, intense violence and damage to property took place. There was a tense climate and a lot of social pressure. Under these conditions we advised workers not to go to work although we did not agree with the tactics. Because we have strong shopfloor

- interviews -

organisation at our factories it was possible to tell management that the workers would be staying at home and so preserve their jobs.

SALB: Given the situation why did the unions not join the stay-away and try to put their stamp on the course of events as they did in the Transvaal in November?

Mkalipi: There are at least two important reasons which must be understood. Firstly, as unions, in the current crisis, we have to contend with specific shop floor matters, for example retrenchments which have hit the Eastern Cape in a particular way. Our primary responsibility is to defend our membership. This does not mean we ignore the unemployed or the unorganised workers. Instead, we have to ask how can we use the strength of the organised workers to assist in building the unity of all sections of the oppressed and exploited to bring about change? But how do you do this best in recessionary conditions when your organisation is under attack by capital. Secondly, in the Transvaal the invasion of Sebokeng by the military was able to unite all groups together in united action. It was a "local matter" which was tackled locally by all. There was also a long-standing working relationship between organisations. In the Eastern Cape, particularly Port Elizabeth, the historical conflicts between PEBCO, MACWUSA and GWUSA and FOSATU have harmed working relations. And the recent stay-away has certainly not improved them. In addition to these reasons our involvement in any action is decided by our membership and the feeling was not to come out in support of the stay-away. On the other hand the community organisation has no organised working class base. It is mainly made up of unemployed people and youths. There are no accountable and democratically controlled structures. They only hold mass meetings where decisions are taken and very often it is mainly the youth, not the workers who are at the meetings. We believed the stay-away - in terms of its desired objective, to combat GST and petrol increases - would not be successful because the issues demanded a national, and not local, response.

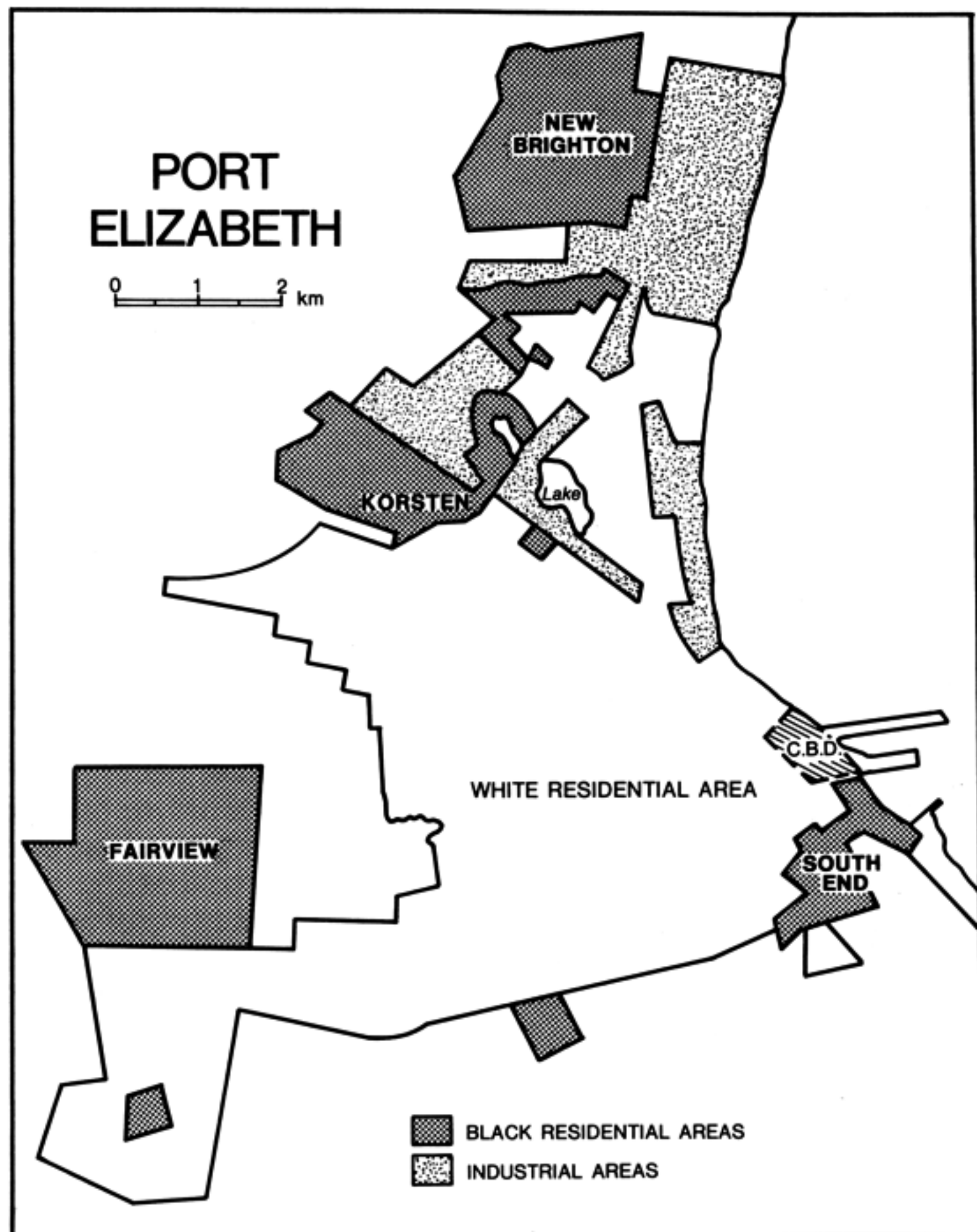
SALB: What do you think was gained by the boycott and stay-away?

Mkalipi: That is very interesting. In the press, white businessmen stated that Friday's business had been as good as Christmas. Black businessmen also said they benefited

from the stay-away. The only people who did not benefit were the workers; some at small and unorganised factories lost their jobs and most lost wages. Most managements adopted a "no work no pay policy". There is no doubt that in terms of numbers the stay-away was 100% successful amongst Africans. But petrol is still the same, bus fares have remained the same and GST is unchanged. Nothing has really been affected by the stay-away, except workers have suffered.

SALB: Is this not an economic way of evaluating the stay-away in terms of immediate gains instead of the wider impact the stay-away had as a demonstration of workers' power?

Mkalipi: No, not at all. Our struggle generally concerns building organisation and alliances that promote the overall goals of the workers' movement. We have to ask whether this was achieved by the stay-away. Instead of strengthening relations between worker organisations on the shop floor and organisations in the community, the opposite has occurred. Rank and file union members are beginning to see that certain organisations are not promoting their interests because they refuse to negotiate on a democratic basis with their trade unions and their representatives. In view of this, workers are distinguishing between working class politics which enhances and furthers the workers' struggle and petty bourgeois politics which comprises rhetoric. FOSATU has never shirked the political struggle. For us it remains a question of how we can use issues, economic and political, to build, mobilise and strengthen workers' organisations generally for struggle. But it is important to remember that as a trade union we also have very specific responsibilities which are determined by our membership.



MAP 1

Source: W J Davies, "Patterns of non-white population distribution in Port Elizabeth with special reference to the application of the Group Areas Act", Institute for Planning Research, University of Port Elizabeth, Series B special publication No 1, 1971, p85.

Report: The March Stay-aways in Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage

Labour Monitoring Group*

Over the period 18-22 March more than 120,000 black workers stayed away from work in the PE/Uitenhage area for at least one day. The Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organisation (PEBCO) issued the call for a stay-away as a response to the political and economic crisis in the region, initially identifying the following issues: mass retrenchments, the Amcar-Ford merger, and increased petrol prices - with the last becoming the final focus of the stay-away.

All the "unity talks unions" expressed reservations about the wisdom of staying away at that time. In particular their public statements were concerned that: a call made by an African community organisation (PEBCO) would exclude "coloured" (1) workers; a local response to what was a national problem was likely to be ineffective; there was inadequate consultation with workers; workers in smaller and unorganised establishments would be vulnerable.

These differences reflect the reality of a divided working class. Thirty years of social engineering has left African and coloured workers geographically separated. One outcome has been a township based protest politics which has failed thus far to overcome the racial divisions resulting from the application of the Group Areas Act. Where these divisions have been countered - in the trade unions - working class unity is still largely confined to the workplace. Moreover, this bifurcation has been reinforced by the legacy of division and mistrust which exists between the unions and some community organisations. Now, in addition, the recession affects workers and the growing number of unemployed in different ways. While unions are concerned to consolidate their position - seeking to preserve jobs and the gains already made on the shopfloor - the young unemployed, who form a substantial

*Glenn Adler, Stephen Gelb, Marcel Golding, Jon Lewis, Michael O'Donovan, Mark Swilling, Eddie Webster

element of the social base of PEYCO (Port Elizabeth Youth Congress) and other community organisations, have taken the lead in organising and mobilising mass protest in the townships. One result of the mobilisation has been the destruction of the government's reform strategy in the townships: the so-called third tier of black local authorities.

