

Rent Boycott

44

Councils retaliate -

Evictions begin

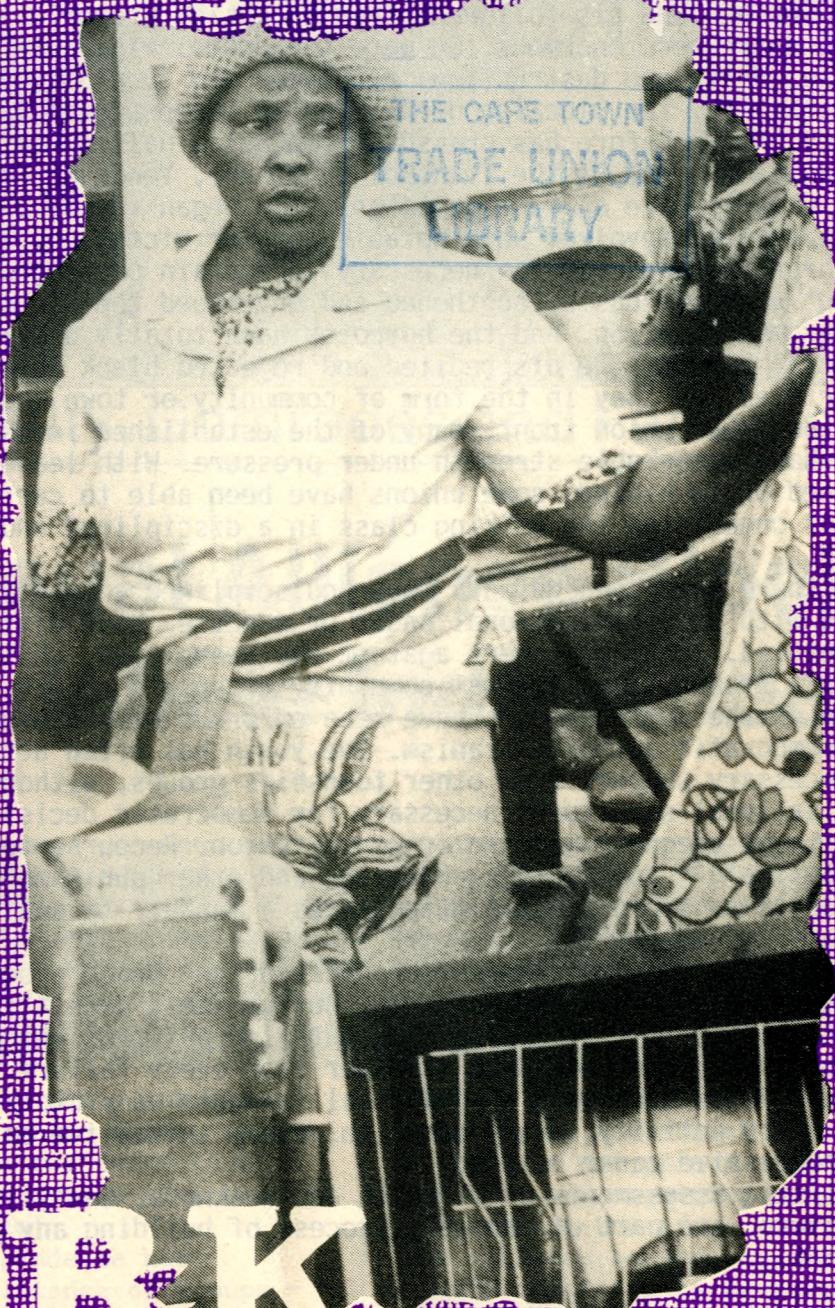
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# Editorial

The themes of victory and defeat dominate this issue of Work In Progress. Despite the state of emergency, there have been some important recent popular victories. Popular pressure and massive resistance blocked proposed 'independence' for the KwaNdebele bantustan. The efforts needed to dissuade KwaNdebele Chief Minister Simon Skosana and his followers from accepting Pretoria-style independence were enormous. So were the costs: vigilante violence and torture, death and destruction, necklaces and burnings.

Nonetheless, the blocking of KwaNdebele independence is a popular victory. Never before has pressure from below halted bantustan independence - not in the Transkei or Ciskei, Venda or Bophuthatswana.

The massive wave of rent boycotts which began in the Vaal during 1984 have also involved some notable popular victories. In many townships the organisation necessary to sustain prolonged withdrawal of rent payments has strengthened and developed the structures of popular mobilisation. And the boycotts have totally destroyed the financial base of the discredited and rejected black local authorities, be they in the form of community or town councils.

On the trade union front, many of the established industrial unions have shown remarkable strength under pressure. With leadership detained or in hiding, some unions have been able to carry on their task of organising the working class in a disciplined and democratic manner.

But there have been defeats too. Undisciplined comrades, often acting with no organisational basis or mandate, have divided communities, setting workers against the unemployed, children against parents, trade unions against community groups.

Some of the rent boycotts have been enforced with a high degree of anti-democratic authoritarianism. The youth has often acted without the necessary support from other townships groups, without the organisational structures necessary for democratic decision-making, and without adequate mandate or consultation. Recourse to 'discipline', - necklacings, beatings and other punishments - has come too easily to a group which often lacks a mandate to act on behalf of any major constituency.

To claim success is a necessary part of any broad progressive movement working to change society. But to admit defeat is as important. For it is the sign of a maturing politics which can learn from mistakes, and come back stronger from every failure.

Defeat is as much part of political struggle as victory. Those who claim every activity, every campaign, every initiative as a victory do the progressive cause no good.

Realistic assessments of strength and weakness, analysis and debate on failure, are part of the very process of building any powerful mass movement.

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The nature of **Work In Progress**, which is to stimulate debate and present views on a wide range of issues, ensures that the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editorial collective.

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## Royalty, Comrades and Farmers

# Unusual Alliance Blocks KwaNdebele Independence

An unusual alliance between a traditional royal family, white farmers and comrades successfully blocked 'homeland independence' for KwaNdebele. But although the independence issue has been resolved, KwaNdebele's royal family remains committed to bantustan policy, if not independence. INGRID OBERY looks at the struggle over independence, and suggests that the alliance which halted it is unlikely to survive.\*

KwaNdebele, created by the purchase of 19 Central Transvaal white farms, is the first bantustan where residents have forced an outright rejection of 'homeland independence'.

Opposition to independence has involved a curious alliance of groups - residents of KwaNdebele, including young 'comrades' at the forefront of the struggle against vigilantes and the bantustan government; the Ndzundza royal family; and white farmers.

The Ndzundza royal family, pushed by popular pressure into rejecting independence, remains committed to the 46 projects of independence. These

include a new capital city, KwaMhlanga; creating an industrial infrastructure; building a new prison and a number of schools; and acquiring more land.

There are therefore questions about the alliance between royalty, who must remain committed to bantustan policy if not independence, and the KwaNdebele population and comrades who oppose both independence and South Africa's bantustan policies.

The unusual position adopted by a conservative royal family, and the extraordinary decision by the KwaNdebele government to reject independence, after strongly supporting it three months previously, is the direct result of popular pressure. The depth and breadth of this resistance was due in large part to excesses of the government-sanctioned

\* This article is based on documents produced by the Transvaal Rural Action Committee (TRAC).

vigilante group, Mbokodo.

With the blackout on news under the state of emergency, and the suppression of information in KwaNdebele, Mbokodo has remained relatively unnoticed outside its area of operation. Mbokodo activity initially sparked individual resistance. This soon spread to general discontent as KwaNdebele residents recognised that the issues were broader than isolated acts of violence and intimidation. The fight against Mbokodo was transformed into a battle against bantustan independence.

Youthful 'comrades' have often been a driving force in the struggle against independence. Groups of fairly unpoliticised youths, they banded together in their villages to protect local residents from Mbokodo attacks.

Active resistance against independence began at a mass-meeting in the Royal Kraal on 12 May 1986. Three months later, on 12 August, the KwaNdebele government rejected independence proposals. During these months over 100 died, the Mbokodo vigilante group was decimated, the civil service went on strike, over 300 people were detained, and most shops in the area were burned. There were also mass stayaways, demonstrations and school boycotts.

#### 'GOING FOR INDEPENDENCE'

It was in 1982 that Chief Minister Simon Skosana said: 'Oh, it is only yesterday that the bantustan was established. We got our territorial authority in 1977, legislative assembly in 1979, self-rule in 1980 and now we are going for independence'.

In February 1981, he had denied any intention of taking independence. But during May 1982, South African and KwaNdebele government representatives met and decided the territory would opt for independence in 1984 when it had a capital, an industrial infrastructure and more land. This date was postponed to 1986 by then Co-operation and Development Minister, Piet Koornhof.

Official population statistics indicate that half of KwaNdebele's 400 000 population is not of Ndebele origin. Most moved to the area over the past ten years, the victims of some form of forced removal - evicted farm workers, non-Tswanas fleeing persecution

in Bophuthatswana, Africans forced from urban areas.

There is no infrastructure in the area, water is scarce and must be trucked in because of failed boreholes, and workers live up to five hours away from any employment.

KwaNdebele's rulers were hopelessly ill-equipped to deal with or improve conditions in their 'country'. In 1981, for example, pensions and disability grants were not included in the national budget. In 1982, over half the budget for social services, education and agriculture was spent on an impulsive purchase of construction equipment.

Skosana, who has a standard four education, his family and close colleagues, control state structures, and use this to grant favours - usually taxi or trading licences. In 1982, Interior Minister Piet Ntuli, vice-president and de facto leader of the notorious Mbokodo, denied that cabinet ministers used their position to secure trading licences. At the time he owned a supermarket and a restaurant and was awaiting approval of a liquor licence. Ntuli was in charge of the ministry which approved such applications.

The KwaNdebele government ruled by fear and repression. It consistently denied outsiders access to the territory - except officials of the South African government. SA Council of Churches, Black Sash and SA Institute of Race Relations officials were detained and questioned when seeking permits to be in the area. Journalists have found it difficult to enter KwaNdebele, and attempts by outsiders to set up or support self-help projects have been squashed.

In November 1984, KwaNdebele held an election - the only one to date. Until then all 46 members of the legislative assembly were nominated by the tribal authorities. Women were barred from voting and only 600 out of 50 000 eligible voters participated in the election. Women, Skosana said, should be taught how to vote by their husbands.

#### RESISTANCE FORCES GATHER STRENGTH

Prince James Mahlangu took over leadership of the Ndzundza Tribal Authority at the end of 1983. He acts as spokesperson for the royal family, and

is likely to head any new cabinet formed if Skosana and his group are ousted. The family was angry at not being consulted regarding the independence question, claiming that they were excluded because the South African government feared their opposition to independence.

Prince James opposed independence from the outset. So did other family members, including some, like Makhosana Klaas Mahlangu, who sat in the KwaNdebele legislature. Mahlangu was constantly harassed by Mbokodo, particularly after he resigned from the legislative assembly and demanded the cabinet step down.

Crown Prince Cornelius - dubbed by many as an opportunist - was initially in favour of independence. Under pressure from his subjects he 'became aware of the people's will' and turned about, pushing strongly against independence. This was a blow for his political mentor, Skosana. Cornelius is, however, still Minister of Health in Skosana's cabinet.

Urged to take a stand against independence and the activities of Mbokodo, the family called a meeting of all chiefs at the royal kraal on 12 May 1986. The entire cabinet was invited but only two members showed up. More than 20 000 others attended.

A number of demands were formulated at the meeting:

- \* that Mbokodo be disbanded;
- \* no independence;
- \* that the legislative assembly and cabinet should resign because they claimed falsely to have a mandate from the people of KwaNdebele to proceed with independence plans.

A report back was scheduled for 14 May. But on 13 May, at the funeral of Jacob Skosana, troops fired teargas, rubber bullets and birdshot at mourners. Skosana had been assaulted and shot after an April clash between students at Mandlethu High School and Mbokodo. While looking for his daughter, he had voiced opposition to Mbokodo. As a result, members of the vigilante group abducted him.

A student leader, the son of Chief Minister Skosana, was also abducted by

vigilantes, and saw a badly-mutilated Jacob Skosana at Kwaggafontein. He heard Mbokodo members say Jacob Skosana should be killed and shortly afterwards 'heard a noise like a gunshot'. Skosana's body was dumped at his home the following morning. Outraged, his community filed a murder charge against 20 Mbokodo members. But most were soon released on bail and later it was rumoured the case docket had disappeared.

Thousands disregarded the limitation of 50 mourners, and attended Skosana's funeral. Police arrived, said it was an illegal gathering and ordered mourners to disperse. Then they opened fire. A young girl was killed after falling under a bus filled with teargas.

Angered, the crowd attacked shops owned by members of parliament and Mbokodo.

By 14 May, the day of the planned report back, the situation was tense. Word spread about attacks on Mbokodo property, people stayed away from work, and thousands made their way to the royal kraal at Ndundza. But unknown to many, the meeting had been banned by the local magistrate.

South African and KwaNdebele security forces soon moved in. They threw teargas from a helicopter into the crowd and into buses. Many were trampled and injured when police opened fire with rubber bullets, birdshot and buckshot. Neither KwaNdebele



Chief Minister Skosana

nor South African authorities would accept responsibility for this security force behaviour.

#### MBOKODO AGAINST THE COMRADES

The number of clashes between youths, Mbokodo and security forces increased. According to official figures, seven died in the next two days, and damage of R4-m was inflicted on 41 businesses, nine houses and ten vehicles. Residents claim many more deaths occurred, and in almost all KwaNdebele villages people were arrested, shot or went missing.

The KwaNdebele cabinet seemed unsure how to deal with this overwhelming

opposition. Skosana agreed that the independence issue could be discussed in the legislative assembly. But by the cabinet meeting of 19 May, the rulers felt in control once again. Ntuli denied that Mbokodo would be disbanded: 'With the riots, their work has just begun. The Mbokodo are being used against the comrades'.

By the end of May the situation was chaotic. Most schools were out on boycott and a vicious war raged between youth and Mbokodo. Lootings, shootings, necklacings and arrests were the order of the day. For a long while South African police and security forces ignored charges laid against Mbokodo members, but then showed greater willingness to act.

Mbokodo members started riding with security forces, pointing out comrades rather than initiating attacks themselves. Many residents saw the SADF and Mbokodo as close allies, and primary school pupils were only prepared to return to school in mid-July, when the withdrawal of troops began.

#### KWANDEBELE'S 'MILLSTONE'

Mbokodo means 'millstone', of the kind used to grind corn. The vigilante group was formally launched in early 1986 but operated for a considerable time before that. Skosana claims it was established in 1976. It was outlawed on 12 August 1986 when independence was rejected, and Mbokodo members have been urged to return to their villages. But for some, whose atrocities are well-known, return to face the wrath of their ex-victims is not a pleasant prospect.

The activities of Mbokodo, under the presidency of Chief Minister Skosana, generated widespread hatred and fear of the KwaNdebele ruling group. About half the KwaNdebele cabinet were known members. At its launch, Mbokodo was given powers to:

- \* protect community interests;
- \* act against those enforcing boycotts;
- \* deal with problems of family life;
- \* discipline arrested 'trouble-makers'. Skosana explained that Mbokodo would 'fetch such a person from the police and hit him'.

Mbokodo was probably intended to be an Ndebele version of Inkatha, claiming

status as a national cultural organisation. Skosana defined it as a non-political peace-keeping force.

The core power group in Mbokodo - prominent MPs, businessmen and taxi-owners - had access to weapons, halls and schools where they held prisoners.

Ntuli, Minister of Interior until his car-bomb death on 29 July 1986, was the driving force, initiating attacks on Moutse and other residents. One of the most notorious members of the KwaNdebele Cabinet, he was charged with the murder of Andries Mahlangu, a Lebowa MP, in the mid-1970s. But the case was withdrawn on a legal technicality.

Mbokodo members in the field were often high-school students forced to join. Those who refused an approach from the local Mbokodo king-pin faced attack themselves. Common weapons used by the vigilantes were sjamboks and knobkierries, although the leadership certainly had guns, and there were reports of panga attacks.

#### STUDENTS UNDER ATTACK

Like black scholars all over South Africa, those in KwaNdebele were in a militant mood, and opposed to bantustan independence. Mbokodo regarded them as 'troublemakers'.

In December 1985, Mbokodo vigilantes attacked and held prisoner a group of Mamelodi youths out on a Christmas Day picnic in KwaNdebele. After a dispute with a taxi-driver over a broken window, police arrested three youths, but later released them. As the picnickers left for home they were abducted and taken to a place their captors called 'Mbogodo o Bovu'. Here they were assaulted and accused of being COSAS members. Ntuli later admitted that Mbokodo vigilantes had been involved.

Clashes between Mbokodo and students occurred throughout 1986:

\* During February, the principal of Mmashadi High in Siyabuswa called in police and Mbokodo to 'discipline' students who had held a meeting to discuss forming a Students Representative Council without his consent. Students and teachers were arrested, some were sjambokked, and vigilantes forced teachers to resume lessons with beaten and injured students.

\* In mid-April a boycott began at Benginhlandhla High, in Siyabuswa. Mbokodo was called in and students fled. Those caught were held prisoner for two days, assaulted with sjamboks and electrically shocked.

