CHANGING THE SABC: IVY MATSEPE-CASABURRI SPEAKS PERSONALLY R4,50

WORK IN PROGRESS

WIP 93 • NOVEMBER 1993

WHO SAYS IT DON'T MATTER IF YOU'RE BLACK OR WHITE?

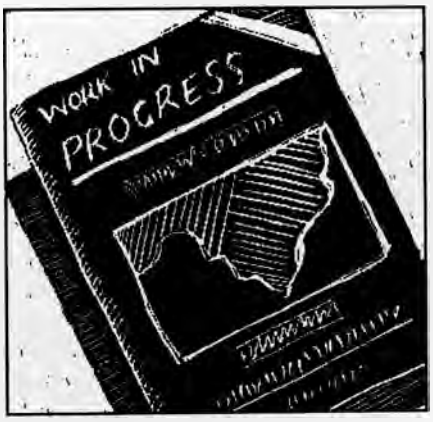
the new south african identity crisis

WHAT'S LEFT?
Updates from Palestine, Cuba & Chile

Editorial comment

Let's get the agenda sorted out

As multi-party negotiations start to bear fruit and we move closer towards an election, some important issues are in danger of slipping off the agenda.



In this edition of *Work In Progress*, we try to focus attention on a couple of those issues:

● INTEGRITY: Much has been said about the recent 'peace agreement' brokered between the PLO's Yasir Arafat and Israeli prime minister Yitzak Rabin. But the PLO seems to have made some serious mistakes — opting for a solution which could, in the long run, undermine decades of struggle. There are a few lessons which South Africans cannot ignore, and in this edition veteran Palestinian activist Edward Said tries to guide us through the compromises.

● SOLIDARITY: *WIP* recently brought veteran Chilean politician Manuel Cabieses Donoso to South Africa, and the activists he met benefitted greatly from his explanation of conditions in Chile 20 years after the coup. Cabieses' country is held up by the west as an economic success story — and for the three people who together own more than 70% of the country's wealth, it probably is. But not for the massive numbers of people who live under the breadline (approximately 46% of the population, compared to 20% prior to the 1973 coup). The neoliberal economic model and its accompanying misery are making it easier for the Left to organise in Chile, but it is still an uphill battle — and one which we should watch with interest.

● IDENTITY: Race has always played a dominant role in the South African struggle. Despite this, the struggle to develop a truly non-racial ethic has not been too successful — probably, as our writers argue in this edition, because opposition to racism is not the same thing as building non-racialism. If we're going to build a truly democratic South Africa, we're going to have to deal with race and racism — and that means building true non-racialism, rather than multi-racialism. It's an issue that affects all of us, and one which needs urgent attention.

● Finally, RADICAL CHANGE: South Africa's first Conference of the Left is definitely on (see page 2). Cosatu and the SACP have been charged with the task of convening the conference, and the gathering is likely to have a profound effect on the nature of post-apartheid South Africa. The conference will have to put aside petty differences and grapple with very real problems ... poverty, social injustice, unemployment, marginalisation. It will have to debate new forms of organisation, the many challenges facing the Left internationally and at home, and ways of harnessing the collective energy of those committed to radical change. It will, above all, have to ensure the rapid implementation of the Reconstruction and Development Programme — at a time when the winds of change may be blowing very, very lightly.

— *Chris Vick*

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PHOTO: NATASHA PINCUS

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More and more South Africans tell pollsters they don't know who they're going to vote for. The big question, though, is are they going to vote at all...

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From Moscow to Mogadishu — Jeremy Cronin shows how the Cold War's made way for the New World Order

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LAND

Partners in conservation

RURAL COMMUNITIES ARE INVOLVED IN developing new solutions to the hunger for land and employment — biospheres, a form of conservation cooperative in which people are integrally involved in the conservation process.

The idea has its origins in Russia, where it was first introduced about 22 years ago. Today there are about 270 biosphere reserves in more than 60 countries around the world.

■ COMING INTO LAND: Biospheres offer a unique joint venture

In South Africa, the concept is still a new one; reserves have been introduced by the Natal Parks Board (NPB) at Bulwer, Kamberg, Pongolapoort, Underberg, Coleford and Cobham state forest.

These biospheres generally consist of three zones:

● A core area, which is essentially a wilderness area where the environment is formally protected.

● A buffer area of protected game or nature reserve.

● A transitional area surrounding the buffer zone which involves land used for agriculture, commercial tourism and development.

The latest attempt to form a biosphere is being played out in the Weenen-Escort district, where the NPB and local farmers are starting to develop the Thukela Biosphere Reserve. They have put forward an ambitious plan for what could be the province's biggest game reserve.

Conflict and suspicion

The area has a long history of conflict between white farmers and black communities manifested in evictions, stock impounding, stock theft, assaults and deaths. Given this history of conflict, communities in the area have viewed the biosphere reserve plan with caution and suspicion.

The present economy of the region, which is mainly dependent on agriculture, is very poor. Intensive maize or cattle farming is not suitable or profitable in the area and farmers are heavily dependent on subsidies.

If it succeeds, the reserve would radically change the economy of the district. Maize and cattle farming would become insignificant.

The NPB and farmers involved in the plan feel the reserve could develop in a similar way to Mala-Mala and Londolozi. This block of north-eastern Transvaal reserves is the largest generator of income, employment and government revenue in their subregion. If the Thukela Biosphere fails to meet these expectations, the Weenen/Estcourt areas' economic activity will decline even further.

Role-players

There are three major role-players in the Thukela project, each with their own agenda:

● The NPB: The parks board has had difficulty securing funding to buy land. The major benefit of the biosphere plan is that it provides a means of extending and privatising conservation. Game stock could be bought cheaply from NPB reserves, particularly in Weenen, where there is difficulty in sustaining present stock because of the drought. In turn, the NPB would be able to draw on this stock for breeding.

● White farmers: They appear most interested in the economic viability of game farming, linked to eco-tourism. Some farmers also see an opportunity to secure their farms against livestock poaching and illegal grazing.

● Local communities: Communities stand to acquire more land within the biosphere's boundaries and, possibly, increased job opportunities. They are, however, still deeply mistrustful of what the reserve could mean. They believe there could be pressure to reduce their livestock, and fear eviction from farms in the biosphere. They also believe unemployment could increase because eco-tourism may not provide enough jobs.

Several meetings have already been held between farmers and the affected communities of Cornfields and Tembalihle. The key issue to emerge was the communities' need for more land, and the farmers' willingness to look at making this land available.

The farmers also offered assistance with farming methods, livestock marketing and water provision.

A subsequent meeting saw agreement on what land the communities would acquire. Still outstanding is the issue of how communities will acquire the extra 8 000 hectares of land. Farmers are insisting that the land be bought at market values, but communities say prices should be negotiated as the farmers have benefitted from apartheid over the years while communities have been impoverished.

The Department of Regional and Land Affairs has given a verbal commitment to help the communities buy this land. ■

— Estelle Randall (AFRA)

POLITICS

Conference of the Left

SOUTH AFRICA'S FIRST CONFERENCE OF the Left, intended to bring together a range of disparate socialist forces, is being planned for June 1994.

The conference will be convened jointly by Cosatu and the SACP, and will focus on developing a broad left-wing movement in South Africa. It will also look specifically at the implementation of the alliance's Reconstruction and Development Programme, and the role this can play in building socialism.

The Conference of the Left is one of a series of conferences planned for the next nine months which will clarify exactly how the reconstruction programme is going to be implemented. Implicit in this series of gatherings is the development of a more cohesive Left project in South Africa.

The first meeting, scheduled for December, is an alliance reconstruction conference. This will see the formalisation of the reconstruction programme by the three main alliance partners.

It will be followed by a civil society reconstruction conference in February 1994, which will bring on board the mass democratic movement, civics, women's groups, the youth and other formations.

The Conference of the Left itself is planned for June 1994. It will be hosted jointly by the SACP and Cosatu, in terms of a resolution adopted at Cosatu's September special conference.

The resolution — proposed by Numsa — instructs Cosatu and the party to "host a conference of the Left consisting of working class organisations with a mass-based constituency".

Calls for such a conference were first made at Numsa's 1991 conference, and confirmed by the Cosatu congress that year, but were never implemented. They have been given impetus in recent months by calls by several Cosatu affiliates for new forms of organisation of working-class organisations.

Who's in? Who's out?

A key issue at the conference is participation. Numsa information officer Langa Zita, in an article due to be published in the next issue of *African Communist*, argues that the conference should be as inclusive as possible.

He suggests the participation of at least the following:

- The Left within the Congress movement. This includes Cosatu and the SACP, the Left within the mass democratic movement (in particular the civic movement), youth and students, the progressive church movement, "the feminist and sexual consciousness movement" and environmental groups.
- The Left outside the Congress movement, for example Wosa, Issa, the PAC and Azapo. "Black consciousness and pan-Africanism have something to contribute to this process, in as far as they conceive their ideas within the concrete concerns of the working-class and the rural poor," Zita says.

Platform or party?

Another key issue is the overall objective of such a conference. The debate over whether to form a workers' platform (a coalition of socialist forces) or a workers' party will be a crucial one, and one which will influence relationships with the new government.

There is strong support for the idea — articulated by Mzwanele Mayekiso in *WIP92* — of bolstering the SACP rather than setting up a new party. As Mayekiso put it: "From where will a working-class party draw its coherence, given our fragmented background and the disagreements that exist within the socialist movement? Why don't we instead put that effort into reinvigorating the SACP, with its tens of thousands of members?"

But there are also calls — such as the one made at this year's Numsa congress — for the formation of a new workers' party.

In his *AC* article, Zita argues for two main objectives:

- The short-term objective — contesting the character of the ANC, developing a programme of Left forces within the ANC.
- A more long-term objective — "pursuing a Left consensus beyond the Congress movement". This, he suggests, can best be realised through a Left platform rather than a new party: "A platform is more loose and flexible than a party manifesto and programme." In addition, he says, "a platform would be preferable if the mistrust and animosity of the past are to be overcome."

A regional Left

Further down the line, a regional conference of the Left is also in the pipeline. Influenced by the successes of the Sao Paulo Forum — which unites Left forces throughout Latin America — socialists in our sub-continent have been talking about a Southern African version of the forum, which would unite leftwing parties and forces in South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe and elsewhere. ■

— Chris Vick

VIETNAM

■ HO HO HO: The last laugh's on Ho Chi Minh

Another little dragon

HELL KNOWS NO SCORN LIKE A defeated superpower, as Vietnam knows very well. But, 20 years after trying to bomb the country back into the Stone Age, Washington now seems poised to call a halt to the war it continued to wage via economic embargoes and the IMF.

Economic analysts expect Vietnam to boom once the embargo is lifted; *New Statesman* reports that "no less an authority than Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew tells everyone who listens that Vietnam is the next giant to emerge in Asia".

The snag is that the country remains, officially, communist and committed to "building socialism". The constitution clearly declares that market mechanisms shall remain "under the management of the state" and follow "a socialist orientation".

The state also seems in no mood to indulge dissent. Earlier this year, eight intellectuals were sent to prison for forming a discussion group, the "Freedom Forum".

Free market theorists argue that the rise of a new middle class will soon spawn demands for political and civic freedoms. But *New Statesman* says the opposite may happen in Vietnam's case. "Everywhere in Saigon you can see party cadres, dressed neatly in grey slacks and pressed grey shirts. Each carries a portable phone and a paging device. Introduce yourself, and in return you get a card, which presents the bearer as a representative of a Japanese or Korean company.

"In fact, to get anything done in Vietnam, money has to cross hands and a party functionary somewhere gets a rake-off. The middle-ranking party officials are the new class, not in the sense of a bureaucracy that appropriates to itself a handsome slice of a socialist state, but in the older meaning of becoming bourgeois by acting as profit-hungry agents of foreign capitalism."

The labour code seems impressively progressive, allowing workers to join trade unions and putting a ceiling on working hours. But these rights are being trampled underfoot in the race for a quick buck. There are reports of workers launching wildcat strikes to protest abuse by foreign employers.