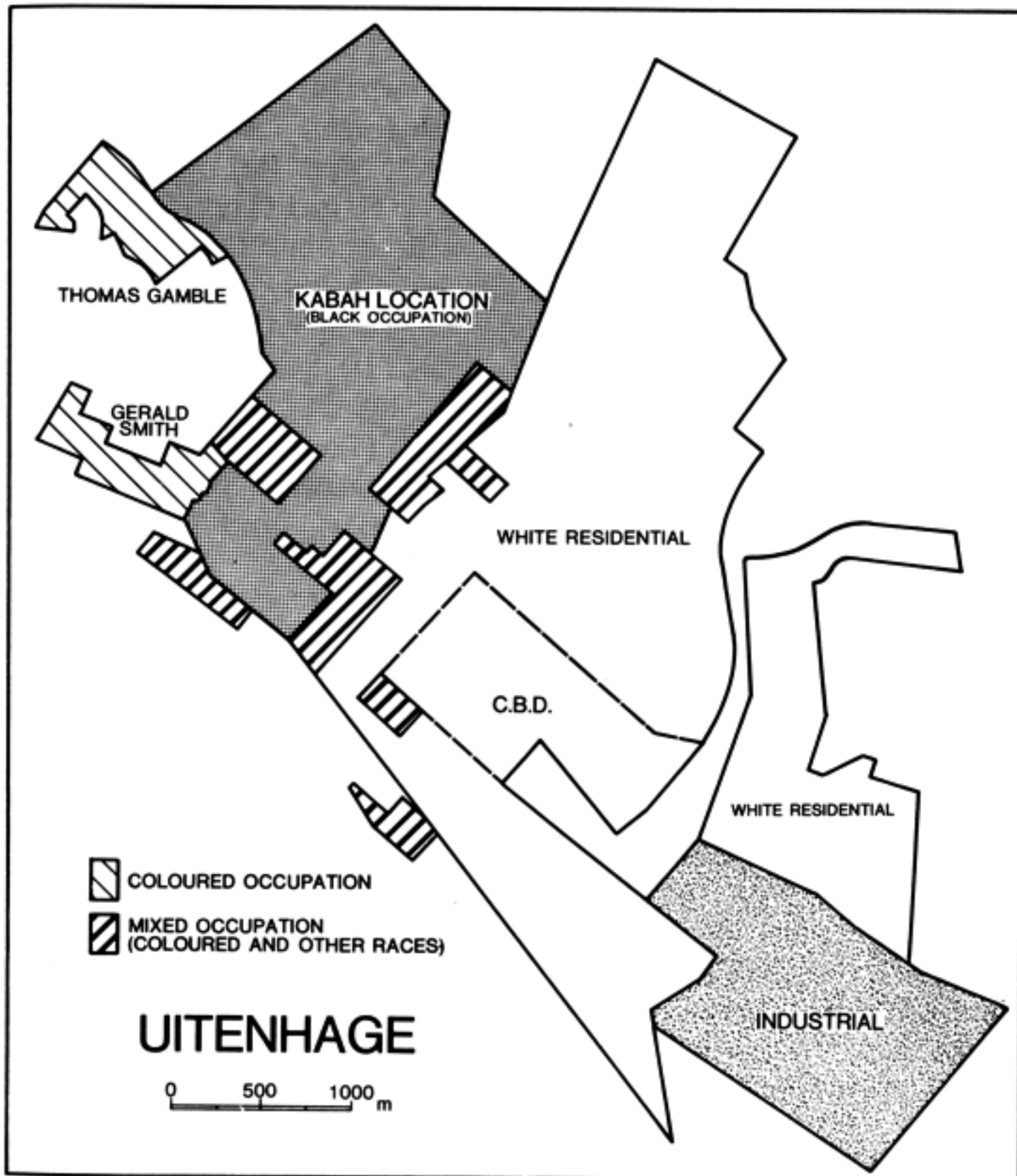
In this report we attempt to analyse the terrain of struggle on which the stay-away tactic was deployed in March. We have tried to record the events leading up to the stay-away and to monitor and measure its impact. (2) Our analysis of the dynamics of the stay-away, exactly why and how people were mobilised, remains tentative and further research is necessary in this area.

I THE BACKGROUND

(i) Group Areas

As in other South African cities, the enforcement of the Group Areas legislation decisively transformed the social geography of Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage, but with different affects in the two cities. Two main factors distinguish Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage from other urban areas, both of which are central to understanding the current divisions within opposition politics in the region. First, the black population of both Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage contains substantial numbers of both Africans and coloureds. (3) Second, both cities grew as industrial centres well after World War Two, especially after the expansion of the motor industry following the introduction of local content legislation in the early 1960's. (4) Thus while the black working class in both cities grew rapidly, it developed against the background of apartheid social engineering designed to divide African and coloured workers into separate residential Group Areas. But whereas in Port Elizabeth that process was fairly complete by the late 1970s, in Uitenhage not only are many Africans and coloureds still living in the same neighbourhoods, but their townships are very close together as well as quite close to the white sections of town. (5)

Though both cities were highly segregated prior to the Nationalist Party's ascension to power in 1948, two features



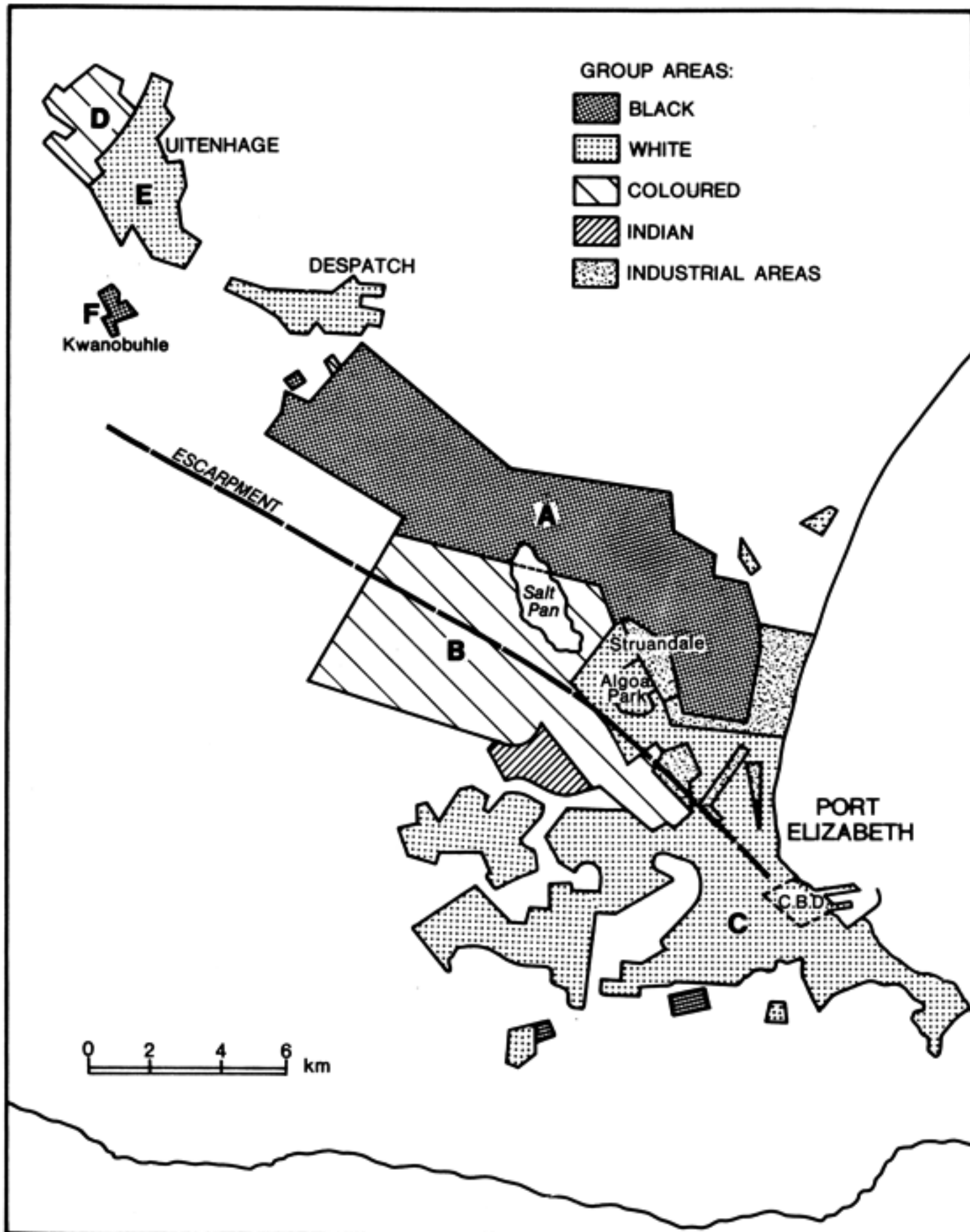
MAP 2

Sources: B D Phillips, "The Coloured population of the Port Elizabeth/Uitenhage region: a socio-economic study", Institute for Planning Research, University of Port Elizabeth, Research Report No 9, 1971, Map 3; and A S du Toit, "Housing and population study of the European population of Uitenhage", Institute for Planning Research, University of Port Elizabeth, Research Report No 5, 1970, Map 1.

characterised the pattern of segregation: it was not "rationalised" into single racial group areas, consisting instead of scattered enclaves of segregated housing; and despite the high degree of racial separation there were, nonetheless, many areas where the populations were thoroughly mixed. (6) In 1951 in Port Elizabeth, for example, 4,500 whites and 6,200 coloureds lived in the South End District, a pattern of white-black residence common in other areas of the city (see Map 1). Coloureds and Africans lived together in many districts, most notably in Korsten, which was home to more than 19,300 coloureds and 17,200 Africans, Bethelsdorp (4,400 coloureds and nearly 4,900 Africans), and Fairview (nearly 3,800 coloureds and 1,100 Africans). Significant numbers of coloureds and Africans either lived together in effectively non-racial areas or, if they resided in segregated housing schemes, nonetheless lived close to each other. (7) A similar pattern characterised Uitenhage. While precise figures are unavailable, the coloured areas of the city literally adjoined the old African township of Kabah (Langa). Furthermore, many Africans lived together with coloureds in the coloured townships of Gerald Smith, Thomas Gamble, and Rosedale (see map 2). (8)

Through the 1950's then, there is considerable evidence of a social basis for united political action by coloureds and Africans at community and municipal levels. Living often in the same areas, their common experience of poor housing, sanitation, transport, and schools provided grounds for joint organising. (9) It was just these residential connections that the Group Areas Act sought to sever.