\* Mbokodo consistently attacked students studying at night at Mandlethu High. Pupils complained that Mbokodo would not allow women students to wear track-suits, and that their parents were beaten by Mbokodo on their way from work.

On 18 April students visited local chief Samuel Mahlangu. They requested that two Mbokodo leaders be present to hear their grievances. On 28 April, student members of Mbokodo told other students the only reply to their grievances would be a beating. Armed vigilantes surrounded the school as students attempted to leave, and police arrived firing teargas and rubber bullets. Police eventually ordered Mbokodo to leave, but that night vigilantes continued their rampage in the nearby Vlaklaagte village, beating people and looting.

#### THE PRISON CAMPS

In late May 1986, rumours that Mbokodo ran prison camps were confirmed, although Skosana denied these allegations saying Mbokodo 'was suspended'. (Activities of the vigilante group were halted by the government for three weeks at this time, although this was never officially announced).

A 26-year old youth, Johannes Ramahlale, escaped from a camp near Vaalbank police station and went to the police. He told of 54 prisoners who endured extreme tortures: vigilantes trampled on prisoners' stomachs, they were forced to stand bare-foot on burning coals, and most went without food for six days. Police stormed the camp and freed the prisoners.

Not all those forced to join Mbokodo agreed with the vigilantes. Five young members tried to defect and join a group of youths guarding Vlaklaagte No 1 village. The defectors said the Mbokodo

prison camp had moved from Vaalbank to Verena and warned the comrades of a joint Mbokodo/military attack.

Some trusted the defectors but others were suspicious. One was caught and set alight. The comrades' leader put out the flames and sent the victim to hospital. Bland reports of deaths, shootings and necklacings in KwaNdebele can never reflect the complexity and tragedy of such situations.

#### THE WAR RAGES ON

On 3 and 4 June most workers in KwaNdebele, including 2 000 civil servants, heeded an anonymous stayaway call. Infuriated, Minister Ntuli ordered civil servants to explain their absence from work, warning that those who gave 'unacceptable' answers would be fired.

In mid-July, in response to a pamphlet calling on 'outsiders' working for the government to return home until people's demands had been met, the entire civil service went on strike, effectively paralysing the KwaNdebele administration.

Civil servants, especially in bantustans, are an unlikely group for a strike. Their dependence on bantustan structures forces them into a passive role.

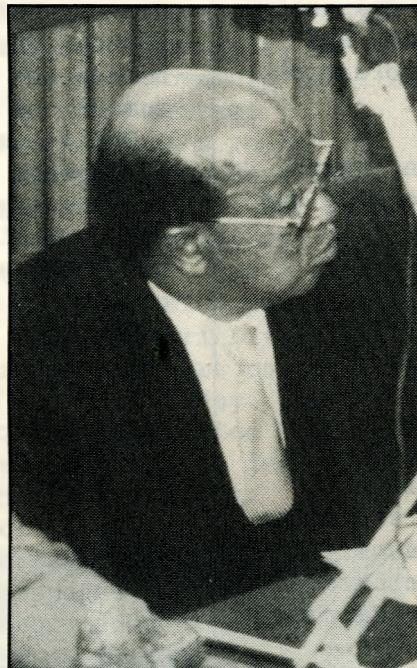
But many civil servants in KwaNdebele, including teachers, who also stopped work, are non-Ndebele. Ongoing violence and uncontrolled behaviour by KwaNdebele rulers confirmed that the situation was untenable.

Widespread conflict intensified during June and July:

\* 2 June: eighteen year-old Stanley Nhlapo was kidnapped by security forces at a funeral and his body found at the Bronkhorstspruit mortuary on 10 June;

\* 11 June: a group in Siyabuswa who proposed a march to the royal kraal were teargassed;

\* 11 June: six were massacred at Tweefontein. Thomas Mnyakeni, who witnessed the incident, was subsequently shot and disappeared. All attempts to find him have proved futile;



Ntuli - Mbokodo leader

\* 13 June: three security guards at Vlaklaagte No 1 were killed after clashes with comrades. Two youths were killed and several others injured.

Special emergency regulations covering KwaNdebele were introduced on 26 June. They included an entry ban on all except those living or working in KwaNdebele; a 9 pm - 5 am curfew; a ban on possessing tyres or petrol unless used for vehicles; and severe restrictions on press coverage.

During July killings and assaults continued - comrades killed by Mbokodo, Mbokodo members killed by comrades, thugs masquerading as comrades. The death toll reached more than one hundred.

Many Mbokodo members fled to Ekangala township or their camp at Verena, and KwaNdebele cabinet members and MPs took refuge in a guarded compound at Siyabuswa.

Detentions increased, and many were charged with murder, public violence and arson.

#### THE TURNING POINT

If the anti-independence alliance of comrades and royalty was initially strange, it was to become more so. White farmers from Rust der Winter, some Herstigte Nasionale Party supporters, and members of the Elands River Farmers Association, also opposed KwaNdebele independence.

Many of their farms were marked for incorporation and they claimed independence would destroy any hope of peace in the area. Violence threatened their property and families and they could no longer be certain of a secure a-political workforce. So they threw in their lot with the Ndzundza royal family.

Both the farmers and the royal family made representations to the police and the KwaNdebele commissioner-general. The South African government consistently ignored representations from farmers, saying conflict in the area was due to 'tension between the government of the region and royalty', and the activities of 'radicals' and 'comrades'.

Finally police indicated a willingness to act. Piet Ntuli, Mbokodo chief and Minister of the Interior, was arrested and faced possible charges of car theft

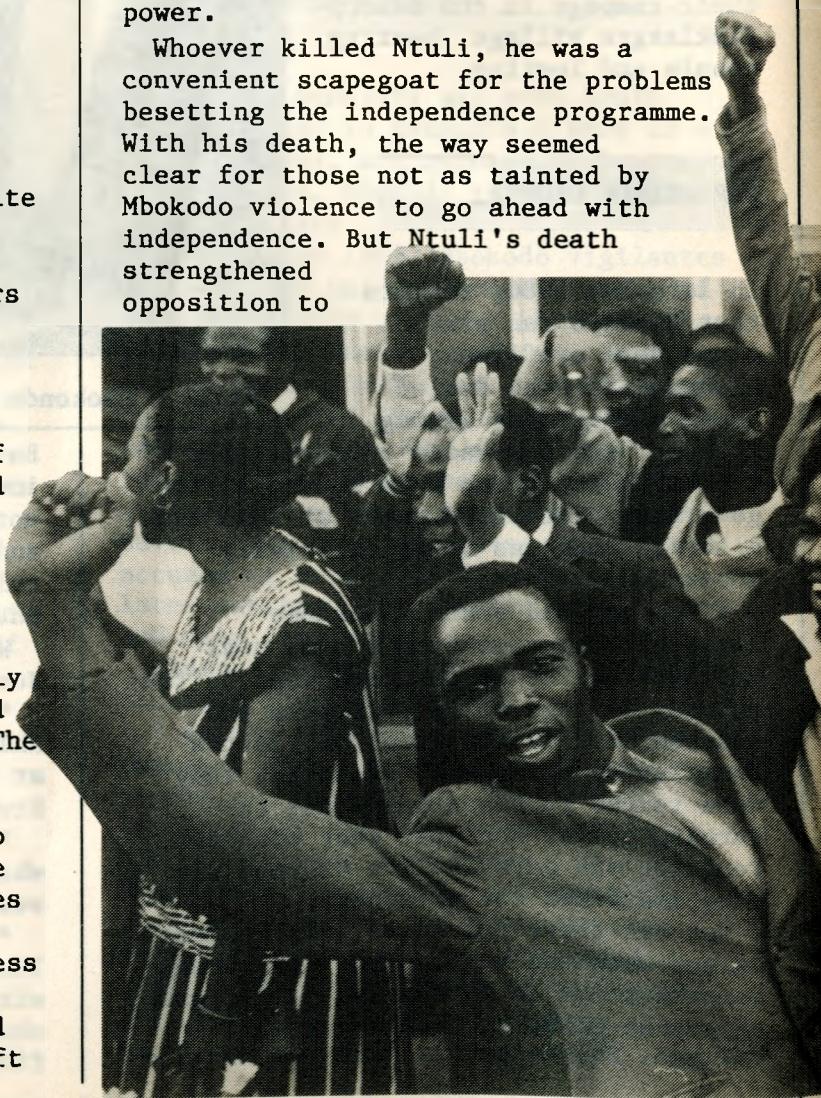
when a car-bomb killed him on 29 July.

Ntuli's death was a turning point in the independence struggle. He was widely regarded as the master-mind behind both Mbokodo and independence plans. KwaNdebele residents believed his death meant the end of a bitter struggle. The news of his death spread, people danced in the streets, slaughtered cattle and sheep, and celebrated for several days.

It is unclear who killed Ntuli. Some say he was killed by those opposed to Mbokodo and the independence programme. Others suggest he was assassinated 'by those within the system'. The fatal car bomb was extremely sophisticated, beyond access of the opposition in KwaNdebele. His car had been parked in the heavily-guarded parliament buildings shortly before the explosion, and this fuelled rumours of an 'inside job'.

Still others believe Ntuli was killed by 'agents of Pretoria'. There were growing signs of tension between Ntuli and central government officials in the two weeks prior to his death, and rumours of his possible removal from power.

Whoever killed Ntuli, he was a convenient scapegoat for the problems besetting the independence programme. With his death, the way seemed clear for those not as tainted by Mbokodo violence to go ahead with independence. But Ntuli's death strengthened opposition to



independence, and signalled the end of Mbokodo, which has now effectively been disbanded.

Thousands flocked to the legislative assembly on 12 August to hear the special debate on independence. Their presence and interjections were a direct reminder of unmistakable popular demands. With overwhelming consensus the independence programme was rejected and Mbokodo outlawed.

Leadership in KwaNdebele has fallen to the Ndzundza royal family. But they remain within bantustan structures where poverty, lack of land, and unemployment are not going to disappear. The youth are bound to react now that the immediate problem of Mbokodo has disappeared. When this happens, the strange alliance between royal family and comrades is unlikely to survive.

## Ekangala and Moutse Reject Incorporation

With independence plans scrapped, the fates of Ekangala township on the East Rand, scheduled for incorporation, and Moutse, already unwillingly incorporated into KwaNdebele, are still to be decided.

Because of a desperate housing shortage, East Rand residents moved in 1983 to Ekangala, a 'model' township built as part of central government's policy of creating decentralised growth points. But life there is prohibitively expensive - rents between R100 and R200 per month, high electricity bills, and transport costs of up to R10 per day. The Ekangala Action Committee was formed to deal with these problems.

When, in February 1985, Minister of Co-operation and Development Gerrit Viljoen announced Ekangala would be incorporated into KwaNdebele, township residents rejected the proposal. A protest on 23 March 1985 was broken up by police using teargas, and a boy shot dead.

A memorandum submitted to the government by the Action Committee, signed by over a thousand householders, explained why they objected to incorporation:

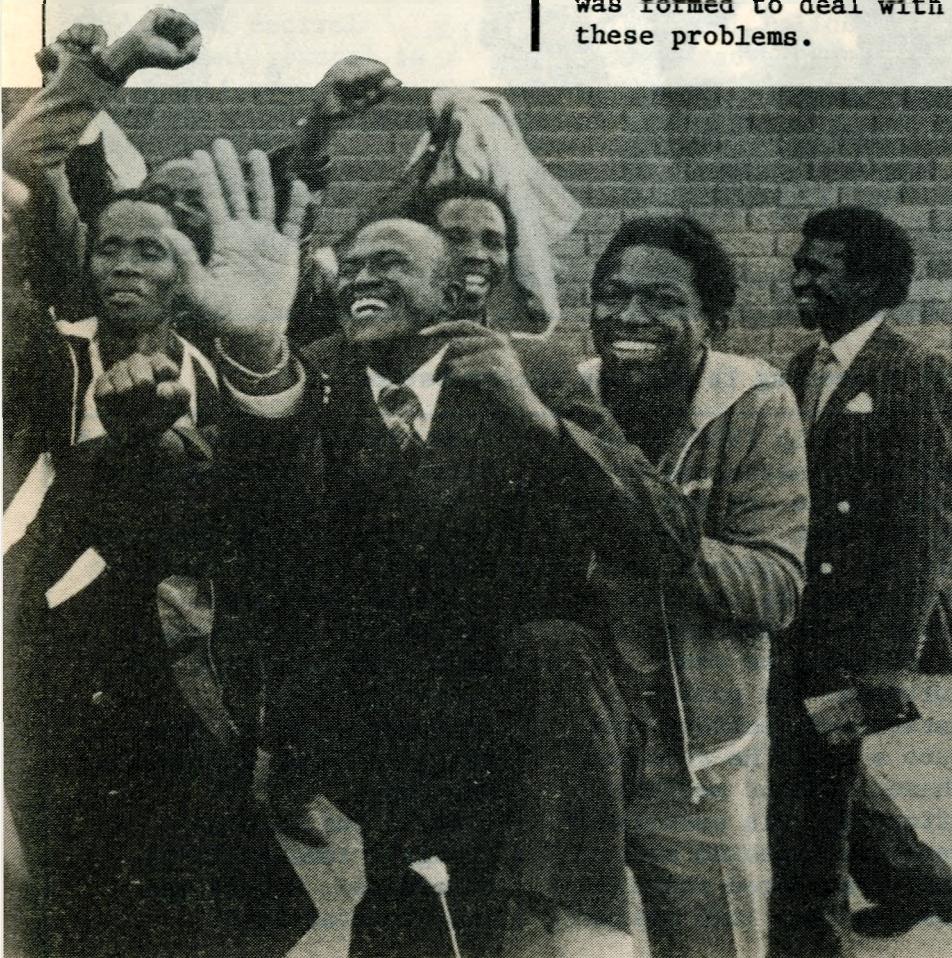
- \* As 'location' people, they did not wish to return to tribal systems of justice in the bantustans.

- \* They feared ethnic discrimination and persecution against non-Ndebeles.

- \* They feared persecution of those opposed to the bantustan system.

- \* They rejected the arbitrary and violent actions of the KwaNdebele government and its supporters, and feared this would increase if Ekangala was incorporated.

Ekangala residents had already tasted vigilante violence. In March 1985 supporters of the Action Committee were attacked.



Jubilant KwaNdebele residents celebrate government's rejection of independence



all the time

### Moutse residents at a meeting to discuss incorporation

One man, assaulted and taken in the boot of a car to the veld, was told: 'Ekangala is a place for Ndebeles, not a place for dogs from the East Rand'. Action Committee chairman Peter Kose's house was attacked, and his daughter expelled from school. He was also abducted twice and severely beaten on both occasions. Police failed to intervene and only agreed to accept his statement under pressure.

On 27 July 1985, Kose was again assaulted by the same people. He was swung by his feet, his head hitting the ground, and then taken in the boot of a car to FK Mahlangu's house where he was tortured. The police intervened, putting Kose into a cell. He remained there, without medical attention. His assailants were not arrested and police accepted assault charges they laid against

Kose. Charges were dropped after legal intervention.

Many residents, including Action Committee members, finally decided to leave Ekangala, preferring conditions in East Rand townships under South African administration to those in Ekangala under KwaNdebele dominance.

While the fate of Ekangala remains to be determined, Moutse was incorporated into

KwaNdebele at the end of December 1985. With a fairly developed infrastructure, a hospital and many businesses, Moutse was a prize Skosana desperately wanted, and in all independence negotiations demanded its incorporation.

The mainly Pedi-speaking population constantly voiced opposition to incorporation. They feared losing South African citizenship, they feared subjugation to alien and violent rule under Skosana, they feared ethnic discrimination, that their property rights would not be respected and that they would lose access to pensions and work contracts. The Bantoane tribe specifically feared that money from mineral rights to their land would go to Skosana rather than the tribe.

In 1980 Moutse was excised from Lebowa and put under central government control in preparation for incorporation. Constant resistance to incorporation led government to cease

negotiations with Moutse leadership, saying that matters would have to be resolved between the Lebowa and KwaNdebele governments.

In 1985, South Africa persuaded Lebowa's chief minister, Cedric Phatudi, to give Moutse to KwaNdebele in exchange for the Zebediela orange estates, a new railway line, some land at Mokerong and the Saliesloot and Immerpan resettlement camps where those who refused to accept KwaNdebele rule would be resettled.

Moutse residents were informed of the decision in late 1985. An area which had not before known unrest became used to casspirs, teargas, arrests and banned meetings.

Rumours circulated that Ndebele groups would attack Moutse residents, and on 31 December vigilantes assaulted villagers from Kgobokoane and Moteti. Police received advanced warning of the attack but were reluctant to intervene.

The vigilantes looted houses and took over 300 men prisoner. They were

loaded onto trucks and taken to the community hall in Siyabuswa, the present capital of KwaNdebele. There they were beaten, tortured and humiliated for 36 hours. At least one man died as a result of injuries sustained.

Treatment included the infamous 'water torture' where water and soap powder were thrown on a floor. Prisoners were beaten, often slipping in the water injuring themselves further.

Victims claim senior KwaNdebele government members, including Skosana and Ntuli, were present during the torture. Although charges were laid, there was no police response.

Moutse remains a burning issue, with residents' opposed to both incorporation and the bantustan system itself. Many Moutse residents and comrades express total opposition to all bantustan structures. And, if incorporation into KwaNdebele is reversed, they will oppose re-incorporation into Lebowa.