The bad news is that the Vietnamese Confederation of Labour, in the mould of its counterparts in yesteryear's "existing socialist" countries, acts as overseer not defender of workers.

Whether party rank and file will resist the new colonisation by capital remains to be seen, especially when foreign investment seems to be the only exit from grinding, albeit war- and embargo-induced, poverty.

As the country courts foreign capital, the Vietnamese Communist Party will probably retain a central role, reminds *New Statesman*. "The indispensable condition for the economic success of the 'little dragons' has been an authoritarian state suppressing all opposition to capitalist accumulation.

"Having liberated the country from foreign armies, Ho Chi Minh's party will now police the transformation of Vietnam into a capitalist market economy under communist rule. The fusion of communist authoritarianism and market capitalism was begun by Deng Xiao Peing in China and is now being applied in Vietnam with a ruthlessness and speed that will again surprise the world."

— WIP correspondent

BOTSWANA

The eagle has landed

THE CONTROVERSIAL $1-BILLION military airbase nearing completion at Molepole, 110 kilometres north of Gaborone (see *WIP 85*), will not cost Botswana a cent.

According to government sources, agreements reached with the US about five years ago ensure that US lease payments will cover running costs.

France, which provided loan finance for the project, is also understood to have contributed to funding. Payments by the US will help cover a large proportion of the building costs over an extended period.

However, both the US administration and Botswana government are coy about the extent of their collaboration, with Botswana especially intent on preserving its image of neutrality.

US involvement in Botswana has grown in the wake of the worsening security situation in Zaire where the large US airbase at Kamina is no longer considered secure. Botswana's central location and political stability have added to its appeal as a replacement.

— Africa Analysis

LATIN AMERICA

Old times' sake

EL SALVADOR HAS BECOME THE LATEST country to be targeted by the Pentagon to host a United States Army "humanitarian aid" mission. The biggest ever US-Salvadoran joint military exercise, "Operation Strong Roads", will be held until next August, and is intended to craft a benign image for a military generally associated with bombing schools, not building them.

The exercise comes at a time when the role of the Salvadoran armed forces is subject to intense debate. The 1992 Chapultepec Accords, which ended the 12-year civil war, ordered an end to the army's role as internal security force and declared that it be used only to repel external attack. Also demanded was a sharp reduction in troop numbers and the removal of officers implicated in human rights abuses.

The military and its rightwing patrons, however, have tried to strengthen the army's role by redefining its mission to include the war on drugs, combating crime and civic aid programmes.

"Strong Roads" is aimed at bolstering the image of civic service. According to Pentagon press statements, the first phase will deploy US troops with Salvadoran military units to dig wells and build schools.

The ruling Nationalist Republican Alliance (Arena) government hopes that "Strong Roads", coupled with the army's renewed use as a security force, will enable the military to reassert itself as a pre-eminent force in Salvadoran society.

Arena also wants to see the armed forces' battered public image repaired. The army has been on the defensive ever since the release of the United Nations Truth Commission report in March. The UN report concluded that the army bore responsibility for the vast majority of human rights abuses, ranging from the 1981 massacre of 400 peasants at El Mozote, to the 1989 murder of six Jesuit priests.

■ **YANKEE DOODLE: Thousands of Salvadoran troops have been trained by the US**

The timing of "Strong Roads" also appears linked to Arena's bid for re-election. Nationwide elections are slated for March 1994, with every elected office — from municipal councils to the presidency — on the ballot. The army can help Arena cast itself in the role of social benefactor.

The exercises also allow the Pentagon to maintain an active presence in Central America, with US military leaders still cultivating strong ties with their Salvadoran counterparts.

Throughout the war, the Pentagon and its Salvadoran allies tried to win "hearts and minds" with civic action programmes that served as prototypes for "Strong Roads".

From "Operation San Vicente '83" to "United to Reconstruct" in 1986, these programmes failed to erase the military's murderous reputation. With "Strong Roads" they seem bent on giving it another try — demonstrating that for the military there indeed is life after the Cold War. ■

— Mike Zielinski, Covert Action Information Bulletin

How are you finding your new job?
It's terrifying ... it's a daunting task.

What's the best thing about the job?
I'm learning a great deal about the technical, advertising and financial issues which shape the media.

And what's the worst thing about it?
The publicity it gives me — and the demands it makes, which are new to me.

What do you think is the biggest challenge at SABC?
Transforming the corporation — its nature, form, content and role — while balancing disparate views and interests.

How do you feel about being in the public spotlight because of your new job?
I hate it. But it's like taking medicine which you have to drink, even if you hate it.

Do you think women get the recognition they deserve?
No. And I could write a thesis on this.

Are you a feminist?
Yes, if you define it as I do: Being a champion for equity between men and women, gender sensitivity as a value, and elimination of oppression of all women of all classes, races, ethnic and geographic location, age and disability.

Describe yourself...
I find it difficult to do that. I have different sides — physical, mental/intellectual, spiritual, socio-political and economic.

What is your greatest ambition?
I don't think I have any, except to always do the best I can do, then to retire and get old with dignity.

And your greatest fear?
That the transition to democracy will be bloodier.

Who is your role model?
Young people who survive terrible conditions and "make it" in society.

What do you do in your spare time?
I haven't had much of that these days, or even for the last three years. I work in my garden and try to walk (when it's safe) and try to be with family and friends. I don't know when last I did things like reading, playing tennis or partying — all of which I enjoyed!

What is your favourite food?
I'm too ashamed to tell ... otherwise, fresh fruit.

What do you think of WIP?
It's bold. It treads where South African angels fear to. It deals with a broad range of "people's issues". It's also very attractively packaged.

Are you going to vote in 1994?
Yes. For the most popular party, of course.

— Interview by Thenjiwe Nhlapo ■

Ivy Matsepe-

personally speaking

PHOTO: ELMOND JIYANE

Casaburri

Thrust into the limelight, the new head of the SABC board is gradually getting used to the glare. But that doesn't mean she enjoys it ...

Matsepe-Casaburri was born in Kroonstad, Orange Free State. She left South Africa in 1963, living in Swaziland, Zambia and the United States of America until her return in 1990. She holds a B.A. from Fort Hare University and a Ph.D. from Rutgers University, USA. Since her return, she has been director of the Education Development Trust. Matsepe-Casaburri is divorced and has no children.

The mystery of the 'don't knows'

More and more South Africans are telling pollsters they 'don't know' which party or leader they support. Likewise, a growing number flatly refuse to be interviewed by pollsters. **BOB MATTES** untangles the quandaries this phenomenon poses for politicians

WHO ARE THE "DON'T KNOWS" and the "won't tells"? Why are their ranks swelling? Are they uncertain about the electoral choices? Or do they represent rising disenchantment with political parties, with the political process, or with politics itself? Or are we witnessing one more symptom of increasing political intolerance and intimidation throughout the country?

Since September 1991, the Human Sciences Research Council (HRSC) "don't know" category (let's call it DK for short) has grown from 13% to 23% when people have been asked which leader they support. In roughly the same period, Markinor recorded a rise of DK among whites from 9% to 21%, and among urban blacks from 11% to 15%. When Markinor has asked people which political party they would vote for, the DK has increased markedly since May 1992; among whites from 4% to 12%, and among urban black voters from 11% to 16%. Research Surveys, too, has encountered a dramatic rise of DK among, for example, its black female sample (2% in February 1992, rocketing to 17% eight months later).

These figures are beginning to approach the levels of DK recorded during the dark days of bannings, restricted political activity and naked repression. In 1984, for example, HSRC recorded a 27% DK when they quizzed blacks in the PWV about their leadership preferences. A year later, a CASE survey posing more or less the same question found a 38% DK.

It's worth noting, though, that this phenomenon is not evenly distributed across all potential voters. The increase in DK detected, for example, by the HSRC has been:

- 10% to 24% among black South Africans.
- 13% to 17% among potential Asian voters.
- 14% to 22% among potential white voters.

The DK rate also differs markedly according to gender. The most recent Markinor survey found that 12% of white men refused to say which leader they would vote for; in contrast, twice as many women (23%) refused to answer. DK responses also seem to differ drastically according to region and language.

What can we glean from this? On the one hand, the DK rate is related to the survey method. When you're interviewing people by telephone, it's difficult to draw them to reveal opinions on sensitive issues (like who they will vote

GRAPHIC: THIS MAGAZINE

for). Mind you, personal interviewers have been known to badger (however politely) respondents who claim not have an opinion on an issue — a sort of "well, then get an opinion, quickly" attitude.

When the HSRC shifted from phone to personal interviews in September 1991, DK rates dropped dramatically:

- Among blacks from 26% to 11%.
- Coloureds from 46% to 20%.
- Asians from 46% to 21%.
- Whites from 14% to 12%.

A high rate of "don't knows" obviously turns electoral predictions into a minefield. In order to compensate for the lower support levels recorded by surveys (due to the DK responses) and to make the projections more realistic and newsworthy, pollsters often provide the news media with estimates of each parties' share of the total vote in an actual election. What they tend to do is assume that the people who land in the "refuse/don't know" categories are distributed among the political parties in the same pattern as people who do divulge their choices. So, if 40% of respondents say they'll vote for the ANC, then it is assumed that 40% of the DK category actually also supports the ANC.

This reasoning is not a problem if the DKs are "randomly" distributed among the sample. But, as we have seen, this is simply not the case. DK respondents seem to differ systematically from those who do divulge their opinions.

On top of this, DK responses can have a lot of different meanings. They can represent a form of "non-response" and apathy. "I don't know" might actually mean, "Go away, you're bothering me"; or, "My political opinions are none of your business"; or, "I don't trust you".

Or they signify overlooked features of social and political life in SA. In a recent omnibus survey among 8 000 blacks (in non-metropolitan and rural areas, squatter camps, hostels, Ciskei and Venda) HSRC found that:

- 4% of the total sample said they did not support or belong to any party because it was against their religion.
- 3% said they did not "believe" in politics.
- 12% said they were not interested in politics.

A glimpse at the 'don't knows'

The HSRC's omnibus survey in February this year offered a glimpse of the 'don't knows', dividing them by region. The first column reflects the percentage of 'don't knows' on the question of which leader they support; the second column which party they support.

	Leader	Party
Venda	2%	?
Eastern Cape	?	?
Natal	6%	?
Western Cape	17%	14%
Northern Tvl, Gazankulu & Lebowa	22%	11%
PWV & Kwandebele	24%	10%
Orange Free State	31%	5%
Western Transvaal	40%	30%
Eastern Transvaal & Kangwane	43%	12%
Northern Cape	51%	15%

This suggests that about 20% of that HSRC sample seem to be out of reach of the usual mobilisation by political parties. A further 2% said it was too dangerous to support a political party.

Intimidation appears to be most prevalent in specific areas. For example, a February 1992 Research Surveys poll found the DK response among black women was 30% in Durban — compared to 4% in Port Elizabeth and 12-13% in the PWV and East London. At the same time, only 3% of black women in Durban professed to support the IFP (considerably lower than the rate of support suggested by other polls).

Interestingly, another 30% in that same poll said they supported some "other" party, one not listed by name in the question. In February 1993, Research Surveys found *no* black men in Durban who admitted to supporting the IFP (this poll had a DK rate of 27% in Durban compared with 6-9% elsewhere).

"Don't know" could also mean that voters have simply not made up their minds yet, or that they are uniformed. In the HSRC's omnibus survey, 30% could not name more than three political parties, and 55% admitted they were uncertain or did not know the policy differences between the parties they *could* name.

So, at this point it might seem that the bulk of the DK phenomena is related to apathy. And, around the world, apathy and indifference often impacts on turnout on election day. Increasing rates of DK may give a rough indication of the problems confronting some political parties as they try to mobilise voters.

A related mystery is the "non-response": people who simply refuse to be interviewed. This reaction rises dramatically in areas racked by violence and tension. Research Survey's Jannie Hofmeyr has noted that in certain areas, such as Durban, 50% of black men and 60% of black women declined to discuss their political opinions with interviewers in a February 1992 poll.