The final recommendations of the Group Areas Board for Port Elizabeth called for the consolidation of the scattered communities into three main Group Areas and two smaller sections for Asian residence. These zones extend outward from the central city and port area like spokes on a wheel (see Map 3), with the New Brighton-Kwazakhele-Zwide concentration stretching northward (A), the coloured townships of Korsten, Schauder, Gelvandale, Helenvale, and Bethelsdorp to the northwest (B), and the white suburbs to the west and southwest (C). For Uitenhage (see map 3), the recommendations proclaimed a coloured Group Area extending from near the centre of town to the northwest (D), a white area to the northeast (E), and the elimination of the African township of Langa, the population to be



MAP 3

Source: J A Erwee and W J Davies, "The Port Elizabeth metropolitan area: an appraisal of terrain, land use and possible future development patterns", Institute for Planning Research, University of Port Elizabeth, Research Report No 13 1973, p26.

removed to the new Group Area of Kwanobuhle (F).

As in District Six in Cape Town, creation of Group Areas required the destruction of existing mixed race communities. The coloured population of South End was removed to the new Group Area; though 6,200 coloureds lived in South End in 1951, only 9 could be counted in the 1980 census. Over the same period, in Fairview removals of Africans reduced their population from 1,148 to 21, while the coloured population declined from 3,796 to 1,405. Removals of Africans from Korsten cut their population from 17,240 to 1,125. (10)

These removals, powerfully resisted though they were, resulted in an increasing overall segregation of PE and an increasing rationalisation of that segregation into the three planned Group Areas. Roads, railway lines, industrial belts, and geographic features such as rivers, foothills, valleys were employed to ensure thorough physical separation of the areas (see Map 3). For example, the major industrial belt at Struan-dale, which includes two Ford plants and the General Tyre factory runs directly across the street from the African township. Not only are the companies close to their source of labour supply, but the belt creates a literal "cordon sanitaire" between the nearby white enclave of Algoa Park. Further to the north the same industrial belt and a wide salt lake separate the African and coloured townships. Similarly a steep escarpment running northwest from the city centre divides low-lying coloured townships from the white areas on the high ground.

But in Uitenhage the removal policies were less successful. While nearly 34,000 Africans now live in Kwanobuhle, approximately 20,000 Africans (and 3,000 coloureds) remain in Langa. (11) The pattern of racially mixed residential housing has not been completely shattered, nor have coloured and African communities been geographically isolated. Similarly, the black townships and the white areas of Uitenhage are still quite close together, separated by a mere 100 metres in certain areas. (12)

In both cities the massive increases since the war in the size of the black population in general and the black working class in particular occurred along the rigid lines set out by the Group Areas Act. Thus in Port Elizabeth geographic segregation under the Group Areas Act introduced a powerful impediment to

concerted working class political activity among coloureds and Africans, especially at Struandale. In Uitenhage, however, the process of separation was much less complete and the gap between work and residence less severe, allowing for a greater possibility for concerted working class action.

(ii) Organisational conflict

While the differing social geography of the two cities does not ultimately account for political outcomes, it certainly threw up difficult problems which marked subsequent political relationships between unions and township organisations. The contrasts appeared most prominently in the Port Elizabeth-Uitenhage strike wave of 1979-1980, especially in the different outcomes of the strikes at Ford and Volkswagen, and figured in the divisions between the motor unions which would later merge to form NAAWU (the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union) and the township-based PEBCO.

NAAWU began in 1967 as the National Union of Motor Assembly Workers of South Africa, a TUCSA-affiliated union of coloured workers in the Port Elizabeth-Uitenhage automobile and components plants. As the numbers of African workers in the industry increased in the early '70s, the re-named NUMARWOSA (National Union of Automobile and Rubber Workers of South Africa) began to organise the new workers in the United Automobile, Rubber and Allied Workers Union (UARAW). The union split from TUCSA in 1976 over the federation's segregationist policies, and in 1979 was instrumental in the formation of FOSATU. Finally, in 1980, NUMARWOSA, UARAW, and the Western Province Motor Assembly Workers Union (WPMWU) joined to form NAAWU.

The union had started in the TUCSA tradition of non-political trade union organising: it had originally been established on racial lines as a coloured union, it was registered, and it participated in the industrial council. But unlike most registered unions it had also developed strong structures of shop floor representation, and had indeed replaced its executive in 1967 under pressure from the shop floor. (13)

PEBCO had been founded in October, 1979 at a mass meeting in New Brighton, as an umbrella organisation of the many residents' associations then organising in the Port Elizabeth

black townships. (14) While addressing a variety of community issues, the organisations were particularly focused on increasing rentals and the proposed removals of the residents of Walmer Location. The new organisation adopted a policy of non-negotiation with the government and local authorities, and non-collaboration with organisations participating in government institutions.

The presence of NUMARWOSA on the industrial council and the union position of distancing itself from township political issues created tensions between the two organisations. The union, for its part, was sceptical of the strength of democratic structures in PEBCO, and wary of involvement in actions or with organisations which could compromise the principle of worker control.

At Ford's Cortina plant in Struandale 700 workers walked out on October 31, 1979 to protest the forced resignation of PEBCO President Thozamile Botha, a trainee draughtsman at the company. The UARAW had already organised the neighbouring Ford engine plant and, at the time of the strike, had only recently begun organising at Cortina.

Though PEBCO had neither called for nor organised the actions at Ford, as Botha was its President and most of the Cortina workers were members, the organisation, both in its style of protest and the issues around which it mobilised, became centrally involved in the dispute. The volatile conditions in the townships, where residents were mobilising to protest rent increases set the background for events at Ford. The proximity of the plant to the township, the younger, more politicised workers at Cortina, and Botha's leadership all contributed to the close linkage between township and shop-floor grievances. While the UAW had worked through the Ford liaison committee hoping to turn it inside out "to handle shop floor issues, and to secure representation on industrial councils," (15) it was the PEBCO-linked Ford Workers Committee which would provide the nucleus for the Motor Assemblers and Components Workers Union of South Africa (MACWUSA), a breakaway from NUMARWOSA.

In Uitenhage, however, the outcome was different. The Volkswagen strike in June 1980 occurred after the employers refused to accept the union's demand for a living wage of R2,00 per hour and the magistrate banned the union report back meet-

ing. Not only did both coloured and African workers at VW go out, but their action precipitated a general strike in the city. (16) But in contrast to the Ford factory at Struandale, the VW plant is located in a central industrial district and draws its workforce from both the coloured and African communities of Uitenhage. Whereas in Port Elizabeth the strikes precipitated a split between the motor union and the community organisation, a rupture which continues to this day, in Uitenhage union shop stewards were the leaders of the Uitenhage Black Civic Organisation.

II THE CRISIS IN THE EASTERN CAPE

The stay-aways and the trade unions' response should be understood in the context of the specific conditions and dynamics of the political economy of the Eastern Cape. There were three factors which shaped the terrain of the class struggle in the Eastern Cape and gave rise to varying organisational agendas and responses, namely: the recession and retrenchments and the struggles in the factories; township struggles, in particular over local government; and the schools' boycotts.

(i) Recession, retrenchments and factory struggles

The recession and unemployment have been particularly severe in the Eastern Cape. There are a number of reasons for the increasing unemployment level. Firstly, recession, and the effects of increased GST and tighter HP have greatly reduced sales of cars, and since the Eastern Cape depends heavily on the auto industry, have contributed to a regional economic crisis. The regional problems have intensified as sections of the industry have moved to the Rand. During the last three years, 11,000 motor workers have lost their jobs and a further 20,000 in related industries have suffered the same fate. Half the women are out of work and 46% of the men under the age of 24 are out of work. (17) NAAWU has estimated that a further 10,000 will lose their jobs as a result of the Ford-Amcar merger. (18) In the six months before the stay-away over 1,073 motor workers have been retrenched: this figure includes 765 from Volkswagen, 146 from Dorbyl Automotive and 118 from Borg Warner. (19) In addition, as we found in our survey, many of those workers who are still employed are working short-time or a 4-day week. Secondly, the crisis in the white agricultur-

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al sector coupled to the effects of the recession has led to the decline of the numerous small hinterland towns. The consequent decrease in job opportunities has forced many whites and blacks to flock to the metropolitan areas. Many of the blacks have gone to PE. (20) In addition, the drought that has hit the rural hinterland and homelands particularly badly, has forced many people into the PE metropolitan area in the hope of finding some way to subsist. Thirdly, the low number of migrant workers and the equal ratio between men and women has - in combination with the other factors mentioned - resulted in a high annual growth of the black population in the PE area. (21) Finally, the ranks of the unemployed have also been swelled by thousands of school-leavers joining the already bleak job market. The latest estimates of the unemployment level among blacks in Port Elizabeth is 56%. (22)

The dismissal of 952 striking Industex workers in December last year was a clear warning from management of its intention to curb union militancy. (23) The recession is being used to justify retrenchments, wage cuts, and reduced working hours, especially in the weakly organised sectors.