# Dispute in Alexandra Township

## 'We must ensure houses for all'

**PASCAL DAMOYI** lives in Alexandra township, where a recent dispute between two families ended up in the hands of comrades trying to resolve the problem. He argues that the issues involved in this conflict are bigger than petty rivalries and reflect deeply-rooted social injustices.

Our yard is not yet organised into a street committee, and the residents are not involved in any political organisations. There are people of different social positions, including clerks, intellectuals and labourers.

As a yard within a ghetto slum, it is little different from the rest of Alexandra. People live in what are called 'bonds', where a straight line of rooms is shared by many families. Three families share our 'bond' and my family room is in the middle.

In late February, one family decided to build a wall between us. We were not consulted about the decision. This really affects us, as we are left with only a narrow passage to our rooms. We protested, but in vain.

Our mother, who does not live with us, decided to consult the neighbours, but was told that they have a right to do as they wish. She then decided to refer the matter to the comrades from the Alexandra Action Committee.

She went to them because they had held a street meeting where she lives, and because she knew that people's courts had been established, and are said to solve residents' problems.

A meeting was set up where the family that had built the wall was to explain their action. This family, which was supported by the Alexandra Civic Association, reiterated their stand, saying they wanted privacy. The Action Committee comrades decided that the family was being unreasonable and provocative. They had organised other yards into street and block committees and would like to see that happening in our yard. They wanted peace, with residents united as blacks.

I was very troubled with the way the meeting was conducted. My standpoint was

that the wall was not an issue we should trouble ourselves with, as new arrangements could be made between the families. I felt we should be grappling with the underlying forces which had led the family to build the wall in the first place.

The comrades left the meeting with some uncertainty about the next step, but promised to come back in the future.

### THE CIVIC AND THE ACTION COMMITTEE —

The Alexandra Action Committee and the Alexandra Civic Association became involved in the dispute.

I asked a comrade to describe the Action Committee: 'It was started by concerned residents who formed the Alex Crisis Committee with activists. They then decided to co-ordinate daily events which directly affected the people. According to activists, the call for ungovernability of the township was coming to the fore with policemen wiped out of the township and the community council rendered defunct. Street committees were established to co-ordinate the struggle properly'.

I then asked what sort of issues Alex people could organise around?

'Basically', answered the comrade, 'housing is a priority. People need better houses and the abolition of night soil (bucket) systems, and rents they can afford, because Alex is predominantly working class.

'Also, the infrastructure of the re-development plan is bad. You find that houses are demolished with no proper alternative housing provided. People should go to the local authorities'

offices to demand the sort of houses that will suit them'.

And what, I asked, do the street committees do?

'They are there to sort out problems in the yards. These issues are discussed by yard representatives who sit on the street committees, which then have delegates to the block committee. A decision from there will go back to the yards and that is how decisions on mass actions should take place.

'Beatings by comrades should be stopped by the street committees, and the forced consumption of powder soaps and oil during consumer boycotts must also be prevented.

'All this is the task of the Action Committee, which has become a steering committee to establish a general representative body for the whole of Alex'.

The Civic Association has existed for a long time in Alex, but was controlled by elderly people. It had priests and the aged but did not have support throughout Alex. It has recently gained support from some of the younger generation, perhaps because of the general political climate.

#### THE DISPUTE CONTINUES

Comrades from the Civic Association came to our yard the day after the meeting with the Alexandra Action Committee comrades. They were aggressive, and in a bloody mood, a 'target' mood - they were determined to deal with the problem immediately. They were carrying sjamboks and travelling in a combi and private car.

They appeared to know what the problem was, and had already formulated solutions. They inspected the place and shouted for the family who was demanding that the wall be demolished. I showed myself, but was scared. They were very threatening and looked like people ready to pounce on a prey. I asked whether they understood the problem. They responded sharply, asking me if we were the ones who wanted the wall demolished.

I refused to answer. I insisted we have a meeting to explain the problem. Some agreed, but others brandishing sjamboks sat reluctantly, wanting rather to solve the matter with 'discipline'.

I refused to answer their aggressive

questions. I persuaded them to discuss the issue, rather than merely finding out if I was the one who wanted the wall demolished. I was nervous, it was like a 'legotla court' (traditional court).

The only way to explain the problem was to make the connection between the immediate issue and broader, socially oppressive problems. The wall reflected conditions created for the working class by the oppressors. I said we had to examine the question in the context of the housing problem, taking Alex as our starting point. But Alex is, of course, no different in essence from other black townships established under group areas, where black workers are physically segregated.

Alex is a ghetto with more than 80 000 people living in single rooms, shacks, and even buses. The majority are working class, and this is confirmed by the Alex Town Council which found that most breadwinners earn less than R150 per month.

The family with which we have a conflict are members of the working class. The mother and father are factory workers. They also want security, comfort and better housing. This is why they decided to extend their house.

Unfortunately, Alex is a congested place. The wall-builders may have solved what seems to be their private problem, but it is in fact a social problem which could be solved socially through collective struggle.

The comrades from the civic were now split. Some thought the issues I raised were important. They now addressed me as a comrade. Others still felt 'discipline' was the answer. They decided to report the matter to the civic.

Both groups adopted superficial and subjective viewpoints. They could only see part of the problem, but not the whole. Both groups tended to take sides with their respective complainants. They were concerned about recognition, and wanted to appear accountable to their clients who had come to them with a problem.

But organisation of yard, block and street committees is not just to attain peace. It is also to struggle democratically against eviction and demolition without alternative housing.

The family who built the wall, like any other family, wants basic civic rights and liberties which include proper housing and affordable rent.

Housing is not only a right, but a necessity, like water and air. It is not something which can be done without.

Housing should not be treated like a commodity offered for sale at 'market' prices. Rents should be based on a principle of affordability which means the rent a family pays depends on what it earns. A rough guide is 10% of family income: higher earners pay more rent and low earners less rent. So a family with R150 per month income should pay R15 rent. This means each family will have enough income for food, clothing, rent, and transport. But this does not happen.

### THE RE-DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Alex is now being 're-developed'. But who is this development for?

There are two re-development schemes taking place. One is under the auspices of the council, which caters for a middle-class standard of living: expensive houses, swimming pools, nice parks, hotels. The other is being carried out by the majority of Alex residents, who build more shacks and extend their one-roomed homes.

So who are the new homes meant for? With rents so high in the new houses built by Goldstein, Shachat, and the town council, Alex is to be turned into a 'five-star lokasie'. The master plan does not include the majority of people in Alex, but is meant for the town clerks, cops and teachers. The project aims to create a population of active, employed and skilled people, afraid of losing their expensive houses, tamed, and effectively controlled.

But there has recently been a change in the re-development scheme. The council has been rendered defunct by

political resistance, and a new township administrator, Steve Burger, has been appointed by the government.

He has said that 'the first sales of freehold titles are just months away', and 'about 60% of existing dwellings will probably be retained'. This means present residents will have to buy the dilapidated houses and parts of houses they now live in. And it is not yet clear how the 'bond' houses will be divided up for sale.

This is a new state policy aimed at retaining the ghetto system. Is this what people are striving for - to buy worn-out houses within a ghetto? The new administrator may think so, but the people of Alex do not.

We need a vision of our ultimate goal, which lies in the hands of the people. But it is important to recognise and admit the limits and difficulties involved. For it is bad politics to romanticise our struggle or to lie about its degree of success.

And it is more important to show that the future of areas like Alex are inseparable from politics as a whole; that they cannot be liberated or self-governing until the entire country shakes off its chains.

It is also necessary to show what these chains are. For even if workers in Alex were free of the military and police presence, they would still not be free as long as they are wage slaves in the factories, kitchens and commercial sites that surround the township.

Fellow activists do not seem to see these problems. We should move ahead on the basis of realistic and democratic principles. In this way we can ensure that there will be houses for all and that the interests of the working class will be advanced in the townships as well as the factories.

# Local Authorities on their knees

Since September 1984, there have been at least 49 rent boycotts in South Africa's black townships. These have cost local authorities more than R250-million, and led to the collapse of black local government. KAREN JOCHELSON co-ordinated an investigation into the origins and nature of these boycotts.

'An eviction to one is an eviction to all' is the new township slogan as residents' refusal to pay rent hardens.

The rent boycott in many South African townships is in truth a boycott of service charges for maintenance and installation of amenities such as water, sewerage, and roads. Actual rent tariffs for houses are very low.

Boycotting residents have rejected exorbitant service charges which have not been invested in necessary township development. Many complain that they are charged for services which do not exist.

Rent boycotts and demands across the country seem uniform. But they mask vastly different realities. In each township the immediate reason for the boycott, those involved and the nature of organisation, create specific patterns.

The current wave of rent boycotts began during September 1984 in the Vaal townships of Sebokeng, Sharpeville, Bophelong, Boipatong, Zamdela and Evaton.

During the first half of 1985 the boycott spread to towns in the northern Orange Free State, such as Tumahole, Vredefort, and Kroonstad.

Since May this year a second wave of rent boycotts have developed in Soweto, the Eastern Cape, and East Rand townships like Katlehong, Duduza, Tsakane and Tembisa.

Forty-nine rent boycotts have been recorded nationally. According to conservative estimates these have cost the state R250-million since 1984.

The rent boycotts of 1984 and 1985 were largely a response to massive rent hikes imposed by the Lekoa Town Council. Unemployment and declining real wages meant households were spending more on basic essentials and could not afford

higher rents.

In 1978 the Vaal Triangle Community Council introduced its 'economic rentals' policy. Costs of housing provision, municipal services and administration were to be covered by rents, which rose dramatically.

Residents called for reduced rents, and also demanded that members of the council, which had lost all remaining legitimacy, resign.

Election promises were not kept, and many councillors were suspected of corruption and maladministration. When residents' delegations tried to discuss grievances with the council, they were ignored.

The first boycotts were concerned with economic matters. But this soon broadened into a strategy for destroying the economic base of the unpopular black local authorities.

Rent boycotts tend to gather momentum. Most households do not save unpaid rent, and use it for daily expenses. Arrears escalate over the months and it is unlikely that a boycotting household will ever be able to pay off its debt. Since significant proportions of a community boycott rent payments, it is difficult for the state to undertake legal or intimidatory action with any effect.

Town councils have adopted similar strategies to combat boycotts. The Lekoa Council and Orange Vaal Development Board issued summonses to Vaal and Tumahole defaulters, giving them three days to defend the action. Most residents ignored the summonses, often because they did not understand them, and failed to appear in court. Courts issued default judgements, compelling debtors to pay rent arrears or be evicted.

## Rent Boycott

Then the board issued notices under section 65 of the Housing Act. This allowed the council either to take legal action, or to evict defaulters with seven days notice. The council followed the first, less risky step.

Again, many residents ignored the notices and failed to appear in court. Warrants of arrest were issued for contempt of court. Many were forced to work off jail sentences over weekends.

The councils have used the state of emergency and consequent disorganisation to try to crush the boycotts. Councils also hope evictions will intimidate residents sufficiently to break the boycott.

The Soweto Council followed the Vaal and tried to crush the Soweto rent boycott through evictions before arrears became too high. It has had little success and merely increased resistance.

Evictions have occurred on a limited scale. Wider action could provoke resistance far greater than the Soweto Council recently confronted in White City when police broke up a meeting to protest the eviction of rent defaulters.

The Lekoa Council's public policy is to evict families with breadwinners in stable employment first, as they can supposedly afford rent and arrears.

Losing a home is a serious threat given the housing shortage. So evictions or the threat of eviction may create splits in communities between those who can afford to pay debts and rent and those who cannot. But this has not occurred on any great scale.

Boycott breakers may have their houses burnt down. During August 1986 an evicted Tumahole resident agreed to pay his arrears so he could be reinstated. The day after he moved back into his house, it was set on fire.

Councils are in a no-win situation. Mass evictions may provoke fierce resistance from residents. Yet they cannot admit defeat and write off rent arrears, losing necessary income. So far 32 community councils and three town councils have collapsed due to rent boycotts. Future events will be a test of strength between communities and councils.

## Defiant Vaal Boycott Enters Third Year

Solidarity among Vaal township residents makes it unlikely that the two-year rent boycott will be broken by evictions. If the Lekoa Town Council intends to end the boycott by force, it may provoke further resistance and a possible repetition of the September 1984 uprising.

After the recent White City massacre in Soweto, the Lekoa Council would be shortsighted if it believed that crushing the rent boycott is possible at present.

THE 1984 RENT HIKE



Resistance in the Vaal townships was not always fierce. Before September 1984, the Department of Co-operation and Development considered black local government in the Vaal to be the most successful in the country. Vaal townships were not particularly active in the events of 1976 and the Vaal Triangle Community Council (VTCC) seemed to have more support than most. In

February 1978 it was the first to receive formal administrative powers under the Community Councils Act.

Similarly, the Lekoa Town Council (LTC), which replaced the VTCC in January 1984, was the first black town council in the country. It was elected in November 1983 on a 14,7% poll. This was substantially less than the 20% the council managed in 1978 but well above the national average.

Surprisingly, Vaal local authorities ran at a profit. Throughout its existence, the VTCC managed to balance its books and still subsidise Orange-Vaal Administration Board projects in the Free State and QwaQwa.

Its 'economic rentals' policy made this possible and the seven years prior to 1984 saw dramatic increases in Vaal rents. In 1977 average Vaal rents were R11,87 per month; by the start of 1984 they were R62,56 - more than R10 higher than anywhere else in the country.

At a meeting on 29 June 1984 the LTC decided to increase monthly rents by R5,90 for board houses and R5,50 for private houses. The LTC maintained Vaal residents were the best paid in the

## Rent Boycott

country and could afford higher rents. Throughout the rent boycott the authorities stood by this claim. It is simply not true.

A 1985 Bureau of Market Research report showed average annual black per capita incomes in the Vaal Triangle were substantially below the national metropolitan average - R1 112,79 versus R1 366,24 in 1983; R1 159,82 versus R1 396,48 in 1985. While the real increase in black incomes between 1980 and 1985 was 17%, rent increased by 56%.

against the increase, distributed pamphlets in the townships and held meetings in Zone 13 Sebokeng on 25 August, and in Bophelong, Boipatong and Evaton Small Farms (adjacent to Zone 7) on 26 August.

The Sebokeng gathering called a further meeting for Monday 3 September at the Roman Catholic Church in Small Farms, from where people would march to the administration offices to express their dissatisfaction.

In Sharpeville, the Sharpeville Anti-Rent Committee organised opposition.



Vaal residents demanded rent be reduced to R30 during negotiations

Announcement of the rent increase was delayed so that individual councillors could break the news to their wards first. In most cases this did not happen and when a general announcement of the increase was made in late July residents and local organisations responded angrily.

Most leaders of this ad hoc body were linked to black-consciousness trade unions and political organisations.

The Anti-Rent Committee held four meetings at the Sharpeville Anglican Church on successive Sundays, from 12 August until 2 September. At the last of these, it was decided to march on Sebokeng the next day, and join up with the anti-rent protest at the administration offices.

The council ignored all demands for a suspension of the rent increase. Its only response was to call a meeting with Vaal church leaders, warning that their site permits would be withdrawn if they continued to allow churches to be used for political meetings.

In Bophelong, residents had an additional grievance. In August they had to pay a R50 deposit to cover future arrears on electricity accounts. A meeting to discuss the issue on 29 August was attended by hundreds of

### THE MARCH ON SEBOKENG

Outside Sharpeville, the Vaal Civic Association (VCA), a UDF affiliate, co-ordinated opposition to the rent increase. Launched in October 1983, its major campaign before the rent hike involved opposition to the November black local authorities elections.

When rent increases were announced in July, the VCA organised an anti-rent campaign. It issued press statements

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angry Bophelong residents and a number of councillors. All council members present were armed. The mayor, Mahlatsi and deputy mayor, Dlamini, had two guns each.

The mayor addressed the rowdy meeting, and residents insisted that he answer questions about the rent increase and the electricity deposit. At that point the hall lights were switched off, councillors were given a police escort out and teargas was fired into the hall.

That night police shot at youths in the township, and for the rest of the week there were sporadic clashes between Bophelong residents and police. These culminated on the night of 2 September when three youths were killed.

The following morning a strong police presence in Sharpeville and Boipatong prevented marchers from leaving for Sebokeng. Several protestors were killed in clashes with police, and in Sharpeville a crowd attacked and killed Deputy-mayor Dlamini.

A march set off from Small Farms, but never reached the administration offices. Details of events en route to the offices are sub judice, pending the outcome of the Delmas treason trial. However, during the morning, large-scale violence broke out in Sebokeng and Evaton. Two Lekoa councillors, an Evaton councillor and numbers of protestors were killed.

### THE CONFLICT ESCALATES

Violent confrontations continued for the next few days. All over the Vaal administration buildings, beerhalls and homes and businesses of councillors and policemen were attacked. Thousands were arrested. Police raided Vaal hospitals, arresting those with bullet wounds. Fearing arrest, unrest victims stopped going to hospital and the death toll rose. By 9 September more than forty people had been killed, about 90% of them by police.

After 3 September, almost all of those associated with organising the rent protest were arrested or went into hiding away from the Vaal. Most remained outside the Vaal well into 1986.