It's almost impossible to know for certain, but it seems likely that those who refuse to be interviewed differ from the rest of the sample in very important ways (precisely because of the hostile or suspicious attitudes which lead them to avoid the pollster).

GRAPHIC: THIS MAGAZINE

What this suggests is that certain sections of the public are not well-connected to the political process at the moment. And the evidence indicates they are not going to be brought into this process soon — at least not by simply providing them with more information.

A good part of the "don't knows" seem to be unavailable for political mobilisation. Whether politicians can persuade these South Africans otherwise before next April remains to be seen. ■

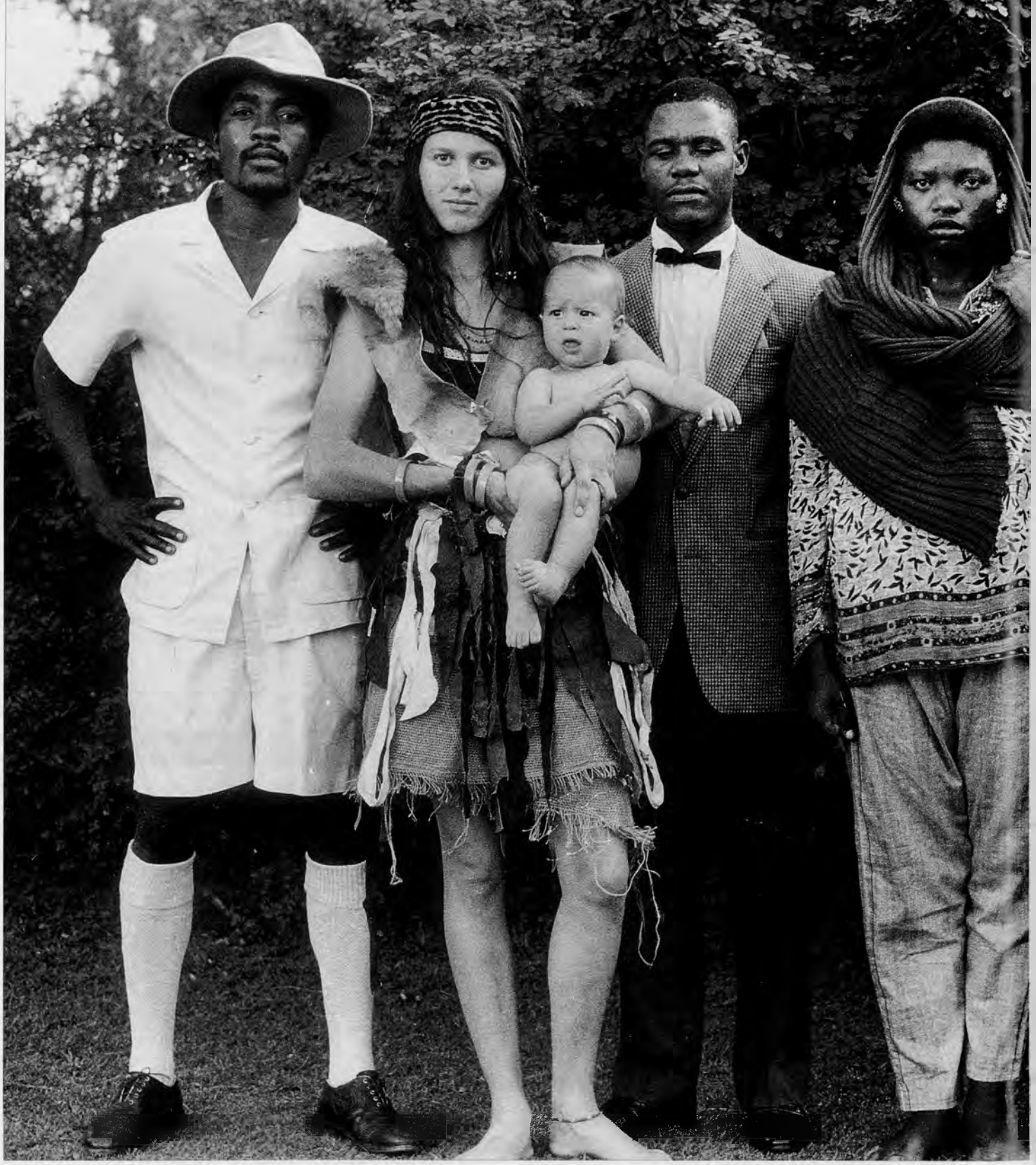


PHOTO: NATASHA PINCUS

THE NEW SOUTH AF
IDENTITY CRISIS

TRICAN

cover story

Falling down

The non-birth of non-racialism

All around us, there are signs that the non-racial project is in serious trouble. **HEIN MARAIS** looks at the implications of a country still grappling with race and identity

NON-RACIALISM TODAY IS AN emblem beaming good intentions but emptied of meaning. A hallowed concept, hollowed by misuse. The longer we stare at it, the more confused and cheated we feel.

The other day a friend quietly announced her verdict. "It's a pie in the sky," she said. Like with the most disarming lies, enough truth lay embedded in the judgment to dunk our conversation into a long silence.

"Non-racialism" had always stood as a kind of beacon for the struggle; it lifted spirits, it incited experiments in organisation and behaviour we treasured as proof that we had broken free of the black/white rut, that we had drained our politics, our visions and ourselves of the poison.

Now it has joined the ranks of motherhood and pap 'n wors — an institution, casually sanctified, something only a crazed cynic will dare ridicule in public. But privately, honestly, we can recognise in it the smell of failure.

How else, when it finds its purest expression in ephemeral and "unreal" zones: among the hobnobbing, hard-talking suits at the World Trade Centre, in the elaborate hallucinations of beer advertisements, around the cash registers of upmarket stores?

More and more, this pivot of our struggle is being transformed into a verbal memento of the hopes that propelled us forward. A concept now commandeered effortlessly by government ministers and potbellied racists, by municipal autocrats and edgy liberals.

Profound slips

'At the weekend, [the NP] had its 79th Transvaal congress opened by a black minister praying in Sotho. President FW de Klerk was welcomed by two praise singers who attempted to get the 1 000-strong crowd fired up with chants of Viva and Long Live the NP! De Klerk appeared to revel in the party's newly-found non-racialism.'
*– **Business Day**, 14 September 1993*

Isn't it weird that a fundamental part of a liberation movement's ideology can be appropriated so neatly, integrated so casually into the discourse of the opposition? Isn't it bizarre that a concept that engages the rawness at the heart of our society, and which is therefore so fraught with peril and hope — and so damn ambiguous — has evaded intellectual enquiry by the Left?

By ducking the need to scrutinise its relation to lived-life, we have steered non-racialism into a cul-de-sac. Non-racialism has become a stimulant for nice-warm-feelings, an accessory accessible to relatively elite strata in our society. To the rest, it has become drained of meaning and potency.

"It's given rise to socialising and politicising among the political elite, with folk who know how to behave themselves at dinner parties — that's been our non-racialism," says historian Ciraj Rassool.

The problem, as Rupert Taylor recently put it in his paper *Taking non-racialism seriously*, "is not that non-racialism is inappropriate, but that it has not been fully thought through in academic and everyday understanding".

"The irony," agrees political analyst Vincent Maphai, "is that racism and non-racialism are issues we understand least in SA, despite the fact that we're a paradigm of those issues."

This intellectual laziness is strange enough to tempt speculation. "Our illusory conception of non-racialism," says

Rassool, "masked the realities of racial power. It has allowed whites to be white and not question themselves."

It also obscured the pervasiveness and complexity of racism, the multiple ways in which racism infiltrates our realities and relations. It has enabled us to forget that there is no quarantine zone when it comes to racism in SA. Definitive lessons of black consciousness have been forgotten.

Fighting fire with non-fire

The nub of the problem, however, is political. In many respects the Congress movement defines itself in contrast to the system it opposes, as that which apartheid is not. Thus, the ideology of racism was countered with the doctrine of non-racialism. The practice of racism — *exclusion and rejection* — was countered by rehearsing the practice of *inclusion and acceptance* in our organisations.

But the counter-measures failed to contradict the framework established by apartheid, a framework threaded by "colour lines" and "racial groups". Generally, non-racialism meant cooperation *across* the boundaries imposed by apartheid — in other words, multiracialism. The 1990 decision to maintain the Natal and Transvaal Indian Congresses confirmed the resilience of this practice, and betrayed the diluted nature of our non-racialism.

Meanwhile, our rhetoric declares the irrelevance of race, the unity of the oppressed, the artificiality of racial identity, the sublime nature of non-racialism. Parts of Julie Frederikse's book *The Unbroken Thread* sound thoroughly religious; people talk of "discovering" non-racialism, much as one "retrieves faith", of finding themselves through it.

Surprise. A vast no-man's land has opened up between the celestial rhetoric and the racialism of our practice. Today that dismal contradiction towers over the gallant *non-racial* experiments of the 1980s.

And it's a terrain organisations now have to cross in search of votes — hence, the discomfiting racial tone of ANC election sweet talk when it courts whites, coloureds, Indians. Our chickens are home to roost.

■ **DO THE WHITE THING: Jodac meeting, Johannesburg, 1984. 'Although people basis, the reality is that they were.'**

Exalted as they are, the non-racial experiments of the 1980s also look a little different when held to the light. Doubtless, the UDF experience confirmed non-racialism's importance in Congress ideology. And, in some ways the Western Cape was seen as a kind of foundry of this revival.

"Generally, there was a lot of coming together across the racial divide," recalls one Western Cape UDF activist. "But when it came to the actual on-the-ground organising, most of it happened in a multiracial way, even among the African and coloured communities."

Interviewed in 1986, in the heydays of the UDF, Jessie Duarte confessed in *The Unbroken Thread* her concern: "Although people don't directly say they are organising on a racial basis, the reality is that they are."

Though intense at the level of ideology and rhetoric, non-racial practice was fitful. "There were genuine examples of serious attempts to develop non-racial forms relationships," Rassool recalls, "but to a large extent it was a matter of 'public non-racialism, private racism'." Non-racialism stayed a momentary rupture in an expanse of racism.

What's more, warns Rassool, "the non-racial experiences and political alliances of the 1980s have not been passed on to the next generation. That's why, with the Hani marches, people got so freaked out. Some of our leading activists of the 1980s found *laaities* yelling at them, *'Hey, whitey, gat vi' dzou stiek' ('We're gonna nail you')*.

So, are we looking at a non-racialism that is possible for an elite minority, that is a social spin-off of material comfort? Those beer ads again?

The tension mounts

Like a chill in the air, a lot of South Africans sense hardening racial tensions since the thaw of 1990.

In July, a Markinor Gallup survey found one in two black people believed racial relations had worsened — treble the 15% who had said so a year earlier. Among white people, 48% shared that perception, up from 18% the previous May.

And yet, more than half of all respondents were confident of a happy future for all South Africans.

PHOTO: PAUL WEINBERG (SOUTHLIGHT)

didn't say they were organising on a racial

"One of the dangers of partial transformation is that you perpetuate the experiential conditions that make a mockery of non-racialism," cautions Colin Bundy. "We need to ask ourselves, 'As long as Khayelitsha or Alexandra exist, how do we achieve non-racialism'?"

However deracialised and "normal" it becomes at the centre, corralled out on the perimeter will be the masses. For them race will continue to symbolise power, resources and opportunity; the code that allows you in or locks you out.

The structural blockage in the transformation of our society will make non-racialism even tougher to achieve. For Vincent Maphai this suggests we focus less on achieving "a sort of shangri-la non-racialism" and concentrate more on issues of poverty and democracy. "The way forward is to shift attention from non-racialism to democracy," Maphai advises. "What matters to me is whether I'm oppressed — on whatever grounds. Apartheid was wrong because it was *oppressive*, not because it oppressed on the basis of race."

But, asks Bundy, "in a society that has been simultaneously so undemocratic and highly racist, how do you separate the two?" He's not sure we can.