Since 1979, the Eastern Cape has witnessed numerous work stoppages and strikes, especially in the automobile industry. (24) Most significant was the 1980 Volkswagen strike which rapidly spread into a local general strike and set the union on the road to achieving the "living wage". This was followed by a period of "guerilla struggle" - short stoppages - in the factory, resulting in the establishment of strong shop-floor structures. Major wage gains were won and formal agreements reached, which ensured the growth of a strong regional union movement. In the forefront was NAAWU followed by other FOSATU affiliates and unions such as GWU, FCWU, and CCAWUSA which also made significant gains. As the recession deepened, organisational expansion gave way to consolidation to defend shop-floor gains and to maintain membership. (25)

These shopfloor problems were not as relevant to MACWUSA and GWUSA (General Workers Union of South Africa, an off-shoot of MACWUSA), unions closely aligned to PEBCO. The extent of their membership and the strength of their organisation in the factories is unclear, but is certainly not recognised by managements. They have, therefore, concentrated on mobilising on community issues such as rents and transport. This was just-

ified by Dennis Neer, the general secretary of both unions, in the following way: " workers, before they are workers, are members of the community and MACWUSA sees to those needs. Here we differ from other trade unions." (26)

In the case of FOSATU - the largest grouping among the unity unions in the Eastern Cape - its involvement in community and political issues has been selective and has been shaped, largely, by its policy-orientation: how can trade unions engage in political/community issues to facilitate the development of non-racial democratic working class organisation. (27)

(ii) Crisis in the townships

The townships in the Port Elizabeth-Uitenhage region are experiencing severe conditions of poverty, deprivation and state violence. This, in combination with the crisis in production, goes towards explaining the intensity and temper of the social conflicts that have emerged there.

The average weekly wage for men is R105 and R56 for women, (28) wages so low that even if there were houses for the 120,000 homeless families, 45% would not be able to afford them. (29) Out of the total African population in PE of 300,000, one third live in shacks. Sixty percent of the shacks house 10 or more people and sewerage and other facilities are totally inadequate. (30) In Soweto-by-the-Sea there are 80-90,000 people living in conditions that are so overcrowded that there is only one tap for every 600 people. (31) The average squatter family earns a total of R240 a month although 20% of them earn less than R20 a month. (32) The numbers of squatters have grown rapidly since there is no authority with clear responsibility for removing them. Unemployment is particularly high since it is illegal to employ squatters. Also, given the crisis in the countryside, there is little support available from rural networks for those living in town. These factors have produced the social base from which PEYCO (PE Youth Congress) draws much of its leadership and support.

Conditions in the Uitenhage townships are equally appalling. According to the president of UYCO (Uitenhage Youth Congress), only 25% of the families in Langa live in proper brick houses. The rest either live in houses made of clay and grass or else in tin shacks. Most of these families are poverty-stricken and

cannot afford the new houses that are being built for them in Kwanobuhle. The authorities have tried to remove the squatters to Kwanobuhle but they simply return and rebuild their shacks. Langa has poor shopping, recreational and educational facilities which means that some children cannot go to school because of the high costs of commuting to the nearest appropriate school. Furthermore, community organisers believe that the level of unemployment is higher in Uitenhage than in PE. Our survey also shows short-time working to be more prevalent in Uitenhage than in PE, especially amongst African workers.

In 1983 the state added fuel to the fire when it established a black local authority in the region. As the state itself has recently acknowledged (33), the creation of these bodies at that stage was a mistake because they had no viable fiscal base and were not linked up to higher forms of representation. Thus ironically, it was the state's "reform" policy that provided the space for the re-emergence of powerful township-based political organisations rather than fostering a compliant petty bourgeoisie as the state had hoped.

Although the councillors promised to improve conditions in the townships during the election campaigns, the extremely low poll reflected the residents' mistrust. This judgement proved correct when soon after its' election, the Khayamandi (PE) town council increased the rents in the poorest areas - the squatter camps. The rents were to go up from R10 to R25 a month. The squatters were furious, especially as they had built these dwellings themselves. But the increases were withdrawn last December after PEBCO threatened a three-day stay-away, (34) in the first of many conflicts between the community and the increasingly reactionary councillors who began hiring their own armed vigilante groups. (35)

Following the state's clampdown in 1980, PEBCO became a symbolic opposition rather than a coherent organisational force. Initially the vacuum was filled by the emergence of PEYCO as a mass based organisation towards the end of 1983. The growing crisis in the townships also led to the subsequent revival of PEBCO. The two key personalities in PEBCO are Edgar Ngoyi and Henry Fazzie. Ngoyi, currently the President of the UDF's Eastern Cape Branch, was released from Robben Island in August 1984 after spending 17 years there. Fazzie, Vice-President of the UDF's Eastern Cape branch, was released in September 1984

after 21 years on the Island. Both were active in the ANC and SACTU in PE during the 1940's and 1950's. In October they were elected onto the PEBCO executive. * Fazzie and Ngoyi called a series of meetings in the townships after which they identified five civic problems: high rents, unkempt township conditions, untarred streets, inadequate water supplies, and inadequate creche facilities. (36)

Whereas in 1979 PEBCO emerged from below as an umbrella body for the local residents associations, by 1983 these associations had declined. Consequently, PEBCO re-emerged as a general civic rather than an umbrella organisation, and did not have the benefit of a strong foundation in more democratic neighbourhood-type associations. Instead of establishing strong grassroots structures, like some of the Transvaal civics, the leadership retained the mass-meeting strategy which it had seen as appropriate in the days when PEBCO was an umbrella body. Despite this organisational weakness, PEBCO's opposition to the new town council meant that it was seen by most residents as the legitimate alternative.

PEBCO's leaders are powerful spokespeople for the national democratic struggle. Drawing on the tactics of the 1950's, its' leadership is committed to organising all oppressed classes around racial oppression. It works closely with other UDF affiliates: PEYCO, COSAS, MACWUSA, UYCO, PE Women's Organisation and the Save the Starving Community committee (SSC). In interviews the leadership expressed support for the principle of working class leadership. They claimed that many of the "unity unions" members are also PEBCO members. However, the role of employed and unionised workers in PEBCO is unclear; certainly they are not well-represented at a leadership level as there are no union member on the executive.

In contrast to PEBCO, PEYCO is well organised, has a clear strategy, and its' leadership has engaged in extensive house-to-house organisation. In 1983 a small group of highly politicised educated unemployed youths, aged between 20 and 26, and drawn from working class families, began to meet to discuss their political role in the community. (37) Most of them

* As we go to press Fazzi is under arrest, Ngoyi is in hiding, whilst other members of the PEBCO executive have "disappeared".

were politicized during the 1976-77 period and were influenced by black consciousness ideology. Those who were sent to jail at this time changed their allegiance to the "Charterist" position. A slightly younger generation were products of the 1980 school boycotts - such as the president, Mkhuseleli Jack, who was chairperson of the Committee of 41 that coordinated the boycotts (38) - and others have been drawn from the ranks of COSAS. Excluded from school by the age limit restriction and from the labour market by the recession, this group began to realise that there were many others like them who were looking for a political home. (39)

In July 1983 these youths established a youth congress, following the example of Cape Town and Soweto. The most significant feature of PEYCO is that they organise primarily around political issues. They do not take up civic issues because they do not possess houses, and because they have no jobs, they do not mobilise around factory issues. Although they do hold mass meetings, they also organise workshops to teach other youths about the Freedom Charter, the meaning of the national democratic struggle, the causes of oppression and class exploitation, and methods of organisation. Their activities have been focussed around the million signature campaign, the Black Local Authorities Act, the visit of Mangope's wife in 1984, and the schools boycott. By the beginning of 1985 the PEYCO leadership had succeeded in its' objective: giving the unemployed youths a political home. PEYCO claims over 1,000 card carrying members.

In Uitenhage's African communities, different organisational forms have emerged. During the 1980-1 strike waves in the Eastern Cape, FOSATU activists took the leadership of the Uitenhage Black Civic Organisation (UBCO). However, like PEBCO, UBCO subsequently declined and was defunct by 1983. When community organisers in the national democratic tradition re-emerged in 1983-4 in Uitenhage, they did not try to revive UBCO, but formed the Uitenhage Youth Congress (UYCO).

Today UYCO is the main civic organisation in Uitenhage with members drawn from every age group. It is strongest in Langa where most of its members are squatters and others who have resisted relocation to Kwanobuhle. UYCO is trying to establish structures on the basis of street and zone committees, and each zone has been renamed after a prominent Robben Island prisoner. The zone committees are to elect a township

committee empowered to call meetings, formulate strategy and enter into negotiations. UYCO complements the structure, according to its president, by encouraging people to buy membership cards, which they see as a way of maintaining control during a phase of rapid expansion. UYCO claims 8,000 card carrying members.

As the youth congresses became increasingly influential in the townships, the large mass of unemployed youths have been drawn into their orbit. These youths, many of whom are normally forced to survive on the fringes of legality, have become extremely militant over the past months. Although the youth congresses have tried to draw them into political education programmes to give direction to their militancy, they have rejected this, criticising the leaders for being too moderate and interested only in talking. These extremely desperate unemployed youths, many of whom come from the squatter areas form a large part of what are known in the townships as the "guerillas". They are not formally members of the UDF organisations and tend to be younger, less educated and less politically conscious than the average congress member. (40) They move around the townships in large groups and attack police and army vehicles, as well as councillors and black policemen. As they have become increasingly violent due to the role played by a criminal element in the groups, youth congress leaders have criticised them for their thuggery which is beginning to alienate ordinary residents. Now that the state has banned all meetings, it is extremely difficult for the organisations to bring the "guerillas" under control.

There has been intense struggle in both African and coloured townships against the local authorities, community councils and management committees. Although civic organisations in coloured townships are virtually non-existent, sports organisations played a role in mobilising opposition to the local authorities in both Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage. In Port Elizabeth, the Eastern Cape Co-ordinating Committee was established in 1982 and this brought together the main unions with sports and civic organisations "to liaise and give support to one another in joint struggles." But the Committee soon dissolved because each of its organisations wanted to concentrate on building up its own constituency.