While the VCA and Sharpeville Anti-Rent Committee could not act, the Vaal Ministers Solidarity Group was formed to

convey residents' demands to the LTC. On 8 September a delegation of Vaal church leaders met the council. The Evaton Town Council was invited but failed to attend.

On behalf of Vaal residents, church leaders demanded that:

- \* councillors should resign;
- \* the rent increase be withdrawn;
- \* an independent enquiry into business allocations in the Vaal be set up;
- \* all detainees be released and police prevented from harassing hospital patients;
- \* police withdraw from the townships.

Councillors refused to meet any demands, or to answer most questions relating to these demands. The delegation saw no point in continuing negotiations.

### THE BOYCOTT BEGINS

Up to this point, there was no plan to organise a total rent boycott in the Vaal. The 3 September protests were directed against the rent increase only, and residents were prepared to pay the old rents. At a VCA meeting, a suggestion was made to boycott rent payments until the increase was withdrawn, but this was not taken up. The same suggestion was made in Sharpeville but residents decided to boycott just the increase and continue paying rent at the old rate.

Only when the council ignored the VMSG's post-3 September demands, and indicated that the rent increase was non-negotiable, did the boycott begin.

### THE COUNCIL BACKS DOWN

The council did a dramatic about-face on 18 September and withdrew the increases. But it was too late. Council actions over the previous two months showed that it would only negotiate on its own terms. Residents held the council responsible for the loss of life in the first two weeks of September and the rent boycott was a largely unorganised expression of this.

In early October the SADF arrived in the Vaal complete with patronising

## Rent Boycott

pamphlets telling residents who their real friends were and why they should pay rent. But Operation Palmiet had no effect on the rent boycott.

Residents linked the rent boycott to security force violence on and after 3 September. So it was not surprising that the presence of a few thousand soldiers in Sebokeng and Sharpeville only strengthened residents' resolve not to pay rent.

When the council backed down on the rent increase, it also retreated from its policy of not speaking to civic associations. Council circulars announcing the repeal of the increase invited residents to elect delegations to discuss the rent issue with the council.

Sharpeville, Boipatong and Bophelong elected delegations which constituted themselves as civic associations. The three civics met with the LTC and later with the National Party MP for Overvaal, Chris Ballot. Negotiations broke down because the LTC refused to make any concessions the civics regarded as meaningful.

Residents in Sebokeng refused to elect a delegation because all their leaders were in detention or hiding. When the VCA in Sebokeng was revived in May 1985 the newly-elected office bearers stood by this decision.

### INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE JOIN NEGOTIATIONS

The Vaal Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the LTC and the OVDB also entered into negotiations at this time. These were initiated by the Vaal Trade Union Co-ordinating Committee (VTUCC) after the LTC asked employers to deduct rents from workers' wages.

Negotiations ran during June and July 1985, but were suspended when VTUCC members were detained during the first state of emergency. Talks resumed in November 1985 and were ultimately abandoned in February 1986.

The LTC was not willing to compromise on the VTUCC's demand for a rental of R30 a month. And, when council obstructionism prevented unions obtaining venues for report-back meetings, the unions saw no point in continuing negotiations.

The council's attitude was curious. It

was totally unwilling to compromise with the civics or unions. It clung resolutely to its position that rents could not be reduced below R60, that as the only 'democratically-elected' body in the Vaal it did not accept calls for its resignation and that it had no say in the affairs of the security forces.

Despite this, the council seemed to believe the rent issue could be resolved through negotiations, which continued for 14 months. Throughout this period the council made no other public moves to deal with the rent boycott. There were no summonses issued and no evictions until well into 1986.

Bureaucratic inertia can account for only some of this delay. Possibly the council was so out of touch with Vaal residents and so blinded by agitator theories that it thought the rent boycott could be stopped simply by explaining the logic behind the budget.

### NEW COUNCIL STRATEGIES

The council became more aggressive. On 4 November 1985 it adopted a document entitled 'Strategy for the collection of arrear rental and service charges' which explicitly stated that 'no acknowledgement through negotiations must be given to revolutionary groups or organisations'. It called for the organisation of stop-order facilities from employers for employees' rentals, court orders and evictions, extensive propaganda campaigns and the establishment of paramilitary law and order committees in the township wards.

The new strategy started off badly when the secret document was leaked to the Sharpeville Civic Association barely a week after it passed through the council. The strategy continued unsuccessfully.

Its most glaring failure was the attempt to arrange stop-order facilities for rents. During the 1985 negotiations the Chamber of Commerce and Industry tended to side with the unions against the council. Eventually the council demanded that the head of the Chamber of Commerce be removed from the negotiations chair because of bias against the council.

Local commerce and industry were anxious to prevent residents' discontent

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in the townships spilling over into the workplace. They were definitely not prepared to deduct rent from wages. The Chamber instructed its members that Proclamation R186 of 1967, in terms of which the LTC requested stop order facilities for rents, was invalid. When Minister of Constitutional Development and Planning Heunis introduced a bill in April 1986 to provide for stop order rents, Associated Chambers of Commerce, the Federated Chamber of Industries and the Afrikaner Handelsinstituut mobilised against the proposed legislation and the bill was withdrawn within a month.

Attempts to break the boycott through evictions have been equally unsuccessful. Residents are contesting the validity of the rent increases in court arguing that there were numerous irregularities in the calculation and proclamation of rent increases in the past. It is also not clear whether local authorities may legally evict rent boycotters.

## THE BOYCOTT CONTINUES

The council issued 7 500 summonses. Residents have strongly resisted evictions and arrests for ignoring summonses and section 65 notices. A VCA executive member in Sebokeng said residents see the rent boycott in 'political terms'.

In response to the arrests of Sebokeng residents in April the VCA organised a two-day stayaway. Residents went on a march to protest further arrests in May.

The council detained in total about 90 residents in late night raids on 1, 6 and 15 August. They were locked in council offices and after a lengthy wait taken to the township superintendent. They were forced to sign acknowledgments of debt and rent stop-order agreements often without understanding what they were signing. Residents went on a march in protest, and all defaulters were released. No



A councillor killed during the September 1984 uprising

further arrests have occurred. Residents are now taking civil action for wrongful arrest and repudiating the signatures on the stop-order agreements.

In Sharpeville, Boipatong and Bophelong civics have limited themselves to co-ordinating legal action against boycott breaking tactics.

Council evictions have met with widespread resistance. Police have been stoned and petrol bombed. So far only 11 families have been evicted in Sharpeville (on 9 and 16 August) and eight each in Boipatong (15 August) and Bophelong (9 August). In all cases the authorities intended to evict more households but stopped because of resistance from residents. Planned evictions in Sebokeng were postponed possibly because the council feared

large-scale resistance.

The council has also experienced great difficulty in finding families to occupy vacated houses, despite the Vaal housing shortage. In Sharpeville and Boipatong no-one has been willing to replace an evicted family and the empty houses are guarded by council police. Only in Bophelong have people moved off the waiting list into the houses of evicted people, and even there the houses cannot all be filled.

The Vaal rent boycott, already two years old, has cost local authorities R150-m. Each resident owes the Lekoa Council over R2 000. Despite council threats of evictions and arrest, and the vast powers granted security forces under the state of emergency, current prospects of it ending remain slim.

## Tumahole Rents: 'This burden is too heavy'

Tumahole lies on the outskirts of the sleepy Free State dorp of Parys. Like most African townships it is characterised by poverty and lack of services.

Officially, its population is 20 000, but residents estimate that over 60 000 live in Tumahole. There are only 2 742 self-built houses on stands rented from the Orange-Vaal Development Board (OVDB), and 254 four-roomed houses built by and rented from the board. Most residents live in shacks.

Employment opportunities are limited, and many residents are either pensioners or unemployed. Those with work are scarcely better off. Just prior to the rent boycott, wages ranged from R40-R60/month for domestic workers to R120/month for factory workers.

In April 1984 the OVDB increased rent from R26,25 to R37. It had risen steeply since 1978 when the board introduced its 'economic rentals' policy.

Sixty-five percent of the OVDB income for 1983-84 came from rentals, and another nine percent from lodgers and hostel permits. Liquor and sorghum beer sales brought in only 12%.

Rent increases were a heavy burden and increasing numbers of people could not pay. By June 1983, R60 718 was outstanding in unpaid rents. A year later the figure stood at R98 845 and by July 1986 each registered tenant owed at least R900.

The Tumahole Students Organisation

(TSO) organised a campaign against the rent increase. In sports grounds, shebeens and bus stations members discussed rents and lack of facilities.

The TSO was formed in September 1980 as a cultural organisation using poetry and drama to conscientise the youth. It gradually became involved in fund-raising to prevent eviction of a deceased's family, helping the aged to collect pensions, assisting parents and students with grievances over schooling, and seeking bursaries for students.

High rents affected students as well as their parents since they meant parents could not pay school fees. Students felt if they did not protest now, the situation would only worsen by the time they were adults. The council had also done nothing about promised recreation centres and other services for youth.

Students visited parents to discuss action around rent increases. They circulated a petition and organised a meeting with councillors who, in turn, refused to answer queries. Residents resolved to boycott the mayor's businesses in retaliation.

In July 1984 an ad hoc civic committee was formed and the Tumahole Civic Association (TCA) was formally launched in October. The TCA organised a march to the community hall on 15 July to demonstrate residents' dissatisfaction. Over 30 000 marched, holding placards reading 'High rent, no jobs' and 'This

## Rent Boycott

burden is too heavy'. Police dispersed the meeting. Many were arrested and one person died in detention. The mayor's shops were looted.

In the following nine months, residents increasingly supported the civic. The limited legitimacy of the community council was further eroded by councillors' failure to fulfil promises, rising rents, absence of township development and manipulation of trading licences and bursaries. Councillors were frequently asked to resign but only four have done so.

### STAYAWAYS AND NEGOTIATIONS

Seven days after the Vaal exploded in September 1984, Tumahole residents stayed away from work and marched to the OVDB offices. Fearing violence the board and community council met civic leaders. The council agreed to freeze rents at R26,25 and to distribute a circular with details of their discussion.

Several meetings with the board followed and the TCA arranged mass meetings before and after to maintain their mandate. The community demanded that rents be reduced to R18,50 and lodgers permits to R6,00; that a sewerage system be installed without charge; that lodger permits be applicable to non-family members only; an end to police raids; and the resignation of community councillors.

OVDB officials agreed that unemployed people could apply to have their rent deferred or their arrears written off. But they insisted that all increases were necessary to balance the council's budget and fund 'development projects'.

### THE RENT BOYCOTT

Negotiations ended in deadlock. The OVDB director refused to recognise the civic as representative of the community, and said he would meet residents on 24 March. He then cancelled the meeting. Township youths demonstrated, the beerhall, bottlestore, and houses of police and two councillors were stoned, meetings were banned and residents arrested. Slogans painted on walls read:

'Boycott rent, R18,50'.

Residents decided to launch a boycott from April. Negotiations continued. A planned 6 June meeting was postponed by the OVDB and residents received circulars fixing the rent at R26,50. They were then issued with notices cancelling their residence permits.

OVDB boycott-breaking strategies ranged from co-option to intimidation. The board approached civic leaders to stand for election to the council. When that failed it offered residents bribes. But residents saw the civic as the legitimate alternative to the community council.

In a bid to force residents to pay rent, the board withheld approval of applications for business sites and house construction plans, insisting that applicants first settle rent arrears.

Residents stood firm and in January the board began serving summonses on defaulters. When these were ignored the board issued section 65 notices.

The TCA organised hundreds of residents who received summonses to defend their own cases. Using a single lawyer to defend a group was too costly. As a result, the courts became overloaded with cases.

In July the OVDB announced a rent increase effective from 1 August. It claimed residents had approved an increase to R38,75 when the sewerage project was completed. Residents had paid for sewerage since 1979 but installation only began in mid-1985. They had never agreed to an increase and as unemployment and retrenchment rose, even R18,50 seemed too high. Negotiations ground to a halt. Mass meetings were banned and the TCA refused to negotiate if it could not report back to residents.

### FROM VIGILANTES TO SWEET PERSUASION

In January, A-Team vigilantes began to roam the township intimidating residents and activists. After a successful court interdict against the A-Team in May, the Tumahole Action for Unity (TAU) was set up by former A-Team members and administration board police. It was funded by an ex-OVDB official.

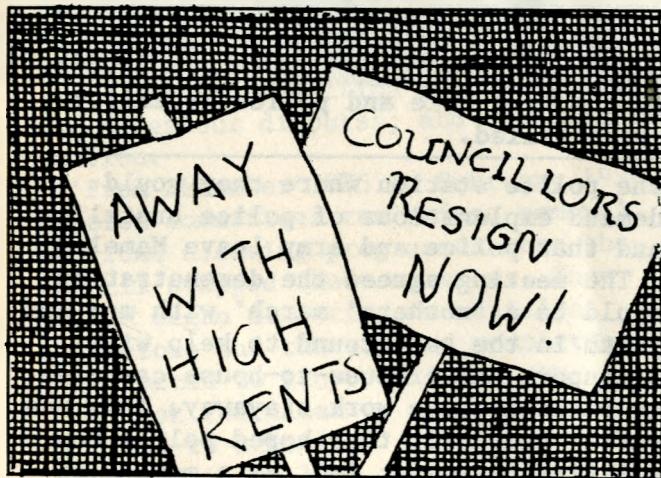
TAU members gave children sweets and toys and urged them to persuade their

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parents to pay rent. They offered members of youth clubs and music groups gifts, and held lectures on the importance of councils and the need to pay rent. The youth groups approached the TCA and decided to take the gifts back to TAU, saying they would find other ways to get equipment needed.

In desperation the board began evictions in June. It had a tactical advantage: organisation was undermined by the state of emergency and activists were detained or in hiding. Twenty-four people have been evicted since June. Most evictions were random, although seven activists' families were affected.

Evictions usually occur during the day. A court messenger, accompanied by members of SAP and 'green beans' or 'amstels' (administration police), force inmates out of the house and lock it up. Furniture is locked inside. Evicted families are often split up and find accommodation with neighbours or relatives in already-cramped houses.



Tumahole residents now await the outcome of a test case in the Bloemfontein Supreme Court. The applicants, Wilhemina Mofurutsi, Selina Makume and Kleinbooi Lesenyeho, are seeking an order restraining the OVDB and the Free State administrator from obliging them to pay rent arrears.

Between January 1983 and March 1985 Mofurutsi paid R913 rent. She claims she was only liable for R495 because rent increases over the period were invalid. The OVDB, it will be argued, did not have the power to determine rent and service charges. The last legal increase was promulgated by the Minister of Constitutional Development and Planning in March 1979, setting rent and service tariffs at R11,80. All subsequent determinations, according to the

applicants, were invalid. Since they were not promulgated, residents were not notified nor given the opportunity to make representation on the fairness of the proposed increases.

The applicants claim they are entitled to set off the excess paid against the rental due; and that the board actually owes them money.

This case is due to be heard at the end of September.

### VREDEFORT: UNDER TUMAHOLE'S WING

Students from Vredefort attend school in Tumahole. In 1985 the Tumahole Youth Congress travelled to Vredefort and spoke to the youth. Shortly afterwards the Vredefort Youth Congress was formed. It called for a rent boycott and for councillors to resign. Residents were paying rent of R26/month but wanted this reduced.

In April 1986 residents marched on the administration offices to protest against rent increases and the council. The offices were stoned. Several residents and youths were arrested, charged with public violence but found not guilty.

The Vredefort boycott was originally organised through the Rent Action Co-ordinating Committee (RACC). RACC was established in October 1984 to co-ordinate rent action against the OVDB in the Vaal and northern OFS and to initiate the formation of civics.