Maphai replies that "we can have a non-racial, oppressive system — let's not forget that".

And yet, much of the humanism that underpins the liberation struggle is bound up in the non-racial project, flawed as it is. Which is why it must be released from the polite, self-absolving multi-racialism that still hounds it. "It calls for a lot more self-questioning," says Rassool. "Whatever political construction or concept we tie to it, it's about understanding and fighting racism — that struggle needs to continue."

Ultimately, though, the necessity to revitalise non-racialism seems to be political. "My bottomline," Maphai acknowledges, "is to prevent racism from becoming the basis for a political project."

Polls suggest next year's election will produce an ANC victory based almost exclusively on black votes, the bulk of them African. Governing with the ANC will be an NP buoyed by white, coloured and Indian votes. "The overall effect," Patrick Bulger wrote recently in *Business Day*, "would be to entrench racial opposition as the defining character of SA democracy." We're haunted.

Given the prospect that very limited transformation will occur in the lives of the majority of the dispossessed, "race" is liable to take on far greater political significance in the traditional constituencies of the liberation movements.

Already, the Pan-Africanist Congress is trying to position itself as the channel for racially-tinged resentment and hostility rising on the margins. If such initiatives are left unchallenged, our struggle for democracy and social justice might find itself bouncing down a sideroad of racially-charged fundamentalism that can last another 40 years.

It's only a small part of the antidote, but revitalising non-racialism as a *progressive* project, investing it with some meaning, might spare us from that detour. ■

The Congress tradition: Equal but separate?

The content of the 'non-racialism' that entered our discourse in the 1950s was rather tame. By recognising the existence of political organisations that corresponded to different racial groupings, it generally stuck to the contours of apartheid ideology.

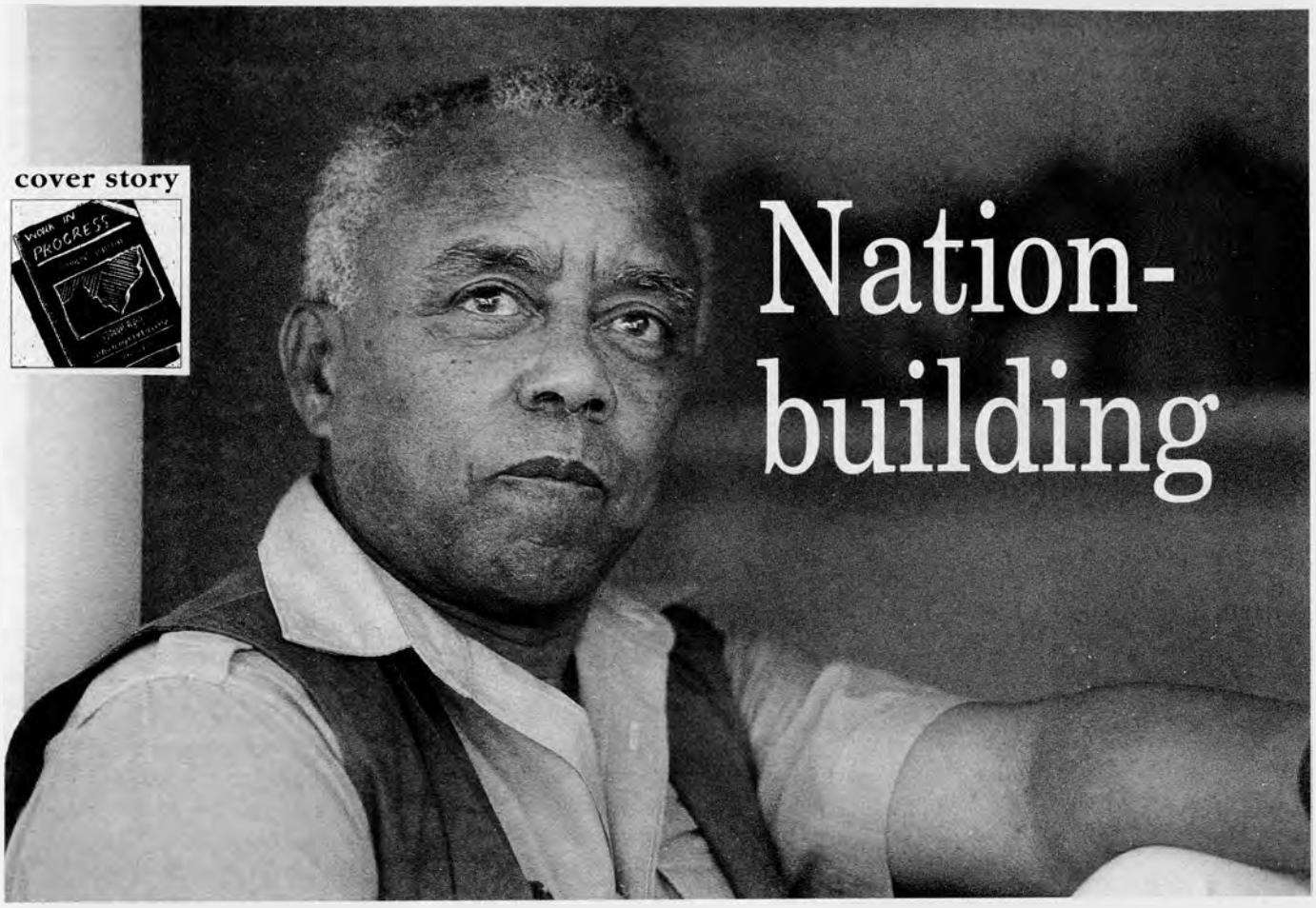
The guiding principle of 'separate but equal' was graphically expressed in the four spokes of the Congress Wheel: the ANC, SA Indian Congress, SA Coloured People's Organisation and the Congress of Democrats. The core principle was 'cooperation'.

Fervid debates broadened the meaning of the concept. But, as Rupert Taylor notes in his paper *Taking Non-racialism Seriously*, it retained 'a reactive nature, synonymous with non-discrimination, and indistinguishable from the dominant one of multi-racialism'.

What we require is a non-racialism that dissolves racial boundaries — as opposed to transcending them — and 'leads to a sense of wholeness which encourages diversity', says Taylor. And that, as Neville Alexander reminds, requires that we acknowledge 'the scientific fact that 'race' is a non-entity'. An increasingly stout body of writing supports that approach.

French thinker Etienne Balibar describes contemporary racism 'as a system of thought and a social relation, the condensed expression of a whole history'. Sure, this doesn't make 'race' any less real a feature of our lives in SA. But it debunks the notion that 'race' is a biological or psychological inevitability of human existence, and confirms that racial categorisation — and its abolition — is a social decision.

Today's pipedream can be tomorrow's routine. ■



An interview with Neville Alexander

MARAIS: The history of apartheid has been countered by a political resistance that, in many respects, has framed and defined itself in contrast to apartheid, as that which apartheid is not. So the idea of inclusion, of unifying and bringing together that which is now driven apart, has become a central element in the opposition's programme. Ideologically, then, the idea of the South African nation carries considerable force.

In addition, national unity is necessary for the achievement of equality, justice and development. There is a functional need for a nation ...

In a country so fiercely wrenched apart, the idea of building a nation — a South African nation — seems even more remote than the prospect of peace. Are we tilting at windmills? Have 'nation-building' and 'non-racialism' been reduced to empty phrases, to hangovers from yesterday's idealism? Hein Marais tests the scepticism on **NEVILLE ALEXANDER**

ALEXANDER: One can take a number of approaches to what you're saying. One can say nations are the mode of existence of modern, industrial states. If you look across the world, that's generally the case.

Secondly, the colonial system created what people like to call artificial states, especially in Africa. But these states themselves created geographical, political, economic and social boundaries that forced people to interact with one another. Benedict Anderson says in *Imagined Communities* that these states created meaning as administrative units, they became meaningful for people. It's like when you try to redraw the boundaries of the regions in SA — people have difficulty dissociating themselves from the Cape Province, Transvaal etcetera. These entities have created meaning, regardless of people's politics.

A third point: Identity is an inherent part of all ideology, and I'm talking about identity beyond yourself. If in SA we reject the nation-building project, we have to accept some sort of ethnic project — because identity is inescapable. If you're asked who or what are you, your answer will be "I am a Xhosa, a coloured, a Zulu, South African" — you cannot escape that. You identify with a particular group of people. The nation is one such identity, one of several identities.

The nation, at the political level, as an identity does not *per se* belong to this is or that class. I want to stress this: In SA, unlike other parts of the world, the bourgeoisie has promoted the capitalist project by dividing people, by making the nation exclusive, a white nation, even an Afrikaner nation. And by way of counter-acting this the national liberation movements, including socialists, have insisted on uniting

the people — not just at the geographical and juridical level, but also at the cultural and political level.

Therefore, in SA that project is a progressive one, though it's not necessarily anti-capitalist. In fact, capital is now swinging around to promote the nation-building project.

So it is important that its definition be given class content. And that is where all those things that constitute the content of a nation-building programme (like language policy) need to be informed by a class perspective.

HM: [The political philospher] Johan Degenaar says the priority is not to build a nation but to build a just society ... to build democracy. He counterposes democracy-building and nation-building. Do you find that a false tension?

NA: Completely false. Now that the Broederbond project of separate nationhood has obviously failed, a lot of people are becoming afraid of nation-building — quite correctly, in the sense of "once bitten, twice shy"; they don't want to be involved in another chauvinistic and nationalistic project. And, clearly, if nation-building goes with national chauvinism, then it is something everybody must reject.

But it doesn't have to be chauvinistic. If we look at the history of nationalism worldwide, it is only under quite clearly definable conditions that nationalism — let's rather speak of nation-building — becomes nationalistic and chauvinistic. It's not at all inevitable.

The second point is that, in so far as the nation-building project is going to go hand-in-hand with a redistribution of wealth and rights, people who have been privileged by the bourgeois project in SA are scared. They are trying to pre-empt a development that might reduce to equality people who have enjoyed privilege up to now. So a radical nation-building project is, in fact, a threat to the "haves" in SA.

What Degenaar and co. are saying is that if you don't go for the nation-building project, then we must go for the ethnic project, the Inkathas and the Volkstaters and the rest.

HM: Others like Herman Giliomee and Lawrence Schlemmer try to couch the South African reality as a bi-nationalist one, a struggle between Afrikaner nationalism and African nationalism. Which strikes me as another attempt to find a route around the nation-building imperative ...

NA: In the sense that it takes *the nation* or nations as givens, as existing forever. Of course, both of them are historians and they *do* know that nations come into being and they go out of being. But somehow they freeze the moment and say these nations are there forever and must be accommodated. It's only when you step outside the stream of history that you can think like that.

When you do, then what Gilliomee and company are saying is fundamentally false. Nation-building is an inescapable process in our context. Radicals have to put themselves behind it and define its content — *we* have to say, for instance, that being South African means you must know three languages in the future.

That's defining the content. But if you say that in SA you have two or more nations, each of them speaking a different language, you're operating in completely different parameters.

HM: Let's separate the building blocks of a nation-building project. It's been suggested that it has two central elements: consciousness-building and institution-building. The former would revolve principally around the idea of non-racialism; the latter around institutions of the state and civil society that are widely regarded as legitimate. Are these sufficient elements?

NA: That reduces nation-building to a set of sociological propositions. We need to start from the fact that a radical perspective of nation-building cannot be divorced from class interests. The leading class should determine the parameters — Marx makes the point in the Communist Manifesto that the proletariat must become the leading class in the nation before we can build socialism. Or to shift into a Gramscian metaphor, the working class must become hegemonic; it is that hegemonic class which will set the terms on which the nation is built.

Of course, the discourse of nationhood is non-class, it doesn't belong to the working class or the bourgeoisie or any other class. But at the same time, the way in which that consciousness is

Race doesn't exist

'Race' as a biological entity doesn't exist — that's a vital theoretical foundation for any non-racial project. That doesn't mean racial beliefs and prejudices are not real. They are socially real, especially if they are linked to economic and other power interests, as happened in SA with apartheid. So I don't question the social reality of 'race'.