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In Uitenhage, the Community Education Programme was established - a loose alliance of FOSATU shop-stewards and sports organisations - to campaign in particular against the tricameral parliament. The campaign proved highly successful, as indicated by the significantly declining percentage of electors who voted in 1984: 45% of registered voters compared with 76% in 1975 and 80% in 1969. (41) In the African townships, shop-stewards were active in the Uitenhage Parents Committee.

(iii) The schools boycotts

In October 1984, African students at all Department of Education and Training (DET) schools in the Eastern Cape launched a boycott in accordance with the national campaign and demands of COSAS. The demands were for the granting of democratic SRC's and for an end to corporal punishment and sexual harassment.

The boycott ended in January/February after intervention by the Uitenhage Parents Committee. Daniel Dube, the regional FOSATU vice-chairperson and the chairperson of the UPC expressed reservations as to how the boycott was conducted:

The schools' boycott had almost been going for 3 months before student grievances were brought to the attention of DET authorities. Only after we met COSAS and conveyed student grievances to the DET were they met.

After a meeting between the DET's Regional Director and the UPC on 11 February, student grievances were discussed, their demands conceded, and on 18 February the boycott was called off on condition that the academic year would begin in March and students be permitted to write their examinations in June.

Coloured students at Uitenhage high schools also launched a boycott in response to the management committee's refusal to grant the use of sports facilities to the local umbrella Uitenhage Sports Board. The struggle between USB and the management committee was long-standing. The latter had attempted to establish a rival sports body to counter EPCOS's (Eastern Province Council of Sports) domination of USB since EPCOS and the USB are opponents of the Labour Party. When the students at John Walton High discovered that their principal was involved in the rival sports initiative, they launched a boycott demanding his removal. The boycott spread to other Uitenhage and Port

Elizabeth coloured schools where students demanded to know where their principals stood in relation to the Eastern Province Senior Schools' Union, an affiliate of EPCOS. On February 22, all the coloured schools were closed on the order of Carter Ebrahim, the "own affairs" Minister of Culture and Education.

On February 27, a Parents, Teachers and Students' Association (PTSA) was established on which FOSATU officials and shop-stewards served. On March 1, three teachers, who were prominent in the sports' struggle were transferred to remote areas. Their victimisation and the intransigent attitude of the Department intensified the struggle which already included a campaign amongst primary school students and teachers. The PTSA's demands were for the unconditional opening of schools; the reinstatement of the three teachers to their original posts; and the removal of those headmasters who had identified themselves with the rival sports initiative. Pressure by students and parents at a meeting on March 3, attended by more than 1,000 parents, and a threatened strike by teachers forced the Department to concede the PTSA's demands. The struggle intensified conflict between FOSATU and the Labour Party. (42)

In the Transvaal, last year, the township crisis and the students' struggle provided the basis for an alliance between the trade unions and community organisations, particularly COSAS. In the Eastern Cape, also, student issues formed part of the terrain of struggle. However they did not play a major role in the stay-away itself. Firstly, immediate student demands had been met by the time of the stay-away. Secondly, COSAS is relatively weaker on the ground in the Eastern Cape, perhaps due to the smaller school population and the political dominance of the youth congresses. This was critical for the unions as their members could more easily relate as fee-paying parents to a student body than to the youth congress. The linkages and points of contact with organisations representing unemployed youths - and which are not focused towards any institution - were less evident. Also, the state's policy of divide and rule was again present in the form of separate schools and educational authorities for coloured and African students. Although both groups were involved in important and broadly similar struggles the issues sometimes differed and the timing did not always coincide.

It is important to note the prominent role played by the

unions in support of these struggles, and the developing relations with student organisations. This may partly explain why COSAS was more sympathetic to the unions' position on the stay-away than was PEBCO. (43) Thus, these links did not serve to alleviate the tensions between the unions and PEBCO.

Although student organisations did not play a major role in the stay-away itself, the schools boycotts greatly influenced the level and nature of resistance, and state response, in the region. The boycotts, which affected the entire Eastern Cape between September and December 1984, were met with escalating repression which pulled in the rest of the community behind the students. Thus when the boycotts petered out in 1985, this did not diffuse the general confrontation between the state and the community, the civic organisations now taking the leading role.

III THE STAY-AWAY

There are conflicting reports of the origins of the stay-away call. In November, there were rumours of a stay-away following the Transvaal stay-away and, although it was linked to PEBCO and MACWUSA, both denied knowledge of it. There was, however, a stay-away call in response to the intended rent increase which was to come into effect from December 1, but which was ultimately called off following the Khayamandi Town Council's resolution not to increase rent and service charges.

Meanwhile, a highly successful stay-away occurred in Grahamstown and a number of surrounding small towns on November 9 called by COSAS to coincide with the funeral of a 15 year-old unrest victim, Patrick Mdyogola. According to reports "only a handful of Africans turned up for work after a call for a mass boycott of work." (44)

Chronology: Port Elizabeth

- * End of January: at a PEBCO meeting at the Rio Cinema a stay-away was suggested and PEBCO leaders decided to meet the trade unions about the proposed action.
- * February 3: the press carried a report about the proposed stay-away before PEBCO met the unions. Shortly afterwards a FOSATU regional congress rejected the idea of a stay-away.
- * February 7: UDF organisations met the "unity talks" unions

to discuss a stay-away. PEBCO identified three issues: the retrenchments of workers which resulted in mass unemployment; the Ford-Amcar merger; and the increase in petrol prices. The unity unions expressed reservations about the wisdom of staying-away but agreed to go back to the workers for a mandate.

- * February 10: Another meeting was arranged but the unions had not had enough time to go back to the factories.
- * February 10 - 17: Unions discussed the stay-away call on the factory floor. Union leaders indicated that workers did not support the stay-away call. PEBCO disputed the union statement and continued planning the stay-away.
- * February 16 : General Workers Union held a general meeting where workers rejected the idea of a stay-away, but because there was support for some sort of action workers decided to recommend a consumer boycott as an alternative. This was never seriously entertained because of PEBCO's insistence that a stay-away should take place. Also the proposal was never taken up by the other unions.
- * February 17 : At a PEBCO meeting of 2,000, the unions' opposition to the stay-away was announced. A vote was taken in support of a stay-away. A Stay-away Committee was formed and the unions were invited to send representatives - the unions refused and PEBCO decided to go it alone. The Committee set the date for a Black Weekend (shops boycott) and stay-away which was to apply to Uitenhage also.
- * February 17 - March 16: The unions concentrated on getting management to agree not to victimise workers that stayed away. During this time tensions mounted in the townships:
 - ** Vigilantes hired by the town councillors become more violent and in turn were attacked and burnt;
 - ** Confusion developed in the schools boycott and eventually fizzled out;
 - ** There were increasing numbers of clashes between police and demonstrators leading to an increase in the number of political mass funerals;
 - ** Buses stopped coming in as they were stoned by youths.
 - ** PEBCO, PEYCO and UYCO begin a pamphleteering campaign and door-to-door organising around the stay-away call;
 - ** PE Chamber of Commerce, PE Afrikaanse Sakekamer, the mayors of PE and Uitenhage and the SAP issued statements urging workers not to stay away; (45)
 - ** Unionists complained that increasingly militant youths were threatening workers who did not stay away.

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- * March 11: The unions held a meeting where a decision was taken not to support the stay-away and to inform PEBCO of their decision. "PEBCO was reluctant to give an answer but said the workers supported them and not the unions", Phindile Maneli, CCAWUSA organiser, subsequently stated. A press statement was issued by the unions, publicly disassociating themselves from the stay-away and insisting that PEBCO had to bear the consequences of any dismissals. In contrast, the general secretary of MACWUSA, Dennis Neer, said: "workers represented by these unions had voted un-animously in favour of the stay-away call."
- * March 13: Unions called a meeting with UDF and black consciousness organisations (the latter also opposed the stay-away) to re-emphasise their reasons for wanting the stay-away called off:
 - (a) The demands were national demands and should be challenged nationally. A local response simply exposed workers to attack;
 - (b) it would affect some workers more than others thus causing division: commercial workers would lose two days pay and others only one day's pay;
 - (c) the call was not made in the coloured areas thus reinforcing divisions;
 - (d) no provision had been made for workers who would lose their jobs, especially unorganised workers.

The unity unions did not propose any alternative action and PEBCO simply rejected their objections. The unions released a press statement opposing the stay-away, but did not mobilise against it.

- * March 16-17: Black Weekend supported in the African townships.
- * March 18: Stay-away supported in the African townships.

Chronology: Uitenhage

- * January 28 and 29: Start of the coloured schools boycott because of the management committee's attempts to establish a rival sports board to the Uitenhage Sports Board.
- * February: Schools struggle intensified at both DET and coloured Department of Education and Culture schools and spreads to Port Elizabeth.
- * February 4: Uitenhage Parents Committee (UPC) established.
- * February 8: Congress of South African Students meet the UPC concerning student grievances.