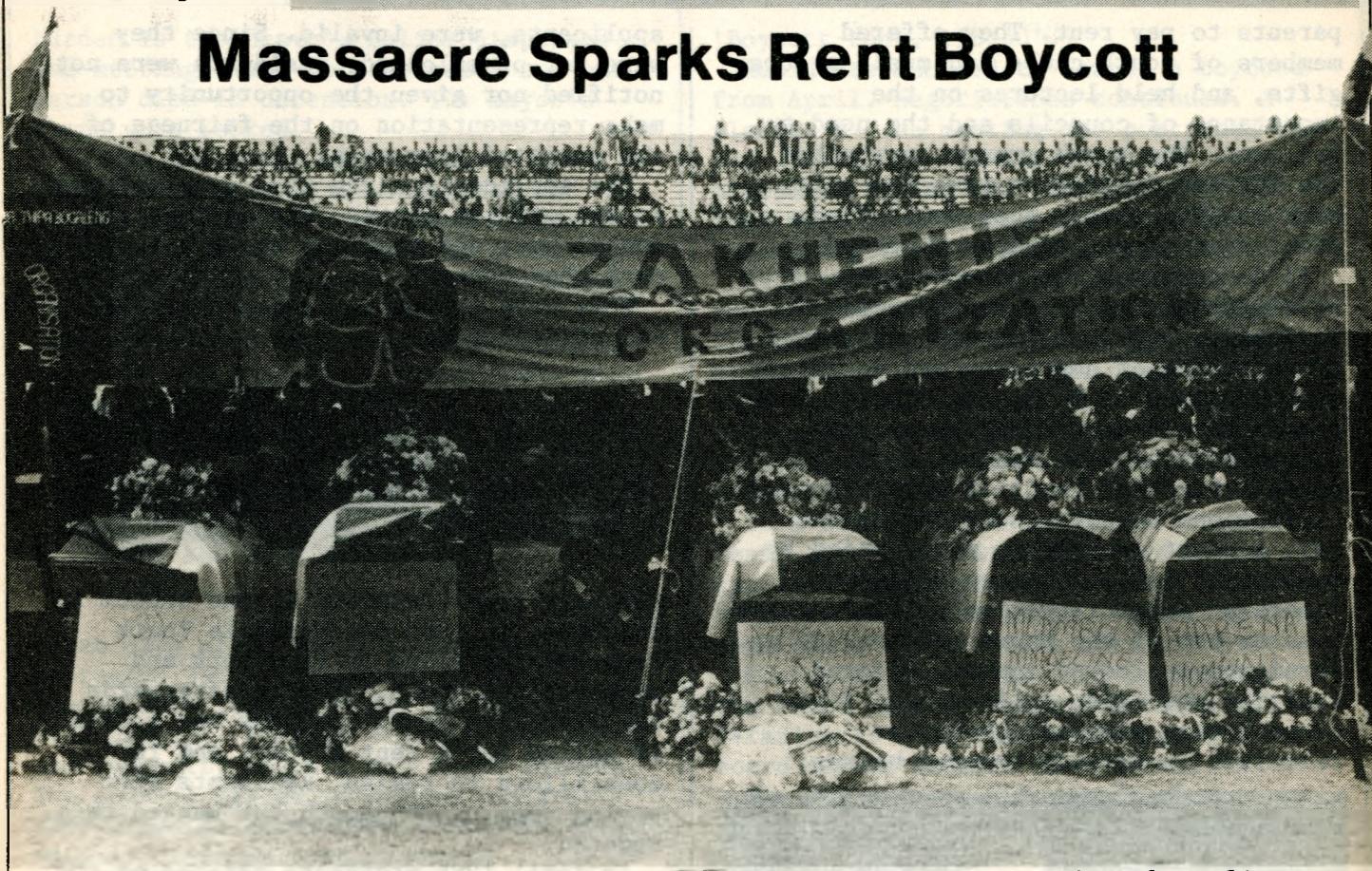
But the Vredefort boycott was more of a spontaneous than organised action. Only about a quarter of the community supported the boycott even before the emergency curtailed activity.

Reasons for the boycott's partial failure possibly lie in the specific nature of the township. It is very small and most students attend school in Tumahole or elsewhere. They are usually at home only on weekends and there has been little progress in building organisation.

The TCA and Vredefort activists eventually decided that Vredefort should be considered part of Tumahole. Vredefort residents were invited to attend meetings in Tumahole in an attempt to politicise the township.

## Rent Boycott

## Massacre Sparks Rent Boycott



Police fired on marchers protesting against the rent hike and police brutality. Thirteen people were killed.

On 17 November 1985, the Mamelodi Parents Action Committee called a meeting to discuss a number of points of conflict. These included:

\* the rent hike. In September 1985 rents had been increased without warning. Although house rent was low, service charges were excessively high, with residents unsure of the exact tariffs. 'Some people were charged as much as R200. If they complained to the council the rent dropped the next month without explanation', said a resident. Residents also had to pay lodgers fees for all people above school-going age. 'Young people felt like foreigners in their own homes'.

\* demands that the SADF leave the township. It had set up camp just outside Mamelodi in July.

\* police brutality to students. Police invaded classes and beat up students for no reason, and students were picked on at funerals.

\* the banning of funerals for unrest victims.

Those present decided on a march to the administration board offices. They intended to discuss the rent hike with the mayor and ask him to lead a group to

the police station where they would demand explanations of police brutality and that police and army leave Mamelodi.

The meeting agreed the demonstration would be a 'mothers' march' with men and youth in the background to help with transport and a house-to-house campaign to publicise the work stayaway. This was partly tactical: they hoped police would not fire on women. And, as a member of the Zakheni Women's Organisation said: 'Women are the real heads of their families. The father's money is his own; he may pay rent and food, but the rest he can spend as he wishes. The mother's money is family money, not her own. If rents increase she would feel and see it more directly if she could not feed and clothe her family'.

On Thursday 21 November, 50 000 people met at the YMCA in East Mamelodi. 'At the bridge we were stopped by casspirs which led us to the administration offices at Mayor Ndlazi's request', recalled a civic member.

'Casspirs were waiting at the gates and Ndlazi was in a hippo at the front. He did not address the crowd. A policeman with a weak loud-hailer told the crowd to disperse. Before five

## Rent Boycott

minutes were up a teargas canister was thrown into the crowd from a helicopter. Then the shooting started from the hippos and the helicopter.

'The crowd scattered, running back into a column of people. As they ran they shouted for people not to pay rent because the councillors and police preferred to shoot rather than talk'. Thirteen people were killed.

### ENFORCING THE BOYCOTT

The rent boycott was quickly enforced. This was a result of deep anger caused by the massacre, but also due to the history of organisation in Mamelodi since 1983.

'We set up street and section committees towards the end of 1985 as the foundation for the civic which we launched in April 1986. The rent boycott was discussed and enforced through section committee meetings. Duties of the section committee were to examine legal, rent or eviction problems; family and neighbour disputes; and cleaning the section.'

'From December 1985 to February 1986, section committees ran refuse removal and road cleaning programmes when the council stopped these services. Then police began escorting in municipal collectors and the section committees were forced to stop. Children who undertook the clean-up campaigns also returned to school'.

Many families live in shacks behind houses and pay rent to the registered tenant. Should shack dwellers also boycott rent payments? Though the final decision was left to tenants and yard owners, the Zakheni Women's Organisation recommended that where yard owners, particularly if pensioners, depended on tenants for income, tenants should continue to pay rent.

### COUNCIL'S BOYCOTT-BREAKING STRATEGIES

Attempting to break the boycott, the council switched off electricity in some areas. This failed, as it could not be widely applied without risking overloaded power lines and the wrath of

ESCOM. Residents demanded ESCOM send accounts directly to them rather than through the council. They hoped accounts would be more accurate and electricity cheaper as the council's additional handling fee would be cut out.

The council forced those applying for taxi or business permits to show recent rent receipts. It also served summonses on rent defaulters. When residents decided to defend themselves in court, summonses were withdrawn.

The council tried to persuade employers to deduct rent from employees' wages. Most refused, saying the work contract only concerned conditions in the workplace, and they did not want problems with their workforce.

The council then issued a warning in terms of the Housing Act, which allowed it to take court action over arrears if it could prove it had built the houses. But the houses had been built by the Pretoria Municipality and the Peri-Urban Boards. The council also claimed service charge arrears, while the Act only allowed for legal action over rents. So this strategy failed too.

Hostel dwellers supported the rent boycott. The September 1984 increases set rental for a bed in a 16-bed room at R20/month or R8/week, a bed in a 4-bed room at R28/month or R11,50/week and a bed in a single room at R34/month or R13,50/week.

### HOSTEL DWELLERS EVICTED

Council attempts to divide hostel dwellers and residents failed. But the council has treated hostel rent defaulters with a special vengeance. From April to June the hostels were raided every fortnight. Over 150 people were evicted, and beds, mattresses and personal property confiscated.

Hostel dwellers were charged with trespassing. Most were convicted largely because lawyers had difficulty in gaining access to their clients.

Hostel dwellers were charged under the Black Urban Areas Act, which makes it an offence to be in a hostel without a permit. Convictions were shaky since legally-resident hostel dwellers who have not paid rent still have valid permits to reside in the hostel.

Two hostel dwellers challenged their

## Rent Boycott

eviction on the grounds that they had not been given proper notice. They applied for and won an interdict instructing the council to restore their confiscated belongings and re-admit them to the hostel. It is not known whether they were able to return to the hostel, although legally entitled to do so. For hostel organisation has been weakened by the detention of activists, and hostel dwellers may not have been able to enforce their return to the hostel.

The Mamelodi Civic Association is currently challenging the validity of the rent increase in court. It argues that the local council did not follow the correct procedure for publicising the proposed increase. The case has been postponed to the end of September.



Residents reaffirm their commitment to a rent boycott at the November funeral

## Jouberton Youth at the Forefront

A rent and bus boycott, sparked by police violence, began in the Klerksdorp township of Jouberton on 10 February 1986.

On 31 January police raided a shebeen and shot a young boy. Residents retaliated with stones and two others were shot. At the funeral on 8 February another person was killed. For the next funeral, two days later, the Jouberton Youth Congress (JYC) asked Western Greyhound to send 15 buses to carry mourners to the graveyard. Greyhound ignored the request and youths decided

to launch a bus boycott.

They commandeered a vehicle and drove through Jouberton telling people not to use buses or pay rent. They felt this was an adequate way of organising the boycott. 'If residents had not been sympathetic they would not have supported the call'. Police escorted buses into the township but people refused to ride. Taxi owners were harassed and their taxis impounded, but boycotters still preferred to walk.

That day the administration board offices were burned down and youths

## Rent Boycott

confiscated residents' rent cards. Frustration with rent increases and community council disinterest in grievances had simmered since September 1985, when rents were increased.

Residents had rejected the increase when councillors announced it at a meeting in November 1984. But in January 1985, councillors railroaded the increase through despite residents' unwillingness to accept it. Those with objections were not allowed to speak.

Councillors did promise to ask employers to increase wages to cover the increase. Until then the current rent would remain. But councillors got only one employer response and in September rent was increased without further consultation.

### FORMING A CIVIC

A co-ordinating body was needed to organise the boycott. Church ministers called a meeting to elect a steering body for a civic. The JYC suggested it consist of five JYC members, five teachers and five parents. The community believed a civic could channel grievances to result in meaningful political action. It also hoped the civic would have a moderating effect on the youth.

After the boycotts began, the JYC formed a people's court - when they 'read about it in the newspaper' - as a disciplinary committee to combat the death toll arising from the high crime rate. The committee banned youths from shebeens and punished those who ignored its orders. Shebeen kings and queens

agreed to bar youths although they complained about losing money. Only youths served on the committee but argued that parents supported them as 'they feel the official legal system has failed and only handles political crime'.

Another concerned group, including a taxi owner, shebeen owner and a minister, tried to set up a more moderate committee. They asked the council to call a public meeting to discuss the rent and bus boycotts. The council agreed, but on 6 April troops surrounded the local stadium where the meeting was to take place. Meeting content was also restricted and no political songs or speeches were allowed. Residents boycotted the meeting.

### RESIDENTS' DEMANDS

Two weeks later the original civic steering committee called a public meeting. Five hundred attended and ratified the decision to form a civic. Residents also decided not to pay rent until it was reduced from R35 to R5. They also demanded explanations about exorbitant water accounts and fictitious electricity accounts: most houses do not have electricity.

Since the boycotts began, two councillors have resigned. In May the council threatened legal action against defaulters. The deadline for back payments was set as 7 June. In July the town clerk claimed that payment of rents had risen substantially.

# Evaluating 'Work In Progress'

In July 1986 the Work In Progress collective commissioned an independent evaluator to survey readership opinions. The WIP collective responds to the evaluation, and outlines its editorial policies.

## Why did WIP commission an evaluation?

WIP has a specific readership in mind. We wanted to know whether we were reaching it, who else read WIP, and what they thought of the publication. The evaluator had a mandate to assess the views of WIP readers and distributors, as well as those of prominent political, labour and community figures.

## What are WIP's policies and goals?

The Southern African Research Service, which produces WIP, is non-racial, non-sectarian, and broadly supportive of the progressive movement. But it is not tied to any specific position or organisation within that movement.

SARS sees WIP as a source of information and ideas and a forum for debate around current political, labour and related issues.

WIP started off as a largely academic journal in 1977. By the early 1980s the editorial collective felt ideas, debates and information should be more widely available. In 1983-4 the format of the publication changed. Attention was given to ensuring articles were more simply written and readable by a non-specialist, non-academic audience.

The publication was increasingly geared towards top- and middle-level leadership of popular organisations and trade unions, as well as students, academics and progressive professionals.

## Who reads WIP?

The survey found that WIP was reaching its target readership. Those interviewed felt this was a valid target group and it would be extremely difficult to put across the complex issues WIP deals with at a lower literacy level.

Readership includes leadership and other members of youth and student groups; trade union officials, including shop stewards and more literate members; community activists; and members of national political organisations ranging from United Democratic Front and National Forum affiliates to the Black Sash and Progressive Federal Party.

While WIP reaches a surprisingly wide range of people there were some groups which have not been adequately reached so far. These include women and women's organisations; some community groups; rural areas; teachers; and coloured and Indian communities. Reasons for this are unsystematic distribution, the price of WIP and low literacy levels, particularly in rural areas.

## How is WIP distributed and how do you intend to improve this?

WIP is distributed through a subscription system, through organisations and individual distributors, through a township distribution network in the Transvaal, and through bookshops.

Distribution problems had been discussed for some time. So in July we employed a part-time distribution officer whose duties include: selling WIP at meetings; improving distribution through trade unions and shop steward committees; recruiting distributors in new areas; preparing advertising and posters to publicise WIP; expanding overseas distribution; and enlarging the subscription service. This has already been successful and distribution has expanded considerably.

## How does WIP decide on articles?

WIP tries to ensure that content is

balanced, current and relevant. This involves consideration of: important political and labour events; political debates, arguments, developments, trends and questions on current conditions and state of struggle; state strategies; and popular and working-class resistance and organisation.

Some articles are offered to WIP as contributions to a debate or topic. Other are specially commissioned by WIP. And WIP staff also research and write articles and compile reports, and conduct interviews.

Any broadly progressive individual or organisation can contribute, but all articles must fulfil certain criteria which are based on the needs, interests and nature of WIP's target readership. Articles must be clearly written, are edited to conform to WIP style, must be short, must have enough depth of information and analysis to make them understandable to readers without extensive knowledge of the subject, and should not be obscure or academic.

**What do readers think of WIP and how is the publication used?**

Most interviewed said WIP is useful, relevant, up-to-date, and an important alternative to the commercial press. It keeps people in touch with organisational failures and successes, and creates a view of struggle in totality. Most readers found the 'Courts' section interesting because it provided information not available elsewhere. 'Strikes and Disputes' is read mainly by trade union members. Debate articles were viewed as directly relevant to political organisation and many said these raised questions facing political organisation not discussed elsewhere. Readers found interviews particularly easy and interesting to read.

WIP is used as a source of information and ideas, in education, teaching and research. Some examples: Church workers use WIP for educational workshops; literacy teachers use WIP to prepare discussions; some progressive organisations use WIP in discussions to work out positions and strategies; and WIP is used in trade union training programmes.

**What do readers think of the way WIP is presented?**

Most commented on the great improvement in the last two years in terms of accessibility to a wider, more popular audience. Readers said WIP now used less jargon, and sentences and paragraphs were shorter than before. This makes it more accessible to those reading English as a second language. Readers found the lay-out clear and the design and colour on covers attractive. More photographs were suggested.

Readers found WIP stimulating: 'It forces people to think about issues and broadens their political outlook'. Most said it was correct that WIP allowed different opinions to be presented. This served an important function because 'a critical stance is important for all organisations. WIP opens up necessary debate and the tone is healthy and constructive'.

**WIP costs more than many other progressive publications. Why is this and can it be changed?**

WIP has always been financially self-sufficient in terms of production and distribution costs. Financial returns on one issue pay for the costs of the next. We have considered ways of subsidising lower-income readers, and are in the process of introducing differential pricing which includes: reduced rates for bulk orders from trade union or community organisations; increased rates for higher-income subscribers; a cheaper subscription rate for workers. We will continue to look for ways to subsidise some readership groups, and of course the larger our distribution, the cheaper the publication can be.

But SARS believes it is important to keep WIP as financially self-sufficient as possible.

**What other suggestions were made in the evaluation, and what is WIP doing about them?**

Many of the suggestions are already being implemented, such as improving distribution and looking at the price. Readers also made numerous suggestions about topics WIP could cover, and we are working on these.

Finally, readers suggested that WIP interview more progressive organisations around current political debates, and that contributors to debates be identified more clearly.

# A Force for Change?

## The Great Sanctions Debate

Some form of sanctions will be imposed on South Africa within the coming year. But the issue is not a simple one. While the 'constructive engagement' position of Thatcher and Reagan misunderstands the nature of apartheid and white power, there are also criticisms of the Commonwealth leaders' view of sanctions as a force for change. DUNCAN INNES looks at the various positions adopted on sanctions, and considers some of their ramifications.

The campaign for sanctions against South Africa recently took a great leap forward. Six Commonwealth leaders at the mini-summit in London decided to move from rhetoric to a programme of action. Tougher measures also came before the US House of Representatives and Senate; Zimbabwean Premier Robert Mugabe and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia proposed still stronger measures. This prompted South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha to demand that Zambia and Zimbabwe impose comprehensive sanctions - for once at least South Africa's government could claim to be in line with thinking in the rest of Africa.