Religion is a good analogy. Many of us might reject the existence of God, but the belief in God is so real that globally huge structures rest on it — economic, material structures. Racism is of the same order of things.

But the mere ability to question the scientific basis of racism isn't enough. It becomes clear that 'race' is a type of social construct; that racialisation of nations has to do with economic and class struggles. It also becomes clear that it can change.

Once the discussion reaches that point, then we can talk about what we do about things like language ... I'm giving you the trajectory of my own development. You suddenly begin to realise that if people can communicate with one another then a lot of the barriers, beliefs and prejudices fall away. Beyond that you realise that if kids are educated together, if certain economic and social conditions are created, you can dampen the effects of racial prejudice.

It's a long-term struggle. We see from places like the US or India, where affirmative action and anti-caste policies have been introduced, that prejudice doesn't disappear overnight. We're talking about a centuries-long process.

PHOTO: SUE KRAMER (SOUTHLIGHT)

moulded is influenced by the hegemonic class in a particular society.

I believe that if the working class project becomes hegemonic within the shaping of national consciousness, then more and more cooperative elements will enter it.

HM: You've been heard to say that "a non-racial capitalism is impossible in SA ..."

NA: I'm not saying it's theoretically impossible; I'm saying it's historically impossible. Race and class have overlapped with one another to such an extent that unless you have a class revolution against capitalism, your mode of production reproduces racial inequality. Not just class inequality, but *racial* inequality. And that is why people's consciousness will in the first place be racial consciousness, because "the white man oppresses us", he exploits us, we work for white people, etcetera.

People won't notice immediately that more and more blacks filter into that ruling class — our children's children's children might notice it, and at that stage we might talk about a non-racial capitalism. But long before we reach that point there won't be any capitalist system ... [laughs heartily]

HM: A lot of people are saying, look, non-racialism has been an integral, emotional part of the struggle but it simply does not stand up to the test of reality ...

NA: We are living in a situation marked by racial oppression and inequalities based on racial beliefs; it's difficult for us to *conceive* of change, that's why people say non-racialism is simply an *idea*, it can't work, look at what the youngsters in the townships are doing, what these AWB types are doing, and so on. They forget there's a growing layer of people in SA for whom race really doesn't matter, who don't notice your colour. The ideal is that what we call racial characteristics become invisible in the way that your stature or the colour of your eyes generally is invisible.

The moment you take an historical perspective and look at the direction things can and probably will take, you realise you're talking about a centuries-long process. But that doesn't mean we don't start now. Our generation, maybe the next one too, is not going to solve the question of racial prejudice, it's gonna take ages. But we've got to start.

*HM: The French thinker Ernest Renan said more than a century ago that nationalism depends on "forgetting history", on "getting history wrong". I'm inclined to turn that statement on its head in the South African context, and say our nation-building project, as an inclusive nationalism, depends on getting history **right**, on reclaiming history.*

NA: I'd agree with that. The denial both of the dignity and of the reality of African people's contribution to the making of SA has to be spotlit and given the dignity which it is not accorded at the moment.

On the question of *nationalism*: I really think we should uncouple the concept of the *nation* from nationalism. Generally, nationalism is an adversarial concept, it assumes antagonism towards other nations. I think we should be talking about *national consciousness*, as opposed to nationalism.

In the not-too-distant future, because of SA's dominance in the southern African region, the people of SA might well become amenable to a nationalist, chauvinist project. And we need to guard against that right now. That is, I think, where the idea of a working class project also comes in: while building a nation we've got to be internationalists. As Lenin said: to be an internationalist you first have to have nations. Internationalism presupposes the existence of nations. We have to build a nation at the same time as we bridge the boundaries between nations within southern Africa.

HM: We've been talking about non-racialism as if it has only one meaning, which of course it doesn't. The PAC also talks of non-racialism, but gives it a specific content. The very meaning of non-racialism is also subject to contest

■ **FLAG THEM DOWN: Nation-building has**

PHOTO: ROY FRANCO (SOUTHLIGHT)

to be driven – it's not the kind of thing you can just allow to happen

and struggle.

NA: It does have different meanings. There is a non-racialism that is really multi-racialism, in other words where the existence of race, of this biological entity, is presupposed. A lot of liberals speak about "non-racialism" when they really are talking about multi-racialism.

Then there is the concept that rests on the idea that the ends don't determine the means. That's the PAC and Black Consciousness attitude. Black people, because they are the oppressed, know what it's all about, they must struggle and do away with the system — and *then*, lo and behold, one will be living in a non-racial society. They will *declare* the society "non-racial". In other words, the ends and the means are totally separated.

I believe the only worthwhile non-racial project is the one that uses non-racial means. Just like democracy: you can't bring about democracy by authoritarian means. For the very same reason I think one must accept that this struggle is going to continue.

I think one of the big struggles in our country at the moment is between these two concepts.

The potential for chauvinist and black racist effects and spin-offs is very great, especially if those things can be linked to economic interests. That is why things like setting up companies where only blacks are allowed could become the thin edge of the wedge. One must start questioning that.

HM: In what sense does the state become a central element of a nation-building project?

NA: I think our tendency to find a central steering mechanism must be resisted. Any attempt to "legislate" people's consciousness is misconceived and counter-productive. There will always be people who object to it, and that's the beginning of resistance and therefore of divisions.

I don't think a *laissez faire* attitude is correct either, because then the stronger force always wins and the stronger may be a very evil one in our society.

Enabling laws are vital to this process, but they should not become punitive. You shouldn't punish people for doing what they think is right and the state thinks is wrong when they are not really invading anybody else's rights. There's a difference between saying you can only get a job if you know Xhosa and saying that knowledge of Xhosa is a recommendation for this job. There the state will play a big role. But other institutions can do the same, without laws. If a trade union says that, to become an official, you've got to be able to speak the languages of the region (the same with the church), once people start taking those things for granted, it's going to make all the difference.

And yet there are areas where an element of compulsion will be needed. Things like revenue and redistribution of taxes and so on. But, again, because we live in a society in which the capitalist class is the ruling class there are very definite limits on that.

And that is where civil society comes in, where building from below comes in. I think — and here Degenaar and I are at one — the more radical the democratic project can be within the limits of capitalism (I don't respect those limits, but I think we must accept that for the next period those limits are going to be maintained), the more radical that can be, the better for us, the better for the nation-building and the socialist project. Because when we have a strong civil society where the working class gains hegemony, then clearly the very practices that come into being will eventually impact even on the policies of the capitalist state.

We need intersecting, competing vanguard groups, interest groups if you wish, which should enrich one another through discussion. But the point of departure must be this idea of a united people, a democratic country.

I think we are arriving at that. Constitutional concepts like federalism, confederalism and unitary state are really code words for class interests which are beginning to be played out. That is why, when we stick to a unitary state (without denying decentralisation of power), we are retaining a class perspective. ■

Calling all Zulus...

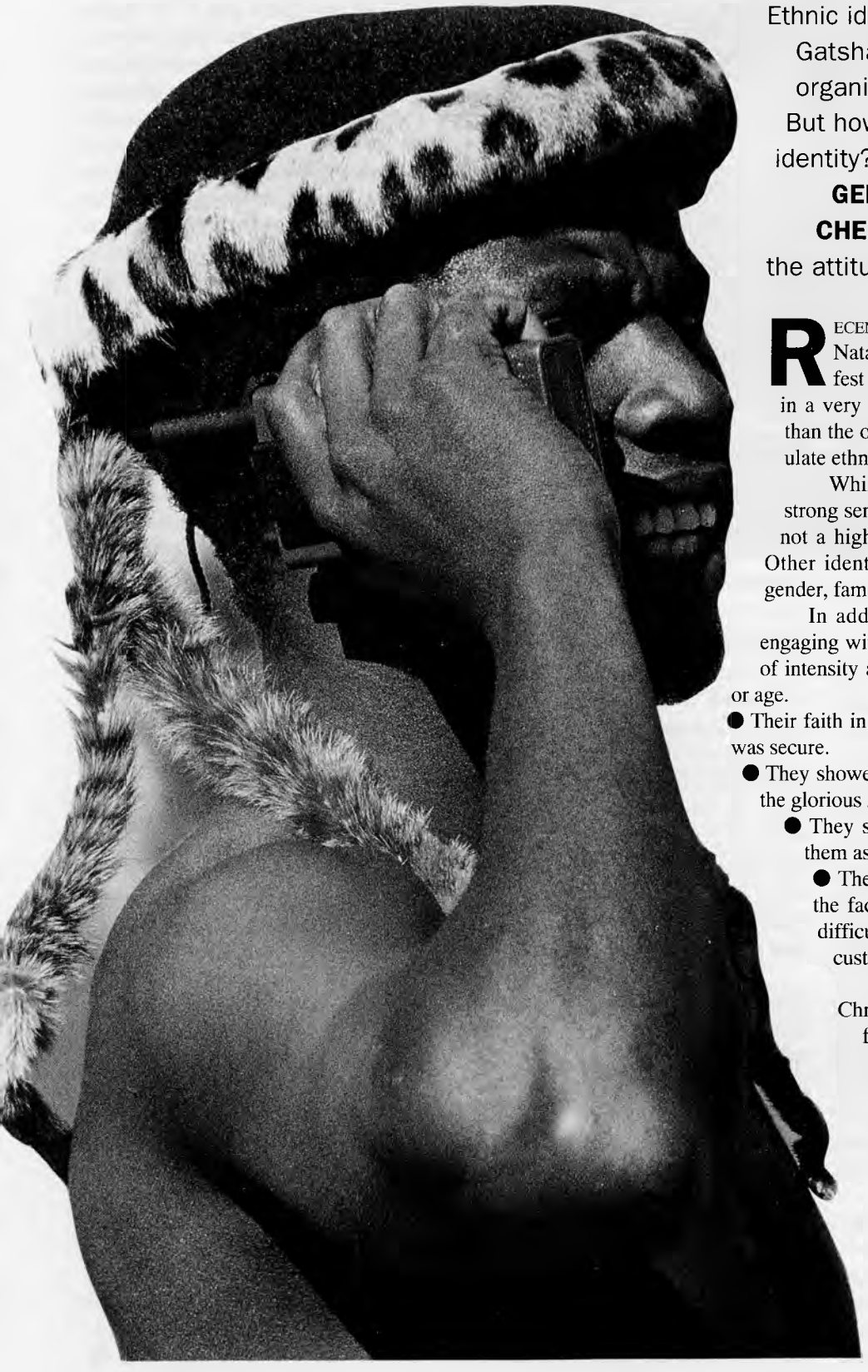


PHOTO: TOM EDLEY (SOUTHLIGHT)

Ethnic identity is a cornerstone of Gatsha Buthelezi's attempts to organise Zulu-speaking people. But how important is their ethnic identity? **CATHERINE CAMPBELL, GERHARD MARÉ** and **CHERYL WALKER** assess the attitudes of a few such people

RECENT RESEARCH WE HAVE CONDUCTED IN Natal suggests that ethnicity *does* manifest itself in people's life histories — but in a very different and more fragmented way than the one put forward by those who manipulate ethnicity for political goals.

While our interviewees generally had a strong sense of themselves as "Zulu", this was not a highly conscious or mobilised concept. Other identities came forward more strongly: gender, family, church and age in particular.

In addition, people did not appear to be engaging with their "Zuluness" at the same level of intensity and urgency as they did with gender or age.

- Their faith in the robustness of the Zulu language was secure.
- They showed little interest in Zulu history, or in the glorious Zulu past.
- They showed little sense of any threats to them as "black people" or as "Africans".
- They appeared to be quite accepting of the fact that it was becoming increasingly difficult, and costly, to observe "traditional customs."

Furthermore, for some informants, Christianity had provided replacements for the old-fashioned rural ways. The passing of customs was simply stated as a fact of life.