- * February 9: At a UDF meeting NAAWU and FOSATU were challenged to take up the case of Mncedisi Sithoto a MACWUSA member who was employed at Goodyear. Both the union and the federation were attacked.
- * February 11: UPC met the Regional Director of the Department of Education and Training where the students' demands were presented and agreed to.
- * February 18: DET boycott ended on the understanding that the new academic year would begin on March 18.
- * February 22: The minister closed all coloured schools.
- * February 27: A Parents, Teachers, Students Association was established which included many FOSATU officials and shop stewards.
- * March 1: 3 teachers prominent in the sports struggle were transferred.
- * March 3: A mass meeting was held in Uitenhage, attended by more than 1,000 parents demanding the reinstatement of the teachers and the removal of those principals involved with the Labour Party.
- * March: There were rumours of the impending stay-away, but unionised workers decided not to support it. Attempts by the unions to explain their position at community meetings were not permitted. The unions were accused of betraying the struggle.
- * March 16-17: Black Weekend. Two died over the weekend in township unrest. The magistrate banned funerals for all weekends and public holidays.
- * March 18: Stay-away unevenly supported.
- * March 19: Uitenhage Youth Congress held a mass meeting to call for a stay-away on the 21st to bury the unrest victims. There is evidence that some workers at least supported this call.
- * March 20: Unions responded by calling factory meetings where workers mandated their leaders to press managements to apply for the ban to be lifted.
According to the Kannemeyer Commission, at the behest of the local security police, the weekend ban on funerals was lifted and the funeral planned for the following day (Thursday) was banned by the magistrate. The unions' response to this turn of events is unclear. (46)
- * March 21: Langa massacre and stay-away.
- * March 22: Stay-away.
- * March 25: 15 minute memorial stoppage in union factories.

Monitoring the stay-away

The historic divisions in the working class were highlighted in a study undertaken by the LMG among employers, unions, and community organisations in the area. In PE a random sample of 50 of the 235 firms listed in the Midland Chamber of Industries Directory were interviewed. 75% of the industrial employers in Uitenhage were interviewed along with a sample of employers in the commercial sector in the area. All interviews with employers were conducted over the telephone. In-depth interviews were conducted with key activists in the community and the trade unions. The main findings of the telephone survey were:

1. 43% of black workers in PE and 62% of black workers in Uitenhage in our sample are on some form of short time.

TABLE I: SHORT-TIME WORKING IN PORT ELIZABETH AND UITENHAGE

	Africans	Coloureds	All black workers
Port Elizabeth	40%	48%	43%
Uitenhage	65%	49%	62%

2. In PE, 99.5% of the African workforce in the commercial sector heeded the call to stay away on March 16, a Saturday morning shopping day. Workers classified as coloured came to work as normal although many stores closed early. On Monday, March 18, 90% of African industrial workers stayed away. Again few coloured workers participated. The situation in Uitenhage was less clear as 69% of the companies surveyed had African workers who were on some form of short-time. Of those who were meant to come to work on the 18th, 36% stayed away.

TABLE II: AFRICAN INDUSTRIAL WORKERS: PERCENTAGE STAY-AWAY

	18th	21st	22nd
PE	90%	-	-
Uitenhage	36%	98%	97%

3. In Uitenhage, a further stay-away was called for the 21st,

the anniversary of Sharpeville, so that all members of the community could attend the funerals of people killed by the police the previous weekend. The massacre at Langa on the 21st ensured that the following day was also a stay-away. 98% of the African workers stayed away on Thursday and 97% on Friday. Coloured workers staying away reached 16% on the Thursday, but dropped to 4% on Friday.

Low as coloured participation in the stay-away may seem, it was, nonetheless, high in comparison to the PE area. In specific factories the proportion of coloured workers staying away was much higher. This reflects the fact that geographical and organisational divisions are not so clear cut in Uitenhage. This was also demonstrated by a short stoppage in organised factories in Uitenhage on 25 March, in memory of those who died the previous week. It also represented a response to the same pressures which gave rise to the protest in Uitenhage: in particular the police repression in the area.

4. 61% of the employers in PE surveyed and 73% of those surveyed in Uitenhage had discussions with employees before the stay-away. All employers, regardless of whether they had discussions or not followed a policy of "no work, no pay", as recommended by employer bodies. However in some companies workers lost their attendance and service bonuses. A few workers in unorganised establishments were dismissed.

5. Of the employers, 71% of the sample in PE and 69% in Uitenhage were confident that stay-aways would continue in the future. Only 1 employer thought stay-aways would not continue. "Stay-aways", one employer remarked, "have become a fact of life". Most of our informants felt that the solution to stay-aways lay either in quelling the unrest or employing coloureds instead of Africans in the future.

IV THE RESPONSE OF CAPITAL AND THE STATE

By opening fire on a crowd marching to a funeral in Langa township on March 21, the South African Police turned the Eastern Cape stay-away into a landmark event in the history of black opposition by linking it permanently with the Sharpeville massacre exactly 25 years earlier. Estimates of the number of deaths ranged from 20 (the police count) to 43 (calc-

ulated by the Black Sash). The massive outcry locally and internationally forced the state to set up a judicial enquiry into the events. (47)

As both activity in the Eastern Cape townships and international attention focussed on the police, the stay-aways themselves became a secondary issue. As a result, the responses of state and capital, especially in the medium term, must be seen in the context of the subsequent events, rather than the stay-aways per se.

The Langa shootings were simply an expression, albeit the most horrific, of the state's general approach to militant township-based resistance over the previous six months - the overt and essentially provocative presence of police and army units in the townships, aimed at intimidating residents into quiescence. Like the Vaal, the East Rand and elsewhere, the Eastern Cape townships had been subjected to this strategy long before March 21. The state's immediate response to the "Black Weekend" and stay-away of March 16-18 thus did not involve any substantial change from its existing policy. While there was apparently no attempt to force people to work house-by-house, the police presence resulted in several township deaths in both PE and Uitenhage. The Langa crowd of March 21 was on its way to the funerals of those killed during the Black Weekend.

Despite the international outcry over Langa, the state continued on its path: the police were not withdrawn nor even issued with less dangerous equipment. In subsequent weeks, townships throughout the Eastern Cape as well as further afield saw confrontations between police and residents, with many more deaths and injuries being registered. (48) By the government's own count, between September 1984 and the end of March, 10,000 people were arrested, 217 killed and 751 injured in nationwide township unrest. (49) Statements by cabinet ministers suggested this trend was unlikely to change: the reputedly "liberal" Adriaan Vlok, Deputy Minister of both Defence and, Law and Order, said: "We are really determined to restore law and order ... in the quickest possible way and by using methods we believe will achieve it." Suggesting that the state may be taking the initiative in its use of violence against black opposition, he added, "we must be pre-emptive rather than reactive." (50) In Parliament, the Minister of Defence announced that if township unrest continued, an add-

itional Defence Budget would have to be introduced later in 1985. (51) Of course, direct responsibility for all the dead and wounded does not rest fully with the state - there were many attacks on community councillors and black policemen, as well as on members of rival political organisations. These latter divisions played right into the hands of the state, which seems to have played some role in exacerbating them; for example, the arrests of UDF national leaders on their way to a peace meeting with FOSATU. The mainstream media also seized upon this aspect of the events, and carried innumerable reports and features on organisational differences. In taking this approach, the media were following the same path as Ronald Reagan, whose reaction to the Langa shootings emphasised black "violence", rather than being critical of the police! (52)

There was another dimension to the state's response: in the longer-term, addressing the economic grievances which actually underlay the stay-away and continuing unrest. This appears to be in part a response to pressure from capital in the region.

The events of March 16-21, and the subsequent township unrest had a differential impact on capital, evoking separate reactions from industry and commerce. For the former, whose markets are elsewhere in the country, township developments are of interest only to the extent they affect their labour force. They tended therefore to focus on the stay-aways themselves, and possible future repetition. For many factories, of course, the stay-away on Monday the 18th had no impact, because they were on a 4-day week already. Those who were affected did not have a particularly harsh policy towards absent workers: "no work, no pay". However, our survey found considerable talk of substituting African workers with "more reliable" coloureds, not subject to the same sorts of pressures within their communities. Such threats seemed idle, however: the cost of replacing particularly skilled workers (many of whom are African) would be high. Furthermore, any attempted action of this sort would be fiercely resisted by the unions.

It was in fact workers' skill levels, and the unions' strength, together with their participation in industrial relations structures (seen to reduce the likelihood of strikes), (53) that were among reasons cited by Eastern Cape industrialists for what they called an optimistic outlook, notwithstanding continuing unrest and the depressed regional economy. (54)

Other points mentioned were "enlightened industrial relations practices" of multinationals in the region, and low labour turnover. It seems that the general view was that, while the depressed economy might fuel the militancy behind stay-aways, it helped at the same time to minimise their impact on industry at least in the large factories. The short working week, together with ongoing co-operation from the major unions, anxious to avoid any further loss in pay for their members, would hopefully ensure that future stay-aways coincided with off-days.

At the same time, there have been calls from major industrialists in the region for state action to pick up the auto industry's profitability. There had already been a response to such calls last November, when the government significantly increased the decentralisation incentives on offer to industry in Region D. (55) It seems unlikely that this will have any significant impact in the area, judging by experience elsewhere. (56) While industrialists welcomed such subsidies, they felt that further steps were necessary, both to lower their own costs by rolling back local content conditions (at the probable expense of local components manufacturers), and to improve consumer demand (through lower HP and GST rates, and cuts in the proposed perks tax). Township unrest provided industrial capital with a strong additional motivation in making such demands, on the grounds that regional unemployment had to be cut urgently. There has not yet been any reaction from the state on these issues.