The sudden escalation in the sanctions campaign forced those espousing the Reaganite constructive engagement strategy onto the defensive. While still clinging to her deeply held view that sanctions are 'morally repugnant' and in any case futile, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, under pressure from the Commonwealth, announced a ban on promotion of South African tourism in



London anti-apartheid march in June 1986

Britain, and indicated she would go along with whatever sanctions are adopted by the European Economic Community when it meets in September.

At the same time her ally across the Atlantic, US President Ronald Reagan, tried to stem his domestic sanctions movement by references to communists in the ANC. Meanwhile, State Department officials were privately claiming that constructive engagement was as good as dead.

Back in South Africa, Minister of Manpower Piet Du Plessis warned ominously that Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu could be charged with high treason if he continued advocating sanctions. Du Plessis also threatened that migrants from the rest of Southern Africa could be repatriated to combat sanctions-generated unemployment.

But despite important developments on the sanctions front, the underlying issues and arguments remain obscure. Both pro- and anti-sanctions groups passionately continue to express the belief that their particular approach is the only way to bring about an end to apartheid. Neither side is entirely convincing. Both display, in varying degrees, an unfortunate lack of understanding of the South African situation, as well as a marked naivete in their proposals to change it.

#### CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT



Thatcher is the best exponent of constructive engagement. Her approach rests on a woeful misunderstanding of the role apartheid actually plays in South African social life. For instance, referring to a visit she once made to South Africa, she said: 'I've seen it on occasions when there is no apartheid, and I've seen it when there is apartheid'.

But apartheid does not occur at some times and not at others; nor can it be switched on or off at will. It is a social and political system encompassing every aspect of South African life. The fact that some hotels, cinemas or sporting occasions might be 'open' does not diminish the system of apartheid. Only when every South African is free to cast an equal vote in a political system based on majority rule will apartheid be abolished.

Precisely because Thatcher fails to recognise apartheid as an all-encompassing system, her strategy for dismantling it becomes absurd. That strategy rests on the notions of contact, dialogue and persuasion. It is essentially a commitment to piecemeal reform - to dismantling apartheid little by little. In her own words: 'Apartheid is wrong. It has to go, and it is going' (my emphasis).

To prove her point Thatcher cites an unfortunate example: at her meeting with PW Botha at Chequers last year she had told him that forced removals of black communities were utterly 'repugnant'. She went on to claim that 'those have been stopped now. Things are coming in the right direction. Naturally one wishes them to come faster'.

The people of Crossroads, to name but one instance, could contradict the view that forced removals have been stopped. Similarly, Tseliso Phofu, a recently-released political prisoner challenged the view that apartheid is going: 'Since my release I have not seen any changes in the system of oppression. When the Mixed Marriages Act and the Immorality Act were repealed, it did not change the lives of black people. The introduction of new identity documents has no significant material effect on our lives, either. Influx control is still exercised through the Aliens Act. The government is trying to play for time by saying to the world that these are "changes". Little has changed from the undeclared state of emergency during 1976-1977'.

Thatcher ignores the fact that while certain formal institutions of apartheid are being scrapped, the underlying social relations of oppression remain intact. The form changes, but the substance remains. Her concern is in any case with the form and not the substance of apartheid. This emerges clearly when she identifies 'industry and some of the political parties' inside South Africa as the main elements in the fight against apartheid. Those dying daily in the townships do not feature in Thatcher's vision. Over two million black trade unionists do not feature; neither do the thousands of people who are banned or detained, nor mass-based organisations like the United Democratic Front, the Azanian Peoples Organisation or the African National Congress.

Disagreement between Thatcher and PW Botha centres on the fact that he is not

dismantling formal apartheid as rapidly as she would like. Consequently, she seeks through persuasion - constructive engagement - to hurry him along. In her own words: 'I think we should have had more contact with her (South Africa). We should have influenced her more. She would have been able to see that multi-racial societies do work in other countries'.

Here is the essence of the constructive engagement position: white South Africans, especially those in government, are believed not to know any better, and therefore need to be encouraged to see the light.

This interpretation is laden with all the reactionary values of nineteenth century British imperialism. Like all imperialist ideology its intention is to obscure rather than reveal. It obscures the very real interests white South Africans have in the system of racial domination. Government clings to the substance of apartheid not because it knows no better, but because white domination works for its supporters. It wants to hold onto political power not because it does not believe that multiracial societies can work, but because it wants to retain and defend white privilege in South Africa.

If Thatcher is to persuade PW Botha to give up apartheid completely, she will have to convince him that white interests can no longer be served by racial domination, and that the only way forward is to hand over power to the people. So far she has not been successful, largely because the people are not yet in a position to take power. Until they are, Botha will in all probability stick to his guns.

#### THE PRO-SANCTIONS POSITION



Advocates of sanctions have shown that they possess a far better understanding both of the realities of the South African situation and of government's present strategy. The pro-sanctions lobby correctly pointed to the futility of the kind of negotiations in which Sir Geoffrey Howe recently engaged. As Malcolm Fraser, co-chairman of the Eminent Persons' Group, puts it: 'The (South African) government has consistently stated that political rights would have to be exercised

through racial groups, not individual rights. That view of the future, of course, would maintain apartheid, but in another form. It is unacceptable to the black leadership, who emphasise citizenship above all'.

In proposing ways of bringing about real change in South Africa, the pro-sanctions lobby believes that only strong pressure, rather than gentle persuasion, can bring this about. To quote Fraser again: 'The purpose of sanctions would not be to destroy the South African economy. They would need to be constructed in such a way as to give the economy and the white population in particular a real body blow'.

In developing his argument further, Fraser makes precisely the point that Thatcher avoids: namely, that whites will only concede power in South Africa when their interests are no longer served by hanging onto it: 'When the banks took their action last year, based on commercial decisions, many white South Africans for the first time understood that their futures were under threat. Since then, whites have been more active in seeking to bring pressure on their own government. The purpose of sanctions must be to cause them to reinforce their efforts'.

However, after this promising start the pro-sanctions argument goes on to assume that there is an immediate relationship between the economic interests of whites and the political policies they support. According to Fraser, if white economic interests are damaged, white politics will automatically change for the better. This is not necessarily the case.

On the contrary, over the short to medium term at least, we are likely to see the opposite response. Racial attitudes are deeply engrained in the consciousness of many white South Africans, as indeed is white national chauvinism. These reactionary attitudes and values provide the government with plenty of opportunity to rally support for its go-it-alone policy - the latest version of the laager.

This is one reason why the optimism of many in the pro-sanctions camp, who believe that severe pressure will rapidly bring the South African government to its knees, is not justified. There are others. As Thatcher correctly pointed out, sanctions will be extremely difficult to enforce

(especially as she for one has no intention of enforcing them).

Not only are many of South Africa's major trading partners opposed to sanctions, but there will undoubtedly be no shortage of international entrepreneurs who will be more than ready to assist government and private companies in sanctions-busting activities.

South Africa is powerful both economically and politically, and can withstand severe pressure for a considerable period. And it can deliver a few powerful blows of its own.

### SOUTH AFRICAN IMPERIALISM



The South African government has not been slow to point out to the rest of the world that, as the dominant power on the Southern African subcontinent, it is in a position to cause havoc to the economies of its neighbours.

Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland are tied into a customs union with South Africa which makes them virtual economic prisoners.

Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi, because they are landlocked, are heavily dependent on South Africa



for their import and export flows, as well as for most of the rolling stock used to transport these goods. Attempts to break this dependency by using Mozambican or Angolan ports have had only limited success due to the South African-assisted wars in those two countries.

Attempts to develop a trade route through Dar-es-Salaam have met serious problems in the form of the unreliability of the Tazara Railway link and congestion in the port.

This dependency gives South Africa immense clout in the region, with all the political implications that flow from this for the governments of these countries.

There is also the supply of labour from the Frontline states to South Africa's mines. Lesotho and Mozambique are most heavily dependent on repatriated earnings, but even Botswana pulls in eight to nine million rand annually from its approximately 20 000 miners employed in South Africa. The threatened repatriation of foreign migrants would have a devastating effect on the economies of supplier states, as well as on the incomes of the workers concerned.

In this scenario of brutal power politics, the British government's stand is interesting. It has in fact done its best to bolster South Africa's position by making it plain that the Frontline

states can expect no economic aid from Britain, should South Africa retaliate against them. The British government in effect proclaimed to the world that it would rather sit by and watch the economies of six independent African states destroyed, than join with them in a united attack against apartheid.

But while the power South Africa wields in the sub-continent should not be underestimated, it is equally important that the Botha bluster not be swallowed whole. Even South African imperialism has its soft

underbelly. Certainly South Africa can close the borders with the Frontline states, thereby causing major dislocations to their economies - but there would be a cost to South Africa as well.

Between January and June 1986, South Africa exported goods worth R828-million to African countries, and imported in return R279-million, giving a very healthy trade surplus of R549-million. Closing those borders could turn out to be cutting off one's nose to spite one's face. It would also mean a loss to the South African Transport Services of revenue earned from the use of its rolling stock, and a loss to the South African Treasury of customs tariffs.

In addition, the South African government receives taxes from local producers which export goods to or through the Frontline states; it is estimated that nearly half a million people are employed in South Africa producing goods for export to Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland alone. Should the South Africa government cut off these exports, it would effectively diminish its own tax base and generate more unemployment inside South Africa.

South African companies also have substantial investments in the Frontline states. What will happen to them if a South African-inspired trade embargo is imposed? Anglo American, for example, has a 50% interest in Zambia's copper mines, as well as major mining, farming and industrial interests in Zimbabwe. How will Anglo's companies in Southern Africa, especially its mines, function when their supplies of equipment and spare parts from South Africa are cut off? The retaliation policy will not appeal to South African companies with investments in the region.

Finally, there is the question of foreign migrants on South African mines. Government and the Chamber of Mines have made it clear that in the event of sanctions they will consider repatriating thousands of foreign migrants. This would have a crucial effect on labour supply: some 40% of blacks working on South African mines are foreign; half of them come from Lesotho.

Any sudden expulsions would create a massive labour shortage on the mines. Although there are currently millions of unemployed black workers in South Africa, they are unlikely to rush to fill the employment gap. Working on the

mines involves low wages, long hours, difficult working conditions and, of course, danger. The latter was recently highlighted in an International Labour Organisation report which points out that over 8 500 people died on South Africa's mines between 1973 and 1984.

The Chamber of Mines responded that the number killed should be seen in perspective: for instance, in relation to the size of the industry with its half a million black workers. But from the point of view of many black South Africans, mining conditions are not only gruelling, unhealthy and uncomfortable, they are lethal.

If the Chamber wants black South Africans to fill the gap left by foreign migrants it will have to offer higher wages and better living conditions than the present predominantly hostel accommodation. The price for repatriation of foreign migrants will be a higher wage structure and much higher housing costs. Admittedly, present high metals prices, particularly of gold and platinum, may give some mines the resources to pay for these. But revising industry costs substantially upwards is not a prospect likely to appeal to shareholders unless it can be accompanied by major productivity improvements.

This is not to claim that South Africa has no power in the region. It has immense power - but it is not omnipotent. The strategy of retaliation means serious problems for the South African economy, problems heightened by the fact of a severe recession.

But retaliation will have severe effects on the Frontline states. Developed countries like Sweden, Australia, Canada and New Zealand which have supported the sanctions campaign have a special responsibility to ensure that economic support is forthcoming for those countries which must bear the brunt of retaliation.

#### THE EFFECT ON SOUTH AFRICA



Any assessment of the effect sanctions are likely to have on the South African economy necessarily involves a good deal of guesswork. Too many variables can impact in a variety of ways for one to develop a precise scenario. And many factors are unknown: how rigorously will

sanctions be applied? Will they be comprehensive or selective? How successful has government's stockpiling policy really been? What arrangements for sanctions-busting have been made, and how successful are they likely to be over the long term?

Despite the current ban on imports of South African coal, steel and iron ore by some of its trading partners, South Africa is unlikely to suffer a major economic decline in the near future. In fact, the level of economic activity may improve.

One probable stimulus is the improvement in the price of gold, platinum and other metals, of which South Africa is a major world supplier. Gold's recent rise to the \$400 mark, and platinum's past \$600 are cases in point, triggered in part by the fear that South Africa could withhold supplies. Each \$10 increase in the gold price alone earns the South African economy an extra \$200-million, so a major improvement in the gold price to, say, \$500 would provide a powerful boost to the ailing economy.

An irony of the sanctions campaign is that the more it promotes crisis conditions inside South Africa, the more likely it is to push up the price of gold and platinum: South Africa produces 60% of the West's gold and 80% of its platinum. Intensification of crisis in South Africa thus leads to panic in the world metal markets, and a rush for gold and platinum which pushes up their prices. The more pessimistic the West's perception of the crisis, the higher the metals' prices - which thereby reduces the severity of the crisis.

What if the West bans imports of gold and platinum? This is highly unlikely because without South African supplies, industrialised nations could not meet their own needs. Were the West to be starved of gold there would be major disruptions to its financial and monetary systems; disruptions which would in turn reverberate throughout the international economy. Catch-22: the West does not want to include gold in the sanctions net because it is too important to its economies; but by excluding gold, the effect of sanctions is crucially diminished.

A second factor likely to cause an economic upswing is the effect of sanctions on local business activity. As imports decline, local companies and entrepreneurs will probably move to fill the import gap. Government spending is

also likely to increase, providing a further important boost. Such spending will be essential for government to give substance to its claim that 'we can go it alone'.

But an economic upswing of this kind is unlikely to have a major positive impact on employment levels. Although increased activity will probably create some new jobs, this is likely to be countered by the fact that some export industries - especially coal, which employs about 72 000 black mine workers, and iron and steel - will reduce employment levels as their overseas markets shrink. And inflation is likely to remain high (though it might come down slightly over the next few months) due to the continued weakness of the rand and increasing government expenditure.

High inflation combined with high unemployment will continue to provide a fertile breeding ground for social disorder, particularly among the hardest-hit black section of the community, but also among so-called poor whites. Such conditions feed political resistance to government policies from both left and right, encouraging political ferment across the spectrum. Despite what the Bureau for Information may say, black opposition can only increase.

This may take one of two forms, or some combination of them. To the extent that government allows black groups to operate legally, they will use every opportunity to put pressure on government and to make its existing institutions unworkable. To the extent that government suppresses legal black political activity, underground action will increase. This will produce more violence and an escalation of the guerilla war.

So despite the possibility of a limited economic upswing over the next two or three years, there is likely to be a marked worsening of the political situation and a gradual escalation of violence, including guerilla warfare.

Should the sanctions campaign gain ground, as seems likely at present, South Africans can expect gradual but serious inroads on their economic life. Without foreign investment, new technologies, spare parts for existing machinery and equipment, new computer equipment and software programmes - and with shortages of oil supplies and shrinking international markets - the

economy must eventually begin to grind down.

This economic war of attrition may take decades to achieve its goal of forcing the government to enter serious negotiations. But combined with a deteriorating political situation and escalating violence it will get there in the end. No modern economy can hope to survive in isolation - or even semi-isolation - from the rest of the world and at the same time finance an escalating war.

## SANCTIONS AND LABOUR



What will the effect of sanctions on the trade union movement and unemployment be? If the ultimate result is economic erosion, it will be accompanied by rising mass unemployment. As the guerilla war and internal violence intensify, some unemployed, both black and white, may be absorbed into the military and the police, as happened during the Rhodesian war. But the ranks of the jobless will nonetheless swell.

This will be compounded by the massive black urbanisation which can be anticipated over the next few years. Despite the limitations on influx from the 'independent' bantustans, government's relaxation on influx controls will dramatically increase the numbers of urban blacks. Along with unemployment, this influx is likely to strain the organisational resources of both trade union and community bodies. There is a danger that employers and government may exploit this situation to drive a wedge between those already established in the urban areas and the newly urbanised.

In a recent interview Malcolm Fraser dealt with the effect of sanctions on the black community: 'It is often said that sanctions hurt blacks and therefore should not be imposed. While recognising that sanctions will have an impact on the lives of blacks, I believe this argument should be put aside. The blacks are hurting now, every day, in South Africa. In many townships, the unemployment is 60% to 70%. Because the land is barren in the homelands, there is virtually no activity and unemployment is even greater. Further, the mere imposition of apartheid creates

most difficult conditions for the black population. Virtually all black leaders, with the exception of Chief Buthelezi, say: "Impose sanctions. We would sooner be hurt more now than endure our present conditions forever". That is their decision. It is a legitimate decision'.

Employers and members of the government who weep crocodile tears about the effect sanctions will have on black unemployment levels are hypercritical. It was this government which allowed interest rates to rocket in 1984, hurling our economy into its worst recession since World War II and throwing hundreds of thousands of people out of work. The same employers who today deplore the effect of sanctions on jobs, then encouraged government in its policies and retrenched vast numbers of workers. Their new-found concern to protect jobs is rank opportunism.

Yet the answer Fraser gives is not entirely convincing either. As he points out, black leaders are saying that black people 'would sooner be hurt now than endure present conditions forever'. But this assumes that sanctions will achieve an end to apartheid quite rapidly. Yet the reverse is true. Sanctions will take a long time to reach their goal. The analogy between a short, sharp hurt 'now' and a long and drawn-out suffering 'forever' is not accurate. Unfortunately, both forms of suffering will be long and drawn-out.