'A Zulu person'

What evidence is there of an ethnic identity in the stories people tell about their lives? As has been mentioned, there was little evidence for the existence of a Zulu ethnic identity in the sense of a self-conscious reference to oneself as "a Zulu person". People

seldom spontaneously referred to themselves as Zulus. When they did it was most likely to arise when people felt their Zuluness was in question.

For example, Mr J, who has a Bhaca rather than a Zulu name, spontaneously emphasised the fact that he was a Zulu, and went to some pains to explain how he nevertheless had a Bhaca name.

When pressed, people were often vague about what being a Zulu entailed. When asked directly about their ethnic identity they usually agreed quite strongly that they were Zulu — but then were often at a loss to explain what Zuluness meant for them. Informants sometimes defined Zuluness in terms of vague stereotypes, which did not necessarily apply to their own lives.

Mr P was one of few informants who spontaneousy identified himself as a Zulu person. His Zuluness came across as a strong feature of his identity: "My strong identifying as a Zulu helps whoever I am talking with to have a clear picture of who I am," he told us.

When pressed to explain his Zuluness he linked it to "certain ceremonies" such as Zulu dancing at weddings, which he described as "our pleasure". However, he then noted that there was no dancing at his own wedding because he is a Christian. He explained: "You asked what constitutes a Zulu, and how we differentiate it, [so] I explained it in the light of being a Zulu. But since we are now Christians we have forbidden those customs, as we proceed along Christian lines."

Mobilising around 'Zuluness'

We then proceded to examine what space there might be for a political broker to mobilise under the banner of "Zuluness" in a particular situation — using, for example, issues like history, practices or symbols to reinforce an ethnic identity.

On the whole, we found our informants' accounts of their life histories were markedly lacking in references to an ethnic identity. Maré's recent study of politics and ethnicity points out that Buthelezi often refers to the glorious Zulu past to mobilise ethnic sentiment. This past is symbolised in heroes such as Shaka, Cetshwayo and Dingane; characterised by mythical wisdom and bravery; and supported by a cast of warriors of legendary disciplines, but

Customs, past and respect

Three factors which spontaneously emerged in people's accounts of themselves, although not explicitly linked to a subjective sense of Zuluness, conform to criteria for an ethnic identity. They may constitute the fragments of an ethnic consciousness which could be mobilised by political brokers.

● Customs: There were a number of references to this, especially in relation to rites of passage. However, these customs were seldom referred to as 'Zulu' in nature.

Some people referred to them as 'our customs', and vaguely related these to 'black' or 'African' people.

There were also references to the problematic status of customs associated with the past in modern urban life. We were told it was difficult to keep up 'our customs' in the absence of land for growing food, and keeping livestock.

'There is a tendency for people to abandon Zulu culture ... the food we used to eat is no longer available ... I don't have a grinding stone here — I left it in a rural place,' was the explanation given by Mrs G.

The declining relevance of 'our custom' in people's eyes was often linked to the influence of competing frameworks (such as Christianity). Furthermore, the demands of the workplace, and the growing economic independence of women, had forced people to make a range of adjustments to patriarchal gender relations.

● Rural past: There were frequent references to the rural past, but these were rarely linked with Zuluness; images of the rural past were often evoked by people explaining the shortcomings of the urban present, where life was characterised in terms of poverty, alienation and conflict.

LONG LIVE THE KING: King Goodwill Zwelithini

PHOTO: JOE ALFERS (SOUTHLIGHT)

Said Mr D: 'When I was growing up I looked after everyone's cattle. I did not say: 'These are not my father's cattle.' These days if someone has a puncture, another will just say: 'That's your problem,' and walk away. If someone even kills his wife, the same thing will happen.'

There was little sense of a common historical past. Our informants' links with the past were highly individualised or family connections. Accounts of their rural history are more modest and personal than Buthelezi's evocation of a blazing trail of chiefs and warriors. They hark back to a gentle rural existence where the homestead was the main unit of production, where people were economically self-sufficient and where life was ordered and predictable.

In evoking a 'common Zulu history', Buthelezi does not refer to the homestead or to productive activities. However, perhaps his references to Shaka resonate with people's personal histories in the sense that they reinvent a time characterised by dignity and control over their own lives.

● Respect: Almost all our informants dwelt at length on the importance of respect, especially in inter-generational relationships. There was general agreement that respect was lacking in the modern township context, and a belief that this 'breakdown of respect' stood in the way of community harmony.

'There is a great difference between how these young ones are growing up. At home I was taught to respect the young and adults alike ... now the young ones don't do that, they don't care whether a person is young or an adult,' said Mr Q.

Again, this was not explicitly linked with Zuluness. However, it was the one feature of the interviews that was probably the most consistent with Buthelezi's mobilisation of an ethnic identity.

capable of an awesome anger when provoked.

In making sense of their lives, not one informant made a spontaneous reference to Zulu history. When asked what they knew about Zulu history, several people mentioned the names of Shaka, Cetshwayo and Dingane — but not one person was able to give any information about them, other than vague comments that they were "heroes of the past" and "leaders of the Zulu people".

But they still believed their children should be taught these histories.

There was also no spontaneous evidence of a sense of a "Zulu" group belongingness among the people we interviewed.

A number of informants referred disapprovingly to the notion of marriages between black and white people, making comments such as "once you lose your colour you lose your nation" (Mr K). However, in response to enquiries about the concept of a "nation" people tended to refer vaguely to differences between blacks and whites, rather than in terms of a Zulu distinctiveness.

Cultural symbols

In relation to culturally distinctive symbols and practices there were a number of factors that are of interest in relation to the possible existence of a latent for existing (but unexpressed) Zulu identity.

The first of these is *language*. None of the informants mentioned language spontaneously. However, in reply to a specific question, everyone expressed a great personal commitment to language as the cornerstone of Zuluness. This was in fact the only feature consistently associated with a Zulu identity in the interviews.

As Mr K told us:

"My children speak English (at their multi-racial school), but I emphasise to them that they should speak Zulu at home. Zulu is our pride, not necessarily due to the customs, but due to the language itself. It enables one to easily merge with one's next of kin. When someone related to you meets you it is of great pride to hear him greeting you with the distinct surnames of the lineage or clan."

Two interesting comments can be made about language at this stage:

- While there was general agreement that the Zulu language was not of economic value (in terms of material survival) there was no sense that the language was under threat.
- Language and religion are facets of Zulu identity that have not been drawn on by Buthelezi and Inkatha. This contrasts markedly with the mobilisation of Afrikaners in the 20th century.

We have two explanations for the lack of evidence of a self-conscious ethnic Zulu identity:

- The nature of the interview situation, which was not particularly well-suited to "bringing ethnicity to the fore." In our open-ended interview situation, perhaps ethnicity was not adequately problematised for it to be a self-consciously salient issue.
- The declining relevance of "Zuluness" as a useful resource for making sense of everyday life, in the light of the daily challenges of modern township life.

Perhaps Zulu ethnicity as expressed by Buthelezi is not a particularly salient factor in the lives of township residents in the 1990s.

We know he has been more successful in mobilising rural people than in mobilising urban people. His claims do not resonate for many Durban township residents in the conflictual and exclusive way he uses ethnicity, because he refers to customs people cannot practice — and a past they cannot remember or recapture.

Furthermore, Buthelezi addresses his appeals to a group of people whose confidence in the robustness of the Zulu language and community appears to be quite firm and unshaken.

Buthelezi's appeals to Zuluness do not resonate directly with urban people's everyday life experience. His appeals, for example, to a glorious warrior past filled with chiefs and heroes, or his references to the threats to Zulu identities posed by Indians, whites and Xhosas, might not necessarily resonate with the experience or identity of urban people struggling to survive under conditions of social psychological disembeddedness and material poverty and hardship.

A sense of Zuluness

In conclusion, our interviews show little evidence for a self-conscious sense of Zuluness in the sense in which an ethnic entrepreneur such as Buthelezi would characterise it.

But it would be wrong to say Zulu identity is dead. On the contrary, people have a firm confidence in its robustness, particularly in relation to the Zulu language which appeared to be the central core of our informants' sense of Zuluness.

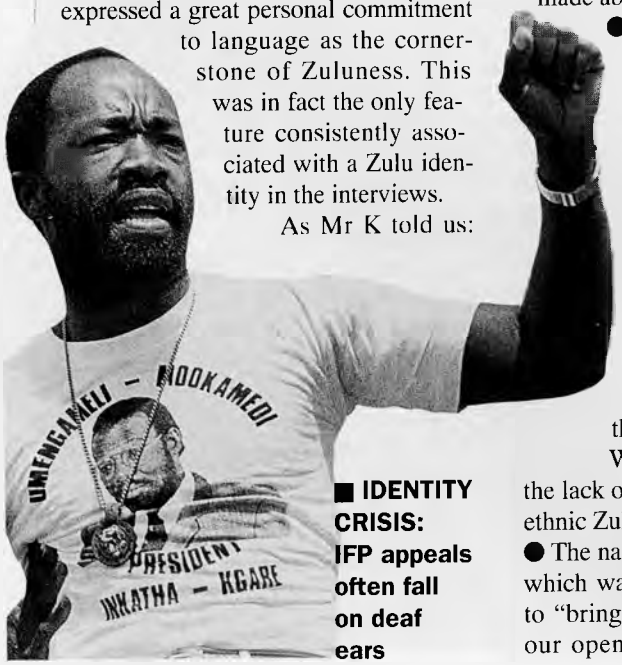
In addition, the fragments of Zulu identity which do exist — particularly in relation to language, respect, a rural past and possibly customs — could potentially be mobilised in a range of circumstances in the future (see box). ■

● *This is an edited version of sections of a paper presented to a recent conference on ethnicity, identity and nationalism, organised by Rhodes University*

Identity to the fore

Under what conditions might a 'Zulu' identity come to the fore in Natal and KwaZulu? There are three key factors:

- **The issue of regionalism, and the specific powers that will be granted to regional governments, is of central concern in setting spatial and administrative/government boundaries to ethnic identities. At the end of last year the KwaZulu government presented a constitution for a strong federal 'State of KwaZulu/Natal'. Mobilisation around this issue will have repercussions in the identity choices regional inhabitants will have to make, and also on the way 'outsiders' will define and mark 'Zulus'.**
- **A strong central government (under 'opposition' control) which deolves power to the region could be presented as not truly caring for the interests of 'Zulus' or being insensitive to the regional specificities.**
- **Language may become a mobilising platform if, for example, these 'insensitivities' extend to the educational field.**



■ **IDENTITY CRISIS: IFP appeals often fall on deaf ears**

PHOTO: KEVIN CARTER (SOUTHLIGHT)

A paler Inkatha?

For years now, foreign journalists have introduced Gatsha Buthelezi's party as 'the mainly-Zulu Inkatha Freedom Party'. But there are signs that more and more white voters are turning towards Inkatha. **BOB MATTES** descends into the data

Reports on popular support levels for Gatsha Buthelezi and Inkatha tend to stir up controversy, as readers of *WIP 88 & 89* might recall. Some survey findings peg the IFP with 5% support, others (like the Human Sciences Research Council) say 10% is closer to the truth.

Regardless of these controversies over national support, Inkatha clearly packs significant political punch in KwaZulu/Natal. Until late last year, HSRC surveys routinely found the IFP with around 37% of the Natal vote (compared with the ANC's 21% and the NP's 15%). But these numbers may be declining. February 1993 results showed support levels for the IFP dropping to 31% in that region.

Ethnicity has undeniably been a key feature of Inkatha's public profile. But how does it translate into voter support? At first glance, language appears to be a key variable in Buthelezi's support base. The February 1993 HSRC poll, for example, had 27% of Zulu-speakers saying they would vote for Buthelezi; less than 2% of both Sotho- and Xhosa-speakers admitted similar intentions. And yet Nelson Mandela fared *better* than Buthelezi among Zulus — with 33% support. A closer inspection helps.

Both Mandela and the ANC outdo Buthelezi and Inkatha among Zulu-speakers living in metropolitan areas. In a February 1992 HSRC poll, the ANC came away with 60-70% support, compared with the IFP's 10%.