While industry was putting a brave face on the picture, the retail sector made no such pretence. For them, the continuing township unrest was the main problem, rather than the Black Weekend itself. Although we found that 99,5% of African workers at the 2 major supermarket chains did stay at home on the 16th and 18th, most shops had exceptionally high turnover on Friday 15th, as people prepared for the weekend. However, the ongoing unstable climate created a state of near-panic amongst retailers, as demand fell away completely. Five weeks after Langa, the president of Uitenhage's Chamber of Commerce lamented that "the prolonged unrest had had a devastating effect on the town's economy", while the director of the equivalent body in PE noted that turnovers "have not increased since the stay-away." (57) The subsequent boycott of white businesses beginning in July was to greatly increase the fears of retailers. (58)

The Chambers of Commerce of PE, Uitenhage and Grahamstown submitted a joint memorandum to the government, together with a request for an urgent meeting. They stressed the need to address what they called the "fundamental issues" behind the situation, such as black education and housing, rising service charges, unemployment and the petrol price hike. Having met with G Viljoen, Minister of Co-operation and Development, they resolved also to arrange meetings with black leaders, including those from civics, to try to help resolve the situation. (59)

In response to the general consensus that the high level of unemployment is the key factor fuelling black militancy in the Eastern Cape townships, the government took 2 steps to alleviate the situation. It brought forward the starting date for the next phase of the Orange River irrigation project by seven years, so that it will begin immediately. Only 1,350 construction jobs are involved, and 3,000 permanent agricultural jobs from 1987 - both negligible quantities. Secondly, a R100 million "emergency relief" programme for unemployment was announced at the beginning of May. Labour-intensive projects providing short-term jobs primarily to unemployed breadwinners is to be the primary emphasis, with two-thirds of the funds going to urban areas, and the Eastern Cape being a particular focus for spending. (60)

The amount of money allocated to these initiatives is of little significance, and their potential for job-creation minimal. However, their ideological impact cannot be as easily dismissed, and this seems to be their primary objective. Furthermore, they represent an aberration from the overall ideological thrust of policy during the past several years, which has been away from economic activity undertaken by the state, and state-financed projects, and towards greater reliance on the private sector, in line with the "free enterprise" approach.

Much of the money in the job-creation programme is likely to be spent on development and improvement of township facilities. This is part of an additional aspect of the state's reaction to the Eastern Cape events: its response to the collapse of local authority structures. This involved essentially the "re-announcement", to show it was taking some action, of various policies connected to township "upliftment", as part of the long-term policy around urban blacks. These include the "unfreezing" of development in dozens of town-

ships intended at an earlier stage to be included in the Bantustans; the spending of large amounts of money on township development as recommended by the Rive Commission (R273 million over 5 years in the Eastern Cape); and the Regional Service Council structures. (61) These programmes are tied, by the state, into the issue of African political incorporation in the central state. As Sam de Beer, Deputy Minister of Co-operation and Development, pointed out, apparently seriously, "Since the tricameral parliament began its work, there had been no unrest in the coloured community which had experienced riots in 1980." (62)

V ASSESSMENT AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

1. We concluded in our report of the November stay-away that: "stay-aways crystallised the central contradiction of state policy - the liberalisation of the industrial relations system without meaningful political and social change". (63) This remains true of the Eastern Cape stay-aways: the crisis in the townships and in the schools - and the failure of the state to adequately deal with these grievances - impinged directly on the workplace through the stay-away call. As in the Transvaal, trade unions were forced to take up a position on what action to take over these non-factory issues. In Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage they opposed the call for a stay-away for reasons outlined in this report.

2. In spite of this opposition from the "unity unions" the stay-away on March 18 was highly successful in the African townships of Port Elizabeth, although only partially successful in Uitenhage. The stay-aways in Uitenhage on March 21 and 22 were also successful in the African townships. This raises the question as to whether the unions miscalculated the feelings of workers for some kind of political action, or were workers intimidated into staying away? The answer to this question remains a matter of debate and requires considerably more information if it is to be adequately answered.

3. However what we have suggested in this report is that even if the "unity unions" had supported the stay-away, regionally specific features in the racial composition of the PE-Uitenhage working class would have raised problems for nonracial political organisation outside the organised factories. The

historic divisions - created largely by the state - between coloured and African workers would not have been effectively challenged by an organisation such as PEBCO calling for a stay-away as it is based almost exclusively in the African communities. Clearly if the tactic is not to reproduce these divisions, then its use must be preceded by the development of democratic organisation in all the communities and by closer consultation between unions and community organisations.

The existence in PE and Uitenhage of a large proportion of coloured workers was one of the principle differences with the situation in the Transvaal stay-away in November. Cape unions and coloured workers generally do not have a militant history: the legacy of TUCSA-style unionism. (65) The growth, in recent years, of militant union organisation amongst coloured workers in the Eastern Cape - in alliance with African workers - is therefore a highly significant development. One of its affects has been to pull large numbers of coloured workers away from support for the Labour Party after it chose to collaborate in the government's reform strategy.

4. The recession is impacting in different ways on the black population in the Eastern Cape. Retrenchment, short-time and factory closures mean that unions have to consider their actions very carefully if they are to maintain their hard-won gains on the shopfloor. Thus many feared that a stay-away could play into management's hands and provide a pretext for reducing even further the labour force. This does not mean, however, that unions are on the run: witness the successful rolling wage strikes which hit the Eastern Cape auto industry in the days immediately after the stay-aways. For employed workers this represents a viable strategy of struggle in order to counteract the affects of the recession. For some community organisations, on the other hand, the recession is having a different effect. With nothing to lose and no prospect of a job in the future, growing numbers of unemployed have been mobilised. The logic of their position pushes them into a generalised conflict with the "system". They have, over the last few months, successfully called the tune in the townships.

5. In the Transvaal, the months leading up to the November stay-away were characterised by deepening links between the unions and other opposition forces - particularly the students. In the Eastern Cape, the unions had worked with sports

and student organisations, and had some links with community organisation in Uitenhage. However, opposition politics in the area has been dominated by the historic division between the FOSATU unions on the one hand and MACWUSA and PEBCO on the other. Not surprisingly the different organisations gave radically opposed assessments of the March 16-18 events. For the latter it was a resounding success, justifying the emphasis on township-based action. Spokespeople for the unions saw the events in a different light, however: generally workers were left more divided than before. (66) However, by opposing the stay-away the image held by some of the community organisations of a union movement divorced from politics was reinforced. Neither did the unity unions provide an alternative strategy, appropriate to the upsurge of resistance in the townships.

6. The stay-away was not an organised challenge to state power in the region; it was, like the November stay-away in the Transvaal, a demonstration of power and a sign of the depth of the economic and political crisis in South Africa. To respond, as did many employers in our survey, by calling either for stronger police action or for the substitution of African labour by "less political" coloured workers, is to sadly misread the situation.

The pressure on the union movement, particularly since the declaration of the state of emergency, is of such a magnitude that the issue is no longer whether unions become involved in non-factory issues but what the most appropriate form that political action should take. Both state and management would be wise to recognise the emergence of politics as a central industrial relations issue and look at the demands raised in the stay-aways. The "law and order" response that has emerged as dominant since the stay-away has served only to further politicise the workforce without removing any of the grievances raised during the March stay-away.

References

- 1 For the rest of the article the term "coloured" will be used without quotation marks to mean simply those classified by the government with this label. This does not mean that the authors accept the racially divisive categories which the state employs.

- 2 For a more detailed narrative account of the events surrounding the stay-away see: D Pillay, "The Port Elizabeth stay-aways: community organisations and trade unions in conflict", WIP 37, 1985.
- 3 The following table summarises population growth in both cities on the eve of passage of the Group Areas Act in 1951, and in 1980:

	White	Asian	Coloured	African	Total
<u>1951</u>					
Port Elizabeth(a)	79,662	4,289	45,533	70,184	199,668
% of total	40	2	23	35	100
Uitenhage(a)	18,995	373	7,497	21,753	48,758
% of total	39	1	15	45	100
<u>1980</u>					
Port Elizabeth(b)	120,218	6,268	106,330	195,677	428,403
% of total	28	1	25	46	100
Uitenhage(c)	26,000		30,000	50,000	106,000
% of total	25		28	47	100

Sources:

- (a) Union of South Africa, Bureau of Census and Statistics, Population Census, 1951.
- (b) Dept of Geography, Univ of Port Elizabeth, "Population distribution in Port Elizabeth by allotment area", 1980.
- (c) Estimate of Uitenhage population published in N Faull, "Industrial relations simulation workshop: VW case", (mimeo), The Graduate School of Business, University of Cape Town, 1983, p6.
- 4 The following table summarises the growth in the size of the industrial working class between 1949-50 and in 1980:

	White	Coloured	African	Total
<u>1949-1950</u>				
PE-Uitenhage(a)	13,522	7376	9834	30,732
<u>1980</u>				
PE-Uitenhage(b)	19,360	30,450	53,540	103,440

Sources:

- (a) B D Phillips, "Secondary industry in the Port Elizabeth/Uitenhage region: an employment study", Institute for Planning Research, University of Port Elizabeth, Research Report No 3, 1969, p40.
- (b) Republic of South Africa, Central Statistical Services, Population Census, 1980: Sample tabulation economic characteristics, Report No 02-80-03. It is important to point out that the data for 1949-1950 include industrial workers only, while the sample data for 1980 do not provide a detailed definition of the category "production and related workers; labourers". It is assumed that the categories are roughly similar. Also, according to the introduction to the 1980 census, the data "are based on a systematic five per cent sample of the census returns". While error introduced by these two problems might alter the absolute returns, it would most likely not affect the general trends.
- 5 Faull, "Industrial relations simulation workshop", pp13-17.
- 6 See J Davies, "Patterns of non-white population distribution in Port Elizabeth with special reference to the application of the Group Areas Act", Institute for Planning Research, University of Port Elizabeth, Series B, Special Publication No 1, 1971, p29 and tables 21, 22, and 23.
- 7 Statistics drawn from Department of Geography, University of Port Elizabeth, "Population distribution in Port Elizabeth by allotment areas, 1951".
- 8 Faull, "Industrial relations simulation workshop", p17.
- 9 See T Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa from 1945, Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1983.
- 10 Statistics drawn from a comparison of the two documents from the Department of Geography, University of Port Elizabeth, cited above.
- 11 1980 census figures for Kwanobuhle and Langa.
- 12 Faull, "Industrial relations simulation workshop", p14.
- 13 P Bonner, "Trade unions since Wiehahn," SALB 8.4, February 1983, p23.
- 14 See articles in SALB, 6.2 & 3, September 1980: especially the contributions by Maree, Favis and Evans. See also C Cooper and L Ensor, PEBCO: A black mass movement, South African Institute of Race Relations, March 1981.
- 15 Bonner, "Trade unions since Wiehahn", p23.
- 16 ibid, p28.
- 17 State of the Nation May 1985.
- 18 NAAWU News 1.1, February 1985.