What effect will rising unemployment and the gradual rundown of the economy have on the trade union movement? It will, to put it mildly, be a testing time for the unions and the working-class movement as a whole. When sanctions were imposed on the Soviet Union after the 1917 Revolution, they helped reduce the numbers of the Russian working class and weaken the base of the Bolshevik Party, with crucial effects on the form of Soviet government thereafter. Not for nothing did Lenin and the Bolsheviks condemn the West's sanctions policy against the Soviet Union, understanding it as an attempt to smash the revolution.

What will be the fate of the organised working class in South Africa as sanctions take hold? Fraser does not tell us, but then the organised working class is not his concern. But for the leaders of that class, both in the trade unions and in other organisations, it is a vital issue.

# A University Serving the Community?

Struggles within the university, in alliance with 'the community' and its representatives, can be progressive even if reforms demanded are not that far-reaching. The way these struggles are waged can set the basis for a new education policy. JOHN HYSLOP, for Perspectives on Wits (POW), examines the wider community's view of Wits, and discusses what a university responding to popular demands would look like.

Two views on the role of liberal universities have dominated in South African opposition circles:

- \* that they perpetuate apartheid and capitalism, and cannot in any way serve popular interests. They can only be overhauled once fundamental social change takes place; or
- \* that universities' liberal opposition to certain state policies is useful in legitimising political criticism and providing an arena for political action. But the limits of change within the universities are defined by their liberal positions.

These views differ only on whether the universities can play a progressive role, but agree that little can be done to modify that liberal role.

In a recent survey to determine popular perceptions of Wits University, members of progressive community, political and trade union organisations in the Transvaal harshly criticised its social role. But they did suggest some ways the university could serve the needs of the community.

Most organisations surveyed believed it was not strategic to abandon attempts to influence the university on the grounds that it is a 'bourgeois institution'. But, they said, its liberal rhetoric should not be taken at face value. Organisations believed it was necessary to contest the universities' role in South African society; and to campaign politically for the universities to place their resources at the disposal of the oppressed.

The POW study grew out of a debate amongst a group of Wits academics, who felt the university had responded inadequately to the August 1985 police invasion of campus, particularly in the

context of a national crisis in education and ongoing resistance in the country. To play a role in social change, the university should respond to needs of the wider 'disadvantaged community' and stop formulating policies on the basis of its existing white, wealthy and professional constituencies.

POW decided to survey community views. 'The community' was defined as those mass popular organisations representing constituencies involved in educational and related struggles. The 47 Transvaal organisations interviewed were those which attended the National Education Conference called by the Soweto Parents Crisis Committee in December 1985. This included most of the major political, trade union, education, youth and community organisations in the region. POW also surveyed Wits students and overseas academics interested in South African education.

Overwhelmingly, the 'community' believed Wits represented big business and white community interests. The university is a racist institution by its very structure, and provides little recognition or space for blacks.

While more enlightened than most other universities, Wits was essentially a conservative institution, unwilling to take a stand against government policy.

Community organisations were critical of Wits' selection processes. They accepted students had to be chosen selectively and that academic standards should be maintained. But they felt the existing entrance system, based on matriculation results, was unfair to students who suffered the inadequacies and crises of the Department of Education and Training (DET). Entrance should be based on ability to learn rather than matric performance.

Organisations demanded that Wits increase its black intake, and allow greater representation of working-class and women students. In short, the composition of the university should reflect the composition of the population.

Those interviewed said courses disguised the real interests they served behind technical jargon, and many were irrelevant to community needs.

POW was told that black students often experienced overt racism and 'negative attitudes' from lecturers. Also, an over-emphasis on research led to a neglect of teaching which particularly affected disadvantaged students.

The trade union and community organisations interviewed made proposals on what the university should provide to the community.

They did not expect a politically aligned university, but did demand that it be broadly democratic. The university should attack apartheid laws, encourage critical debate, respond actively to the education crisis, and try to be accessible to the disadvantaged community.

Tests measuring ability, aptitude and potential would be the main basis for admission and students' commitment to community service would also be considered.

Academic support programmes in a non-racial university would both help Bantu Education students with academic skills, and also provide white students with some social awareness.

Two 'bridging' formats were proposed: a junior college where students could either complete a year before transferring to university or complete a two-year junior college diploma; or a pre-university bridging year on campus.

Organisations said the university should offer more courses geared to practical community needs. There should be more part-time, evening and modular courses, so that those unable to study continuously for several years could accumulate credits towards a degree. There should also be practically oriented non-degree courses.

Most organisations felt it was important to campaign for concrete changes in the structure of educational institutions.

To do this, alliances between the community and constituencies inside liberal universities were necessary to force the beginnings of an alternative

model of education.

## ANOTHER KIND OF UNIVERSITY

Some argue that trying to achieve limited changes within existing structures is reformist and that change is only possible in the context of overall social transformation. But this 'big bang' view of social change abandons the terrain of struggle to the state's educational reforms.

Education policy for large-scale social change will not be written on a blank slate: it will have to deal with changing the existing structures. This is only possible if problems within existing structures and practical alternatives are understood.

Wits does make policy under powerful constraints. But the university as a corporate body has a certain autonomy from the state and from its backers in big business. This provides a space within the university for contesting its policies.

Many demands the community made of the university may not be realised because of its structure and nature. But this does not mean the community should stop testing the limits of change in educational structures. Even limited concessions won on the basis of a coalition of trade union, community and education organisations could provide benefits and resources to the community.

The POW report stresses the need for educational debate within community organisations. Few interviewed questioned the need for traditional academic sacred cows like 'excellence', and 'high academic standards'. These concepts do have a rational social basis. A university which produced architects whose buildings fell down, doctors who killed off patients, and ignorant researchers, would not be doing its job.

But the rhetoric of 'standards' is often used to mask the class realities of universities where 'excellence' serves the needs of the dominant classes, and 'standards' and 'selectivity' keep workers and their children outside its doors.

As popular organisations develop educational policies they must question not only the political, but also the educational ideology of the liberal universities.

# Informer Leads Police to ANC Men

Cecil Kandia was a police informer. He is dead now, apparently killed in a car crash.

Jongumuzi Sisulu is the nephew of jailed ANC leader Walter Sisulu. He was raised as part of the Sisulu family, living with Walter's wife, Albertina, in Soweto.

In mid-July 1984, Jongumuzi met Kandia, and asked him for a job. Kandia offered to employ him at his garage in Magaliesburg, and said Sisulu could stay at his farm shop near Boons.

Kandia found out about ANC activities Jongumuzi and others were involved in. He betrayed them and five are now serving jail sentences for high treason.

## THE BOONS ROAD BLOCK

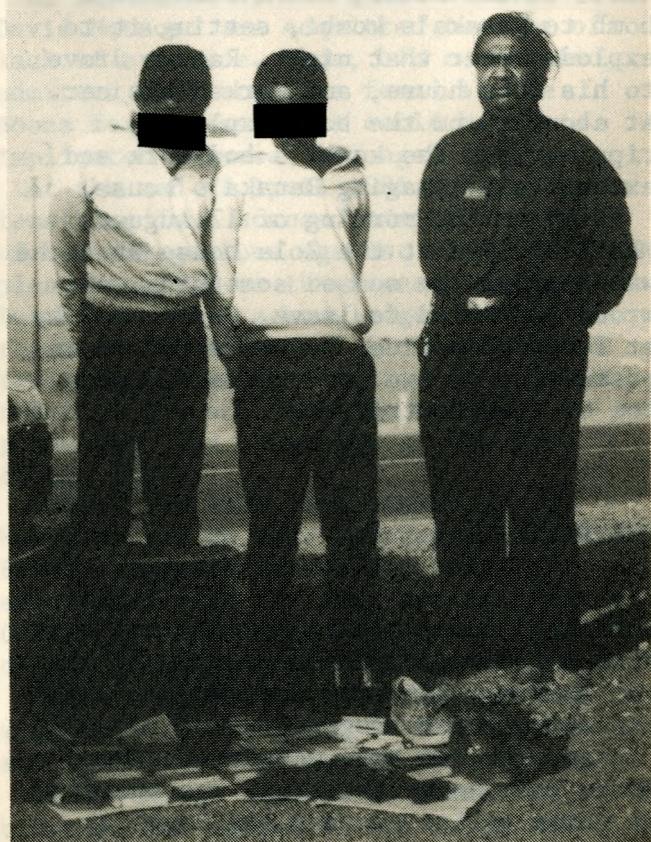
On the last day of July 1984, Major Jan Carl Coetzee, a Pretoria security policeman, was told that a car carrying weapons would travel the road between Randfontein and Orient that afternoon.

Members of the police special task force set up a road block near Orient. At about 3-30 pm, a white Mazda driven by Sisulu, with Kandia and James Dubasi as passengers, was stopped. The three occupants were immediately taken from the car, their hands tied behind their backs, and made to lie on the ground while the car was searched.

In a red bag in the boot of the car, police found three false identity books; a green note book with extensive notes on the laying of mines; and a number of novels. Bound into each novel was Umkhonto we Sizwe's 'elementary handbook on explosives', containing information on petrol bombs, timing and incendiary devices. The bag also contained an AK 47 with three magazines, and two F-1 defensive hand grenades.

From the road block, police rushed to Cecil Kandia's farm shop at Boons, where David Matsose and Joseph Maja were staying. Maja saw them arriving, and ran off. Major Marthinus Strydom ordered his men to open fire. Maja fell, seriously wounded. Moments later, David Matsose was arrested inside the old farm house.

In the house police found a trunk containing limpet mines, detonators, TNT



Sisulu, Dubasi and Kandia  
at the time of their arrest.  
Faces are blocked out to comply with  
the Prisons Act.

explosives, ANC pamphlets, over R1 000 in cash, and a number of hand-written notes concerning sabotage targets and planned ANC operations.

## BOMB AND GRENADE ATTACKS IN SOWETO

Meanwhile, Happy Mkefa had been active in Soweto. On the evening of 15 May 1984, he attached a high-explosive bomb to a car belonging to security police sergeant XR Ntsila. Early the next morning the bomb exploded, destroying the car which was parked at Jabulani police station.

Four days later, Mkefa struck again, this time throwing a grenade at a house in Naledi. As the occupants chased him up the street, Mkefa threw another grenade at them, superficially injuring one Botha Phillip Kgwedi.

Detective-Warrant Officer Reuben Ranaka was Mkefa's next target. On the

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evening of 11 July 1984, he stopped at a friend's supermarket in Emdeni South. While in the store, Mkefa attached a bomb to Ranaka's kombi, setting it to explode later that night. Ranaka drove to his Dube house, and parked his car. At about 10 pm the bomb exploded, ripping open the kombi's bodywork and extensively damaging Ranaka's house.

Early on the morning of 17 August, Mkefa arrived at the Zola house where he was staying. He sensed something was wrong and tried to leave. Confronted by at least 30 police, he was arrested in possession of two hand grenades and a box of 9 mm cartridges.

## THE TRIAL

Dubasi, Sisulu, Mkefa, Matsose and Maja were all detained under section 29 of the Internal Security Act and extensively interrogated.

Maja, who had been wounded in the Boons farm house shooting, was operated on while police guarded his hospital room. Prior to his arrest, he had been trained as a medical orderly by the ANC, and worked in a Maputo hospital.

The accused first appeared in court in December 1984. They faced charges of high treason, terrorism and furthering the aims of the banned African National Congress. The state listed a number of incidents in which the accused were allegedly involved.

**The Mamelodi pylon:** On 20 August 1983, Dubasi and another ANC member, Donald Modise, sabotaged a high-tension electricity pylon in Mamelodi. Serious damage was caused, and the electricity supply in and around Pretoria, including several installations important to the area's economy, defence, security and communications, were disrupted.

**De Deur and the death of Donald Modise:** On the evening of 11 March 1984, Dubasi, Sisulu, Donald Modise and ANC member Joe Masilela tried to sabotage a railway bridge near De Deur, near Vereeniging.

While Dubasi and Masilela installed explosives under the bridge, Sisulu and Modise waited in a car. Two policemen approached the car, whereupon an occupant fired on them with an AK 47. The police returned fire, and the car,

driven by Sisulu, drove off.

The police car followed. As it passed under the bridge, Dubasi and Masilela opened fire on it.

Modise was wounded in the chase. They abandoned the car and Sisulu carried him through nearby farm lands for a while. Finally Sisulu abandoned him and went on, carrying an AK 47. He later hid the weapon, and escaped. Police searched the abandoned car and found hand grenades, two AK 47s, and explosive devices.

The next day, Constable Percy van den Berg saw Donald Modise standing on the edge of a farm. Modise lay flat when Van den Berg drew up, but then stood up with his back to the policeman. Modise pulled the pin from a grenade, and threw it at the policeman. Van den Berg took cover, and after the grenade had exploded, shot Donald Modise dead.

**The pylon in New Canada:** One night in June or July 1984, Dubasi, Sisulu and Joe Masilela attached blocks of TNT and plastic explosives to an overhead pylon on the railway line near New Canada station. Later that night, a railway worker dislodged the explosives while working on the line. Next morning, a railway signalman found the explosives on the ground and called the police.

**The Sizakancane murder:** Constables Maphala and Tsotetsi were on night duty at Jabulani police station on the night of 13-14 June 1984. At about 1 am, they went to an all-night fast food outlet at the Sizakancane shopping centre for a snack. Unbeknown to them, Dubasi, Sisulu, Mkefa and Joe Masilela were watching the shopping centre, each armed with an AK 47.

Tsotetsi left Maphala in the car and went into the shop. As he returned, the four opened fire from two different directions, trapping the policemen in crossfire. Tsotetsi was killed, hit by 37 bullets. Maphala was seriously injured, but later recovered.

**The death of Joe Masilela:** By 17 August, Donald Modise was dead, and all the accused were in detention. From information gained during interrogation of the accused, police traced Joe Masilela to a house in the Soweto suburb of Mapetla. Masilela refused to give himself up, and police opened fire on the house, killing him.

**Military training:** According to the state, Dubasi (28), left South Africa in

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1978, joined the ANC, and underwent training in ANC military camps.

Sisulu (26), alleged the state, became an ANC member in 1983, and was trained within South Africa.

Mkefa (21) and Matsose (24), it was claimed, joined the ANC in 1983, and underwent military training in Swaziland and Mozambique.

And Maja (25), the state said, left South Africa in 1976, joined the ANC, and received both medical and military training In Mozambique, Swaziland, Angola, Tanzania and the Soviet Union.

**Arms caches:** As a result of police investigations carried out after the arrest of the accused, a large number of arms caches were uncovered. The state claimed the accused were legally responsible for caches uncovered near:

- \* The Dakota Drive-In, Langlaagte;
- \* Emdeni Extention;
- \* Veld between Kliptown and Dlamini;
- \* Mamelodi;
- \* Magaliesberg;
- \* Zola.

These caches contained grenades, AK 47s, limpet mines, ammunition, ANC literature, and various explosive devices.

**Sabotage targets:** Finally the state alleged Dubasi, Sisulu, Mkefa and Matsose reconnoitred two planned sabotage targets: the Hollard Street stock exchange in Johannesburg, and the Witwatersrand Command Headquarters of the SA Defence Force.

The trial began in the Rand Supreme Court on 10 March 1986, before Justice AM van Niekerk and two assessors. Much of the evidence led concerned security police interrogative methods, as the accused claimed they had been forced to point out various arms caches under extreme duress.

Under cross-examination, Lieutenant Andre du Plessis denied being present when Sisulu was electrically tortured at Protea police station. But in a surprising admission, he said it was possible this could have happened during his absence from the interrogation room. Du Plessis admitted he had heard security police talk about obtaining

information from detainees by the use of electric torture.

At the close of the state's case, David Matsose was acquitted because of lack of evidence. Maja, his co-accused, admitted that articles found at the Boons farm house which could have implicated Matsose, belonged to him.

At the end of April 1986, the remaining four accused admitted certain of the allegations against them, and pleaded guilty to the treason charge. Dubasi and Maja acknowledged having received ANC training, although Maja's training had been primarily as a medical orderly. The accused also admitted possession and knowledge of the arms caches listed.

Dubasi admitted involvement in the Mamelodi and De Deur sabotage acts, and Sisulu conceded he had actively associated with the ANC, and transported Dubasi and others to De Deur on the night of the attempted bridge sabotage.

Mkefa admitted the grenade and bomb attacks in Soweto, and to hiding arms and ammunition for use by ANC members.

Maja, though trained as a medical orderly, had agreed to act as an ANC courier transporting weapons and explosives. He admitted possession of handgrenades, AK 47 rifles, TNT blocks and limpet mines.

The state, however, abandoned all allegations concerning the murder at the Sizakancane shopping centre, and the accused were acquitted on this particularly serious charge.

On 21 May 1986, Justice van Niekerk passed sentence on the accused. Jail sentences ranging from five to 14 years were imposed:

James Dubasi - 12 years;  
Jongumuzi Sisulu - 5 years;  
Happy Mkefa - 14 years;  
Joseph Maja - 10 years.

So ended a remarkable two years for the eight major actors in this trial. Three are dead - ANC guerillas Donald Modise and Joe Masilela, and police spy Cecil Kandia; David Matsose is free; and the remaining four have started serving their jail sentences for high treason.