So it's not surprising to find (in that 1992 survey) 11% of *metropolitan* Zulus saying they felt "close" or "very close" to Inkatha, but 42% of *non-metropolitan* Zulus saying the same.

Yet even here another crucial distinction is required. Among non-metropolitan Zulu-speakers who regularly read newspapers, the IFP has only 21% support (the ANC gets 58%). It is only among rural Zulus who seldom read magazines or newspapers that IFP support jumps — to 47%, compared with the ANC's 25%.

And the reputed influx of white support? According to HSRC polls, white support for Buthelezi has risen from 3% in May 1991 to 9% in February 1993. Support for Inkatha rose from 2% to 5% in that same period.

But Buthelezi's "popularity rating" among whites stayed fairly steady between November 1991 and May 1993, rising only slightly from 4.9 to 5.6 (on a scale of 1-10). Moreover, since September 1991 the segment of whites who feel "close" or "very close" to the IFP has not grown. It has actually declined at various points in the past two years.

So what appears to have happened is that a small group of whites — who were already predisposed to support Inkatha and its leader — have made that move, but the ranks of other white voters similarly inclined have not swollen significantly.

Which leaves the IFP with a largely Zulu-speaking, rural base and a bit of a headache: will it be able to successfully mobilise that support base to come out and vote next April?

Recently, the HSRC conducted a large-scale survey of attitudes among black voters towards political intimidation and violence. It found those most reluctant to vote lived in Natal, specifically in rural areas, were Zulu-speakers, and supported the IFP.

This is not necessarily good news for Inkatha's political foes. Buthelezi's return to the peace process depends on the concessions his brinkmanship can wrench from the ANC and NP. As long as his ultimate aim — power in the Natal / KwaZulu region — looks achievable, he is likely to step back on board.

But, as Billy Paddock pointed out in a recent *Business Day* article, "the only thing that will deter him from contesting an election ... is if he is convinced that he will lose in the KwaZulu / Natal region".

Findings such as those in the HSRC survey do not seem to make for restful nights.

■ **ZOULOU BLANC:** Some white supporters have taken the plunge

PHOTO: ERIC MILLER (SOUTHLIGHT)

Back to the future

Nationalism, internationally

From Yugoslavia to Somalia, from Iraq to Zaire ... Nationalism and nationhood are tearing the world apart. **PIERRE BAUDET** investigates

THE FEVER OF NATIONALISM HAS spread across our globe. Nightly, on TV screens, we encounter an extreme expression of the crisis of the nation state: the Yugoslavian catastrophe.

The ex-Soviet Union is the theatre of multiple cataclysms, as the old republics collapse. Similar processes are jolting Canada, Spain, Italy, even historically strong states like Britain and France.

The phenomenon is just as pronounced in the third world. Centrifugal forces are pulling apart Senegal, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Zaire, Iraq, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, India and many other countries.

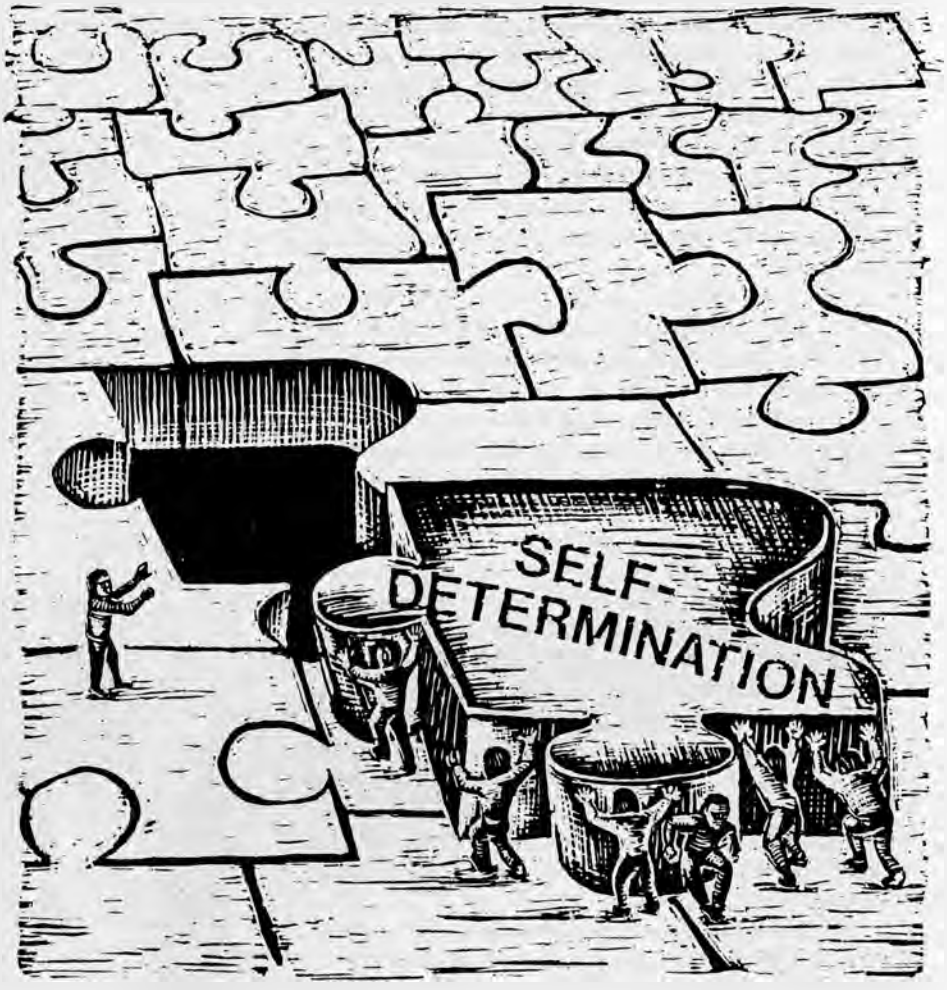
More than 70 years after the intense debates of the 1920s on nationalism and nationhood — and three decades after the wave of post-colonial states emerged — the questions of nationalism and nationhood are back with a vengeance. Can we make sense of them?

Viva neo-nationalism!

The debate has spawned some combative views. On the one side are those who promote this flourishing neo-nationalism as an escape route from the crisis of the "big" centralised states. "National liberation struggles," as the National Somali Movement declares in 'independent' Somaliland, have become more than "simply decolonisation struggles". Increasingly, the boundaries of many nation-states, especially in the third world, seem to be "unviable" vessels for nationhood.

In his new book, *The Black Man's Burden*, Basil Davidson tries to explain the failure of such states in Africa. He describes how they mimicked European state-building by forcing proto-nations and proto-states to abandon the stage of history — only to watch them bounce back a few decades later.

That argument is now catching on. Along the Casamance in West Africa, Western Senegalese are rediscovering their roots. The Oromos in Ethiopia are demanding independence or autonomy. Although not linguistically or ethnically homogenous, south-



GRAPHIC: THIS MAGAZINE

■ **THE 90s PUZZLE: The hunger for self-determination has swept the world**

ern Sudanese are leaning towards secession. Unita might push the Angolan Ovimbundus along a similar route. The list goes on.

Then one finds arguments, following on Benedict Anderson's path-breaking work *Imagined Communities*, that ascribe the rise of neo-nationalism to global political upheaval.

In the ex-Soviet Union, with its over-centralised and fragile "nation-empire", nationalisms coalesced to create new independent states. In the Baltic states these nationalisms were always resilient, and had remained low-key under the rule of empire. They were dormant, though, in ex-Soviet Asia, where nation-states had never existed. Amid the convulsions of political crisis, "imagined communities" leapt to the fore.

Elsewhere, a similar pattern of destruction / reconstruction occurs. Traditional identities — based on clan (Somalia), ethno-linguistics (Ethiopia), or religion (Sri Lanka) — become stronger because they enable people and communities to survive in the midst of economic and political collapse.

Neo-nationalism, in this view, serves an ideological function. It creates or imagines new "essential" identities that have little substantive historical basis, but nevertheless do bond communities in their struggle for survival.

Related to this are the geo-politics of the "new world order", where splitting nations into micro-states is seen as a desirable way to contain or discipline troublesome third world states.

Iraq is an example. The destruction of the Iraqi state, with its weak historical foundations (it never existed as a state before the British and the French carved up the Middle East in the 1920s), appeals as one way to strike back at an "insolent" Arab nationalism (see box).

But different contexts will produce different strategies. US imperialism now opposes — for geo-strategic reasons — neo-nationalist movements in Russia, much as it opposed them in Ethiopia during the Haile Selassie epoch.

Although such interpretations are useful when analysing specific situations, they rely on an overtly political interpretation of this upsurge of nationalism.

After decolonisation in the 1960s, African states seemed to be viable entities despite ethnic and linguistic differences. In the west, the aspirations of national minorities like the Quebecois in Canada or the Basques in Spain did not translate automatically into separatist struggles. The Left, with a strong presence in these struggles, proposed strategies that combined national and social demands. Their aim was to challenge the hegemony of the bourgeois centralised state, and develop forms of popular power within a decentralised state system.

Polarisation within these central states tended to occur more in terms of political options — more democracy, social justice, respect for minorities. There was no rupture, no drive to create a new state.

This suggests that the current march of neo-nationalism is grounded in processes that lie beyond the question of the state, processes that refer to macro-social and -economic forces.

Missionary zeal

Despite its own historical origins, Kurdish nationalism has been exploited in several superpower gameplans. To support the shah of Iran (right) in a dispute with Iraq, the CIA in 1974 and 1975 encouraged the Kurds to revolt against the Iraqi government, providing them with arms and other resources. When the shah struck a deal with the Iraqis, the support was abruptly cut off, leaving the Kurds at the mercy of fierce reprisals. Former US secretary-of-state Henry Kissinger's subsequent comment during testimony became infamous: 'One must not confuse the intelligence business with missionary work.

We have a lift-off

Keynesianism emerged as a new, dominant form of statehood after 1945. It was developed in a variety of forms, in different parts of the world, in response to the global crisis triggered by decades of intense struggle, revolution and war.

At its most sophisticated, the Keynesian state integrated the popular classes into a comprehensive social compact. The process was never complete, and relatively large social or national minorities were left out. But it nonetheless built statehood that was solid enough to sustain nationhood.

The state became the central pillar of "development" (read "capital accumulation"). It did not substitute itself for the private sector — the bourgeoisie still dominated the economy. But the regime of accumulation required a central "regulating" role from the state.

Thanks to the extension of the social wage, and other co-opting measures, the bulk of the popular classes came to locate their interests within the ambit of the state. As an historic compromise between the dominant classes themselves, Keynesianism offered the popular classes some stability and a slow growth in standards of living — in exchange for basic obedience to the capitalist state. Opposition was permitted by legalising leftwing parties; but on condition that they agreed, in principle, to respect "the rules of the game".

The same applied to most of the minorities. They could organise, agitate, demand reforms and, in many cases, win substantial changes. The French-speaking minority in Quebec in the 1960s entered a social, political and economic renaissance known as the "quiet revolution". Of course, this did not rid the system of gross injustices. But the majority of the popular classes (also within the national minorities) came to understand that change lay within the system, not outside it.

In the East, the social deal took another form, though it arose from similar strategies. During the 1950s and

1960s, the Soviet Union's partial stability was not only the result of repressive policies. A majority of its citizens (including those in the republics outside the Russian centre) were able to obtain substantial improvement in their standards of living. Nationalist agitation was limited to nostalgia for the "*ancien regimes*", especially in the Baltic states. After the 1970s, their struggles became fuelled less by nationalism and more by democratic demands.

In decolonised Africa and Asia of the early 1960s, the new nationalist states promised and, to some extent, delivered "development" — capital accumulation based on industrialisation, rural reform and modern infrastructure. For a while that "model" seemed to persuade national, ethno-linguistic and religious groupings that their interests were best guarded by the state.

Wipe-out

This process faltered when the crisis of the 1970s hit. It was a structural and prolonged crisis, one that continues today. The breakdown took many forms in different countries. Generally, it pushed central states to the point of economic, social and political bankruptcy. Societies began to implode.