- 19 FOSATU Regional Office Statistics April 1985.
- 20 Interviews: Port Elizabeth 12.4.85.
- 21 A Jardine, "Endlovini: A case study of a South African squatter community", University of Florida, 1984.
- 22 Business Day 21.8.85.
- 23 Interview: Sam Makaya, NAAWU regional secretary, 12.4.85, Uitenhage.
- 24 SALB 6.2 & 3, September 1980.
- 25 In spite of retrenchments union membership has remained relatively constant. In November 1984, FOSATU's regional membership stood at 15,871; by January 1985, it was 15,974.
- 26 Interview: Dennis Neer, general secretary of MACWUSA, 11.4.85, Port Elizabeth.
- 27 See J Foster, General Secretary of FOSATU, keynote speech in SALB 7.8, July 1982.
- 28 State of the Nation May 1985.
- 29 R D Matlock, "Provisional report: Potential role of the Urban Foundation in the development of new housing for blacks in PE," Urban Foundation, 1983.
- 30 C White, "Poverty in Port Elizabeth", Carnegie Conference paper No 21, Cape Town, 1984, p1.
- 31 Ibid, p10.
- 32 ibid, p11.
- 33 Finance Week 22.5.85.
- 34 Interview: Ngoyi and Fazzi, April 1985.
- 35 State of the Nation May 1985.
- 36 Interview: Ngoyi and Fazzi.
- 37 Interview: PEYCO leader, April 1985.
- 38 Interview: Mkhuseleli Jack, July 1980.
- 39 Interview: PEYCO leader.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 E Patel, "Legitimacy and statistics. A critical analysis of the tricameral parliamentary elections August 1984", SALDRU working paper No 61, Cape Town, 1984.
- 42 Cape Times, 4.3.85.
- 43 Pillay, "The Port Elizabeth stay-aways".
- 44 Eastern Province Herald 10.11.84.
- 45 Ibid, 15.3.85.
- 46 For the claims and counter-claims surrounding these events see Pillay, "The Port Elizabeth stay-aways."
- 47 The Kannemeyer Commission which reported in June 1985.
- 48 Eastern Province Herald 27.4.85.
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- 50 Financial Mail 19.4.85.

- Eastern Cape -

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- 52 Daily Despatch 23.3.85.
- 53 Ironically the auto industry in the Eastern Cape was hit by rolling wage strikes soon after this.
- 54 Financial Mail 26.4.85.
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- 56 M Swilling, "The East London bus boycott", SALB 9.5, March 1984.
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- 60 Business Day 3.5.85.
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- 63 Labour Monitoring Group, "The November stay-away", SALB 10.7, May 1985.
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REVIEW: Fosatu Worker Choirs

In SALB 10.5 the Naledi Writers Unit of the Medu Art Ensemble expressed the view that "at the apex of working class culture in South Africa stand the songs and poetry of Vuyasili Mini", that "working class culture is the expression of awareness of class position" and finally, that "the working class in South Africa has a long and honourable tradition".

I cannot think of any event in the recent history of the cultural struggle of the working class than the release of FOSATU Worker Choirs that would both confirm and disprove our Medu friends. Yes, a long and honourable tradition the working class has, and the songs on this album reach as far back as the turn of the century. And, certainly, Mini's songs are rightly remembered for what they are: the apex of working class culture. But working class culture as the expression of awareness of class position? To me, listening to this album

and placing it within the context of the labour movement in South Africa, a reverse statement seems to be equally plausible: awareness of class position is expressed in language, styles and musical idioms that stretch beyond working class culture. What is it, for instance, that makes polished choirs in the ingoma ebusuku/mbube tradition, in the tradition of Solomon Linda and the Evening Birds, sing about Koornhof, and murdered shop steward Andries Raditsela, and record for the SABC at the same time? Lack of class consciousness, or just a kind of consciousness that simply is not concerned with the neat categories of a theory far behind the realities of the struggle?

Two of the best choirs on the album, the Clover Choir and the K-Team, perform superb iscathamiya songs with a perfection that we know so well from Joseph Shabalala's Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Gallo's lap-dog. The Clover Choir is well known in Durban under its more current name Greytown Evening Birds, and both songs on the album, Sibingelela uFosatu and Sicela indlela Fosatu are frequently heard in the local hostels - with different words! A new class consciousness among migrant workers or just an example of the co-existence of different levels of consciousness in working class culture? To me, it seems that the culture of the working class, in particular the music of the working class, spans the entire range of what has been aptly called an "accumulated heritage of resistance." There is virtually no style that was not incorporated in this heritage, whether working class in origin or not, and FOSATU Worker Choirs contains examples of the most pervasive styles.

First, there are the big songs, the classics of the heritage of resistance; songs like Somlandela and Ilizwe Ngelethu sung by Braitex women. Then there are the folksongs: folk tunes arranged for the choir that have passed into the repertoire of urban folksong like Kudala Sihamba by the I&J Choir, and Basoba Impimpi by the Sizanani Lucky Stars. The neo-traditional iscathamiya style I have already mentioned: the K-Team are represented with four strong songs in this style. Related to this style is the mbube style, sung by the Clover Choir in two songs.

The older makwaya tradition of Western derived hymnody is largely absent from the album. An interesting exception is Hulumeni Senzeni by the I&J Choir, and Give the People by the Brits MAWU Choir, both of which are contrafacta of another classic:

Senzeni na. The DTMB Choir, finally, sings two songs (Hlanganani and Ihlangano Yethu) in a style that reminds me of the vocal quartets of the 1950s like the immortal Manhattan Brothers. This is less surprising than it appears at first sight. One of the Manhattan Brothers' tunes, Unonkisa Kae, welcoming returning miners, later reappeared with new words and figured prominently in the 1976 Soweto uprisings: Thinantsha, "We are the youth".

As one of the oldest techniques of working class political songs, contrafactum, substituting old songs with new words, is still one of the strong motors of worker musical creativity. It is through contrafactum that songs of the defiance campaign surface as FOSATU songs. But the real wellspring of working class song lies in traditional and neo-traditional music: it is in the iscathamiya idiom and related styles that the workers sing about themselves, their own lives, their heroes: Andries Raditsela and the Sasol workers. And this re-orientation towards traditional culture appears to be the single most important event in the recent history of the cultural struggle within the labour movement. The little that is known about cultural activities within the old Industrial and Commercial workers Union (ICU) of the 1920s, for instance, seems to suggest that ICU leaders identified more with English working class culture than with the traditional culture of ICU members, which they suspected to be "backward" and "tribalist". Hence, there were ICU brass bands and classical choirs in the makwaya tradition. The ICU newspaper, the Workers Herald, propagated vernacular versions of the International and the Red Flag, but the kind of ingoma dancing that brings FOSATU audiences alive, was taboo. The resurgence of established forms of working class cultural expression within the ranks of FOSATU then is also another grass roots movement.

Hanns Eisler, the composer of modern German working class and anti-fascist song, once remarked that music should prepare for the struggle, not divert from it. FOSATU worker choirs sing:

Uma kulukhuni senzeni nabekathina soyibamba insimbi ishisa.
(Even if it is tough, we will grab the hot iron.)

(Veit Erlmann, Dept of Music, University of Natal, Durban)
FOSATU Worker Choirs (Shifty Records; L4 Shift 6) is available at R6,00 (record) and R5,00 (tape) from: FOSATU Printing Unit, P O Box 18109, Dalbridge 4014.

Oscar Mpetha Jailed

The seventy-five year old trade unionist and community leader, Oscar Mpetha, entered prison on August 26 to serve a minimum 5 year sentence for terrorism (for "incitement" during the 1980 protests in Cape Town). Because of his state of health, the sentence will be served under medical supervision.

Mpetha's life is a history of struggle. In 1943, as a worker at a fish factory in Saldanha, he joined the Food and Canning Workers' Union and rapidly became secretary of the local branch. In 1947 the union was forced by the government to split on racial lines. In 1951 Mpetha became general secretary of the African Food and Canning Workers Union.

The story is told of how, in 1954, Mpetha queued for work at a canning factory in Wolseley in order to make contact with workers. It was a weakly organised factory and information was required to present to a Conciliation Board meeting. The information obtained, Mpetha left without collecting his wages.

Oscar Mpetha fought for all workers. He played an important role in SACTU and gave one day a week to SACTU work, organising workers outside the food and canning industry. He has also been in the forefront of political activity. In 1951 he joined the ANC. He became regional secretary and in 1955 vice-president for the Cape - a position he held until the ANC was banned. In the 1980s Mpetha has been active in community organisation and the UDF.

In 1963 Oscar Mpetha was banned and forced to leave the union. In 1978 FCWU officials found Mpetha working as a security guard in an ice-cream factory in Parow - even there he was organising. He agreed to return to work for the union and played a prominent role in the Fattis and Monis strike. This year he was due to attend the opening of the union's new offices. A spokesperson for FCWU declared: "It is an act of gross provocation by the government. It means a sentence for life for Oscar Mpetha. We call for his immediate release and for the release of all detainees."



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