# Strikes and Disputes: Transvaal

COMPANY AND AREA	UNION	WORKERS	DATE	EVENTS AND OUTCOME
Acoustical Fibreglass Springs, Vanderbijlpark	CWIU	640	05-07.08	About 400 workers at the Springs plant staged a sleep-in strike demanding the reinstatement of a shop steward allegedly unfairly dismissed. Vanderbijlpark workers stopped work in sympathy on 6 August. Following negotiations, CWIU accepted that the dismissal was fair and workers returned to work.
Baldwins Steel Brakpan	SEAWU		22-24.07	After the IMF-affiliated union declared a dispute with SEIFSA, workers at Baldwin Steel downed tools demanding higher wages. SEIFSA offered a minimum wage of R2,22/hour, while the IMF unions demanded a wage of R3,50/hour.
Duracell Batteries		55	25.07	Duracell will lay off virtually its entire workforce. Its UK parent company has decided to wind down operations over the next six months. The fall in the rand and a 10% import surcharge levy undermined Duracell's profitability.
Dunlop Benoni	CWIU	600	07.08	Workers went on strike when wage negotiations broke down. Those earning R2,43/hour are demanding R3,10/hour and improved maternity leave and shift allowances. Dunlop was prepared to negotiate over wage increases only, and offered an increase of 57c/hour to be implemented gradually over the next 17 months. It refused to backdate the increase to June and did not want negotiations re-opened until 1988. Workers were locked out on 15 August. A conciliation board met on 19 August to try to resolve the dispute. Dunlop refused to allow shop stewards and organisers to report back to striking workers. Negotiations broke down again on 27 August and the board collapsed. Dunlop began recruiting scab labour. On 1 September workers were again locked out of the plant and told they would not be allowed to return until negotiations were concluded.
Epol	FAWU	2 000	28.08	Workers at nine plants banned overtime to back their demand for a living wage. FAWU is demanding a R23 increase on the current minimum of R97/week. It also wants a dust-free working environment and a reduction to 50kg in the maximum weight workers are required to carry.
Expandite Isando	CWIU	50	22.08	Workers went on strike demanding the introduction of job descriptions and grading. The CWIU had pushed for this for two years, as without it workers could be asked to do any job and not be paid accordingly. Workers rejected the company's decision to employ a consultant to draw up the scheme.
Farm Fare Wynberg	FAWU	500	24-29.07	Workers held a sleep-in strike demanding a 50% across-the-board wage increase on the minimum wage of R86/week. Management offered 7,5% over six months. Negotiations began in June but broke down because of what the union called 'management's rigidity'. Workers ended the strike on 29 August when the company applied to the supreme court for an order restraining them from occupying company premises outside working hours. Strikers returned to work on 4 August.
Gypsum Industries and Concor	BCAWU	540	11.08	About 290 Concor workers were dismissed from the Amalgam, Johannesburg and Westonaria plants for going on strike in May. They had demanded that the minimum wage of R1,56/hour be increased to R2,30/hour plus a 70c across-the-board increase. Gypsum Industries dismissed 250 workers from its Pretoria plant in March. BCAWU threatened nationwide solidarity action to force the reinstatement of workers dismissed after strikes at the two companies.

COMPANY AND AREA	UNION	WORKERS	DATE	EVENTS AND OUTCOME
Hlengiwe High School			12.06	Teachers went on strike demanding the expulsion of two pupils who allegedly injured a fellow teacher.
Le Carbone Industria	MAWU	180	30.07	About 180 workers went on strike in protest against the dismissal of seven colleagues, and demanding recognition of MAWU. About 120 workers were arrested. They were released the next day without being charged. The company then dismissed all strikers. MAWU claims the company refuses to negotiate, and that an appeal would be made to the IMF to pressurise Le Carbone. The union will also seek a reinstatement order from the Industrial Court.
Maizeco Waltloo Pretoria	FBWU	400	20-26.08	A strike began after four workers were taken by police for questioning over claims made by the company security chief. The arrested workers were released. Strikers demanded the dismissal of the security chief and the exclusion of police from internal company affairs. The strike had not ended by 26 August.
Maponya Discount Stores		3	19.08	The industrial court found that three employees were unfairly dismissed by the company last year. The three were awarded a joint sum of R6 500. Maponya Stores had ignored earlier industrial court orders to reinstate the three and failed to attend a conciliation board hearing. The three claimed they were dismissed for their union activities.
Mobil Isando and Benoni	CWIU	170	13-19.08	Workers held a sleep-in strike demanding the reinstatement of a shop steward. Negotiations resumed on 15 August. Workers returned to work when management agreed to continue negotiating with the union.
Nels Dairy	CCAWUSA		05.06-30.07	Workers went on strike protesting against the detention of CCAWUSA leaders under emergency regulations. On 18 June about 1 000 workers were arrested and detained for two weeks. On their release 750 workers were dismissed. CCAWUSA called for reinstatement of all workers, recognition of the union and payment for the period out of work. The matter was resolved at the end of July.
National Poultry	FBWU	90	28.07	Workers were fired after a strike in July protesting against the dismissal of four workers. Strikers were dismissed and evicted from the company farm. The workers moved to the union's offices. Workers claimed they earned a minimum of R40/week and worked in poor conditions. They demanded that the company recognise their union.
OK Bazaars Pretoria	CCAWUSA		25.07	The entire workforce went on strike protesting against the dismissal of a deaf-mute worker. The worker allegedly made an improper suggestion to a white woman. Management denied a strike occurred.
Pharma Natura	SACWU	40	29.08	Workers were dismissed last year when they staged an illegal two-hour strike over the recognition of shop stewards. Their application for reinstatement was turned down by the court. The court indicated that illegal strikes might be condoned if the circumstances giving rise to the illegal strike were not created by employees; and employees were faced with conditions which made striking the only reasonable option.
Pilkington Glass	CWIU	1 800	26.08	Wage talks deadlocked over management's refusal to negotiate a national wage agreement at five plants. Management left the meeting, the union applied for conciliation and prepared for a strike ballot.

COMPANY AND AREA	UNION	WORKERS	DATE	EVENTS AND OUTCOME
Pretoria Wholesale Druggists	CWIU	200	13.08	The union and the company agreed to improvements in overtime rates, leave, service allowances, indemnity leave, annual bonuses and the recognition of May Day and 16 June as paid holidays. They also agreed to 30% increase on the minimum wage bringing it to R109/week. Working hours were reduced from 45 to 40 hours a week without loss of pay. The increases were backdated to 1 July.
PUTCO	TAWU		24.08	TAWU declared a dispute with Putco alleging it had given a sweetheart union, Zakheni Transport Union, stop-order facilities. TAWU intends to apply for an interdict to stop deductions from the wages of TAWU members.
SEIFSA	IMF unions			<p>MAWU decided to hold a strike ballot from 5-11 September to gauge support for a national strike against this year's centralised wage determinations. But the Minister of Manpower blocked a national strike by extending the gazetted wage agreement to include non-parties.</p> <p>Despite SEIFSA's opposition to plant-level bargaining, several influential SEIFSA affiliates have concluded wage agreements with MAWU. One Anglo American Corporation (Amic) factory has granted the R3,50/hour minimum the IMF unions demanded. Negotiations continue at six other Amic plants.</p>
Table Top Clayville	FAWU	280	26.08-03.09	Workers began a sleep-in strike demanding the reinstatement of 80 colleagues dismissed from Table Top Distribution Centre in early August. They had been fired after stoppages in protest against the detention under emergency regulations of their shop steward. Negotiations broke down on 2 September but resumed that evening. Workers returned to work.
Travel Lodge Alberton		100	13.08	At the beginning of August workers went on strike when management decided to retrench with two month's severance pay. Workers demanded a minimum of five months pay, which management agreed to after negotiations.
Tembisa Town Council	SABMAWU	900	May-Aug	Workers went on strike demanding a monthly minimum wage of R700, reinstatement of three dismissed workers and recognition of their union. The workers were dismissed. The council decided to reinstate some workers 'out of sympathy'. Tembisa residents began a rent boycott in support of the strike and demands.
West Rand Devt Board	DBBLAEU			Thirteen development boards were dissolved on 1 July. Despite government assurance that board employees would not lose their jobs, the union alleged WRAB was trying to retrench its black workers. In some cases workers were called before disciplinary hearings to answer charges of misconduct from the previous year. The union has intervened in 34 cases which were taken to the industrial court.

## Strikes and Disputes: Natal

BTR Dunlop Sydney Road Durban	MAWU	1 200	25.06-30.07	Workers downed tools in support of their demand for a 50c/hour pay rise spread over 12 months. Management offered 54c/hour increase over 16 months. On 27 June, Dunlop obtained a supreme court interdict and strikers were forcibly evicted from the factory premises although their strike was legal. Management increased its offer to 60c/hour over 12 months. Workers accepted this and returned to work. The minimum wage will increase from R116/week to R143/week.
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COMPANY AND AREA	UNION	WORKERS	DATE	EVENTS AND OUTCOME
Clover Dairies Pietermaritzburg	FAWU	230	June	<p>In June management reversed its promise to implement an interim wage increase. After a strike, management agreed to backdate the increases but dismissed a shop steward.</p> <p>Workers went on strike again accusing the company of breaking an agreement not to take action against workers who participated in the strike. Management reinstated the steward.</p> <p>UWUSA unionists threatened FAWU workers and though management was informed, it took no action. It then dismissed the chair of the shop stewards committee who it alleged instigated workers to attack UWUSA organisers and a councillor.</p> <p>A series of strikes over management's refusal to extend negotiations to cover wage and working conditions also occurred during June. Workers, convinced Clover was trying to smash FAWU, went on strike on 30 June, and 230 were fired.</p> <p>FAWU declared a dispute through the industrial council, and when the company refused to settle, the council referred the case to the Industrial Court.</p> <p>FAWU asked the court to grant an order compelling Clover to allow a legal strike ballot at eight plants. Clover accused FAWU of an unfair labour practice by organising a consumer boycott of Clover, NCD and Elite products.</p>
Damol-Lurie Multi Metals	MAWU	100	12.08	Workers held a one-day work stoppage when the company employed new staff rather than recently-retrenched workers.
Texfin Durban	NUTW/TAWU	200	25.08	<p>On 25 August two NUTW officials arrived at the factory for discussions with management. But workers told management that they supported an official from TAWU, a recent breakaway from the COSATU-affiliated NUTW. The two officials were allegedly assaulted by TAWU members. Pro-NUTW workers stopped work and protested to management. Two TAWU members allegedly responsible were suspended on full pay pending a disciplinary hearing. Workers, angry at the suspension downed tools and called for their reinstatement.</p> <p>When NUTW admitted it could not halt the stoppage, management suspended its agreement with the union. It gave NUTW a fortnight to sort out the dispute after which it would consider cancelling its recognition agreement with NUTW.</p> <p>Earlier, in July, NUTW had won an interim order against three union officials preventing them from passing themselves off as members following their dismissal from the union. The three then formed the rival Textile and Allied Workers Union.</p>
Toyota SA Prospecton	NAAWU	3 600	10-15.07	<p>Thousands of workers went on strike demanding a 50c increase bringing the minimum wage to R3,83/hour, and protesting against further short-time to begin the next week. Workers were locked out when they allegedly tried to damage cars on an assembly line. Following negotiations management offered an 8c/hour increase and not to introduce short-time.</p> <p>When talks deadlocked, workers were given notice on 14 July. But the next day they returned to work. The company decided to retrench about 260 workers at the beginning of August as the only way to avoid short-time.</p>
Zululand Creosoting	BAWU	300	01.08	Workers went on strike in April against retrenchment. They were dismissed and evicted from their homes with their families. BAWU brought an application to the industrial court for the reinstatement of

COMPANY AND AREA	UNION	WORKERS	DATE	EVENTS AND OUTCOME
				workers. But the court could not hear the application because the applicant was not a registered union. It allowed the union time to resubmit the application under the names of the individual workers.
<b>Strikes and Disputes: OFS/Cape</b>				
General Motors	NAAWU	270	Aug	General Motors plans to reduce its staff by 270 salaried and hourly paid workers. The company said rationalisation was necessary in the depressed vehicle market. About 160 employees would take early retirement from the end of August and the others would be retrenched from 1 August. After consultation with unions it was decided that older hourly-paid workers would take early retirement.
Mercedes Benz	NAAWU	3 000	07.07	Workers went on strike when the company decided to close the plant because of production bottlenecks due to a go-slow in the paint shop. A week later NAAWU declared a dispute over the definition of short-time claims.
Mondi	PWAWU		12.08	In July PWAWU declared a dispute with Mondi over wage increases. A conciliation board failed to settle the matter. Workers began a national strike ballot.
Nampak Epping	PWAWU	130	08-11.08	Workers stopped work after negotiations for a recognition agreement reached deadlock. They had demanded 30 days paid training leave, six recognised shop stewards and a one-hour report-back meeting every month. Management offered to recognise five shop stewards, and introduce 30-minute monthly report-back meetings. The strike ended when the union agreed to five stewards with 12 days unpaid leave for union business and five days paid leave for union training and 30-minute monthly report-backs.
PG Wood Epping	PWAWU	200	06.08	Workers downed tools demanding a 35% increase while management offered 5%. After negotiations, both parties agreed to 15% from 1 July. Workers demanded a one-hour monthly report-back meeting instead of the current 30 minutes; and that PG Wood end its 'racist sponsorship of sport', particularly the vast amounts spent on promoting the rebel Australian cricket tour.
Renak Diep River	EAUW		28.07	Workers introduced an overtime ban on 28 July to support their demand for an increase in the minimum wage from R2,30/hour to R3,90/hour. They refused to work shifts as this would undermine the ban; the mainly female workforce did not want to work night shifts which disrupted family life. EAUW accused Renak of employing scab labour for night shifts. Workers went on strike on 31 July when management refused to consider their demands. On 5 August workers went on strike again when negotiations broke down. EAUW withdrew from negotiations saying management had not bargained in good faith. A week later EAUW threatened the company with an unfair labour practice charge if it did not show its financial records to back claims it could not afford the increase. Management then offered R2,60/hour. EAUW appealed to Plessey workers in Britain to help stop management's 'campaign of terror'. Workers said management had threatened union members with police harassment and detention.

# Strikes and Disputes: Mines

COMPANY AND AREA	UNION	WORKERS	DATE	EVENTS AND OUTCOME
Chamber of Mines	NUM		June	<p>NUM declared a dispute with the Chamber on 7 July after the breakdown of month-long wage talks. NUM rejected the Chamber's wage offer of increases of 15-20% and demanded 30% across-the-board. Other demands are that workers be given job transfers at the same wages if injured at work; May Day and 16 June be made public holidays; and 100% holiday and leave allowance.</p> <p>In August the Minister of Manpower appointed a conciliation board. However this was done out of time, and NUM thus has the legal right to strike.</p> <p>At the first meeting on 21 August the board was adjourned over a disagreement over its terms of reference as to which workers NUM represented. On 4 September the issue was resolved and the meeting adjourned to 15 September.</p>
East Rand Gold and Uranian Company (Anglo American)	NUM			<p>Negotiations over wages and working conditions began in May. NUM originally demanded a 45% wage increase while ERGO offered a 16% across-the-board increase. The union declared a dispute on 7 June.</p> <p>At conciliation board meetings in August NUM reduced its demand to 30% and the company increased its offer to 16-19% increase. Talks then deadlocked.</p> <p>At the beginning of September, NUM began a strike ballot at the mine. The union represents 616 of 871 workers.</p>
Secunda Colliery (SASOL)	CWIU	4 000	14-22.07	<p>Following a deadlock in wage negotiations coal miners began protest action. On 14 July miners at one shaft held a six-hour work stoppage. Sasol 2 and 3 workers went on strike on 24 July when management said it would implement a new increase from 1 July even though negotiations were still in progress. Management then agreed that the increase would apply only to non-union members.</p> <p>Workers returned to work while the company undertook to discuss the grievances.</p>
Western Holdings (Anglo American) Welkom	NUM	3 500	21-29.07	<p>Workers went on strike over the dismissal of four shaft stewards, fired after the death of four team leaders ten days before. NUM said the inquiry into the incident had not followed agreed procedures. Workers at No 6 shaft staged a go-slow. Management closed the shaft because of unsafe working conditions on 25 July. After discussions between NUM and mine management, workers returned to work.</p>

## TRADE UNIONS AND THE EMERGENCY

Unions began fighting for full pay for detainees held under emergency regulations. NAAWU criticised General Motors for refusing to pay five detained workers though they were kept on the workforce. In mid-August the company reviewed its no-work, no-pay policy, and offered to set up a relief fund from which it would pay 50% of wages to detainees' families. NAAWU continued to demand full pay. Families of detained workers are currently being supported by donations from fellow workers. Volkswagen offered to pay 75% of detainees' wages and guarantee their jobs for 180 days. It will review the situation every three months. The Cape Town Municipal Workers Association and Cape Town City Council agreed after negotiations that the council would pay detained workers' wages in full to their families. PWAWU began negotiations with Sappi and Saveall, who were not paying detained employees, while Plascon agreed to pay three detained employees for the first 14 days spent in detention. The CWIU began negotiating for payment for the full period in detention.

The strikes and disputes table reflects a very limited sample of current labour action. Emergency regulations, lack of space, and necessary selection of material mean that the table is a very incomplete record.

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