Ex-Yugoslavia is a case in point. In 1990, a chauvinist Serbian movement began taking control of the old Communist Party. Slobodan Milosevic, the current Serbian leader, kicked off his electoral campaign by demagogically accusing the International Monetary Fund and the Croats of responsibility for Yugoslavia's decline.

Croatia's new nationalist elite cut its contributions to the federal state and turned towards independence, with the support of Germany and other western states.

The mainstream explanation of the subsequent crisis is that broiling nationalisms, long squashed under stalinist-titoist rule, burst into the open again. Serbs, Croats and Bosnians are presented as basically inward-looking tribes, unified around religious, linguistic or ethnic identities that stretch back to time immemorial. Their tribalist divisions were temporarily checked by an authoritarian state, but "nature" finally imposed itself. This, however, makes sense only if one ignores history.

If new nationalist movements cannot find answers, they might be confronted by neo-neo-nationalist movements from within their own populations

Like any other modern states, Yugoslavia was "created" by a subjective collective will — in its case by a popular, national movement that resisted Nazi domination. The Titoist version of stalinism shaped modern Yugoslavia out of this nationalist tradition.

Today's national-socialist war of ethnic cleansing is neither the rebirth of "secular hatred" nor the deformed continuation of "national communism". The death of Tito marked the end of the "national" principle created after 1945. The war is neither the "result" of Titoism nor the consequence of nebulous national processes: it is the problem of post-Titoism.

Either the state is able to re-establish a new "national" principle, for instance a framework where a critical mass of the people will find itself in agreement with the state, or it enters into crisis. If that crisis deepens, basic "identities" will resurface, people will fall back onto their immediate networks — family, clan, tribe, village. They will "discover" themselves as Croats, Catholics, Serbs, Orthodox, Muslims, from the "north", from the "south" and so on.

Post-nationalism?

In the third world, the breakdown takes other forms. Although most extreme in Africa, the Andean region of Latin American and the Middle East, the economic crisis batters virtually every country of the south, a few Asian "tigers" excepted.

In that context, old identities resurface. A lot of the old nationalist legitimacy associated with the confrontation with the coloniser is lost, and national populism becomes emptied of meaning. These states lack the capacities to integrate and build a "new nation". States lose their power to co-opt, and national or ethno-linguistic groups become more critical of them.

Whether in Algeria's Kabylie region or the Tamil-speaking areas of Sri Lanka, or Kurdistan, petty bourgeois elites and intellectuals have discovered that their identification with Algeria, Sri Lanka, Iraq or Senegal no longer yields sufficient returns.

This begs a central question. Is independent Eritrea better equipped to confront the IMF and neoliberal policies that marginalised the multinational state of Ethiopia in the 1970s and 1980s? If the Tamils gain independence in northern Sri Lanka, will the condition of the marginalised peasantry improve? Will the nationalist Quebecois movement be able to reduce a 20% unemployment rate and rebuild the economy?

If the new nationalist movements cannot find answers, they might be confronted by "neo-neo-nationalist" movements emerging from within their own multinational populations. Smaller, impoverished states could find themselves much worse equipped to confront the sorts of macro-policies that precipitated the crises of the 1980s. They could become autocratic, using nationalism to eliminate dissent and, at worst, engage in "ethnic cleansing", reducing other nationalities to scapegoats.

On the other hand, if they can invest the new state with legitimacy, and unite and re-organise communities to build a new future, then they might obtain enough social strength to confront the new world order.

They will have to find new ways to work with other states and nations, including the former state structures they abandoned. They might seek new confederations capable of creating enough of a critical mass to impose a new correlation of forces in their regions and further afield. If that path is chosen, neo-nationalism would have to re-invent a political project. ■

● *Pierre Beaudet is director of the Centre de'information et de documentation sur le Mozambique et l'Afrique australe (CIDMAA) in Montreal.*

Reconstruct
A Work in Progress supplement
Issue no. 14
NOVEMBER 1993

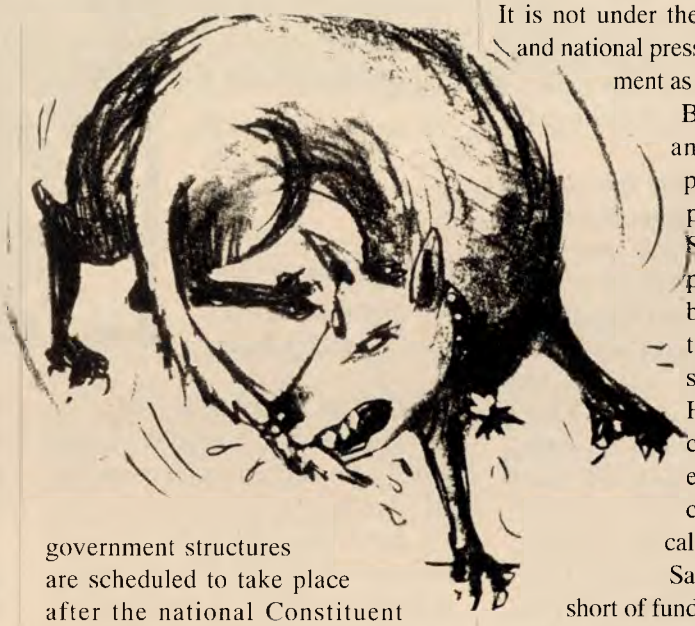
Will Sanco be watchdog or lapdog?

THE WORLD TRADE CENTRE (WTC) negotiations have so far paid little attention to the restructuring of local government. This has been left largely to the Local Government Negotiating Forum (LGNF), a two-sided table consisting of state and Sanco delegations. But the LGNF has so far failed to map out a coherent approach to transforming local government.

Central government now appears to believe it is easier to strike deals with the ANC than with Sanco, and is exploring solutions to the local impasse in bilaterals with the ANC.

Central government is apparently trying to extend its national, five-year power sharing deal with the ANC to the local level. However, the ANC's Thozamile Botha said his organisation rejected local power sharing beyond the interim period. During the interim period, appointed councils — made up of half statutory and half non-statutory bodies — will run local authorities.

But this phase is due to end next year, when elections for interim local



government structures are scheduled to take place after the national Constituent Assembly elections.

Central government also wants wealthier — essentially white — suburbs that contribute more money to local council coffers, to have a greater say than poor townships. This would be done by weighting wards in favour of these suburbs.

The ANC has apparently agreed to the concept of 'high and low density wards', or that wards will not be demarcated in terms of population figures alone.

This means that a place like Sandton, with at most 145 000 residents, could still have more clout (ie more councillors) on a local/metropolitan council than Alexandra, which has double the people.

What about civics?

But where do the civics figure in these deals? Sanco is less likely than the ANC to agree on power sharing deals. It is not under the same international and national pressure to reach a settlement as the ANC is.

But Sanco is weak and does not have a presence in large parts of the country. Sanco's national president is likely to be an ANC representative to the constituent assembly. Hundreds of other civic leaders are also expected to forego civics to fulfil political commitments.

Sanco is also critically short of funds, which hampers its ability to strengthen organisation.

Will the civics survive beyond 27 April? This edition of RECONSTRUCT focuses on how civics see the transitional period, and measures they are taking to ensure that they can become the 'watchdogs' of ordinary people, instead of the lapdogs of establishment elements seeking to buy influence. ■

FOCUS: CIVICS IN THE TRANSITION

CONTRIBUTIONS

Reconstruct **was initiated by the Urban Sector Network to raise issues related to urban development. Contributions should be sent to:**
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Civics' cash shortage could lead to compromises

Sanco is feeling the financial squeeze and civics are exploring 'creative ways' of funding themselves. But some of these ways could seriously compromise civics' independence, argues **KERRY CULLINAN**

ONE OF THE IRONIES OF THE PRESENT transitional period is that businessmen and government officials alike are scrambling to win the approval of the progressive movement.

'Community participation' is a buzzword in development circles, which basically means that it is important for those involved in development to secure the support of community organisations.

Civic associations in communities earmarked for development are thus often courted by an array of developers, engineers, planners and local government officials. All are eager to have their plans endorsed by the local civic.

Some companies, such as Murray and Roberts, appear to be making a genuine effort to become more community-oriented in their approach to development.

But other contractors want civic approval simply to assist them to win the tender for a particular project. These unscrupulous contractors often do not hesitate to offer bribes to civic officials in exchange for Sanco's stamp of approval.

Sanco is battling to raise funds, and many civic officials are unpaid fulltime volunteers. It is thus understandable that civic leaders are vulnerable to these financial offers.

Sanco's deputy chairperson of the Western Cape, John Neels, tells of how a company offered him a free holiday house if he endorsed their design for low cost houses.

"There's another consultant for a firm from Pretoria," adds Neels. "He says he wants my support for a project ... and he'll look after me and give the office five computers. He's desperate, because if he can get Sanco's approval for the project then everything is A okay. I told him he mustn't come here any more."

But Neels, who is in charge of development for Sanco in the region, readily concedes that civic leaders have to make ends meet.

"We get funds from our national office, who gets money from USAID, to employ two people in the region. The rest of us are volunteers. We work more than fulltime, but we also have to go to work outside."

Civics as consultants

Neels himself has no problem with civic members acting as consultants.

"If someone approaches me and says 'John, I would like you to consult for me', I have no problem if I accept as long as it doesn't promote a particular developer or affects the organisation later on. You've got to be very clear about that."

Sanco's national president, Moses Mayekiso, says the organisation does not have a policy on civic officials acting as consultants, but he is not against it.

"We don't have enough funds to pay staff, so civics in different regions sometimes negotiate with institutions for them to pay salaries or to fund a process," says Mayekiso. "Civics can negotiate their own approach as long as the agreement is clean and the person is not bought by the institution."

"We would act as consultants, even at a national level, to secure funds for the organisation," he says. "But we have to be careful that civics are not used in a corrupt way, such as to help one developer compete against another."

There is a real danger of civic officials compromising on their independence if they act as consultants. But at the same time, a range of people — mainly academics and ex-activists — are making a lot of money as consultants. Their role is generally to keep

PIC: ERIC MILLER

■ **DEVELOPMENT DILEMMA:** Where do civics get resources to ensure they can impact on community upgrading?

their client, usually big business, informed about the thinking in the progressive movement. Should they be able to benefit from poor communities, while the leaders of such communities — who generated the ideas in the first place — remain poverty-stricken?

Contributions

Aside from individuals acting as consultants, Neels says communities are busy finding "creative ways of resourcing civics to enable them to be effective in the transition".

He gives the example of Mossel Bay, where people occupied 202 houses owned by Mossgas, and demanded that those houses be sold to them at an affordable rate.

"I was called in to negotiate. I said if we help them to settle the selling of the houses, we want a contribution to the civic, and Mossgas agreed," says Neels.

"The community was informed of the Mossgas deal. There must be transparency about any money that comes in. It cannot be bribery because it is an open thing. It's just like getting commission."

In similar deals, the Witwatersrand Metropolitan Chamber has given the Civic Associations of Johannesburg R100 000 to enable them to participate in the chamber and the East Rand Regional Services Council has given local civics money to take part in a development forum.

In Tembisa, the local civic is discussing getting a certain percentage from each township household to pay for the civic's running costs. This 'levy' would be collected by the local council as part of the service charges residents would have to pay once the rent and service boycott has ended.

Mayekiso says Sanco's national office is aware of the Tembisa civic's plan and "supports the idea that civics find ways to pay for themselves".

"The Tembisa option is one of a number of options we are looking at. It is similar to stop orders in a trade union."

But if the civic is dependent on the local council to hand over this amount, this could influence the civic's independence. In addition, the civic is unlikely to call a rent and service boycott as this will effectively cut off their own funds.

The Tembisa option also means that everyone is forced to contribute to the running of the civic, whether they are members are not. Civics also do not have the same accountability to their members as trade unions, as residents are a more scattered, diverse group than workers all employed together in the same factory or company.

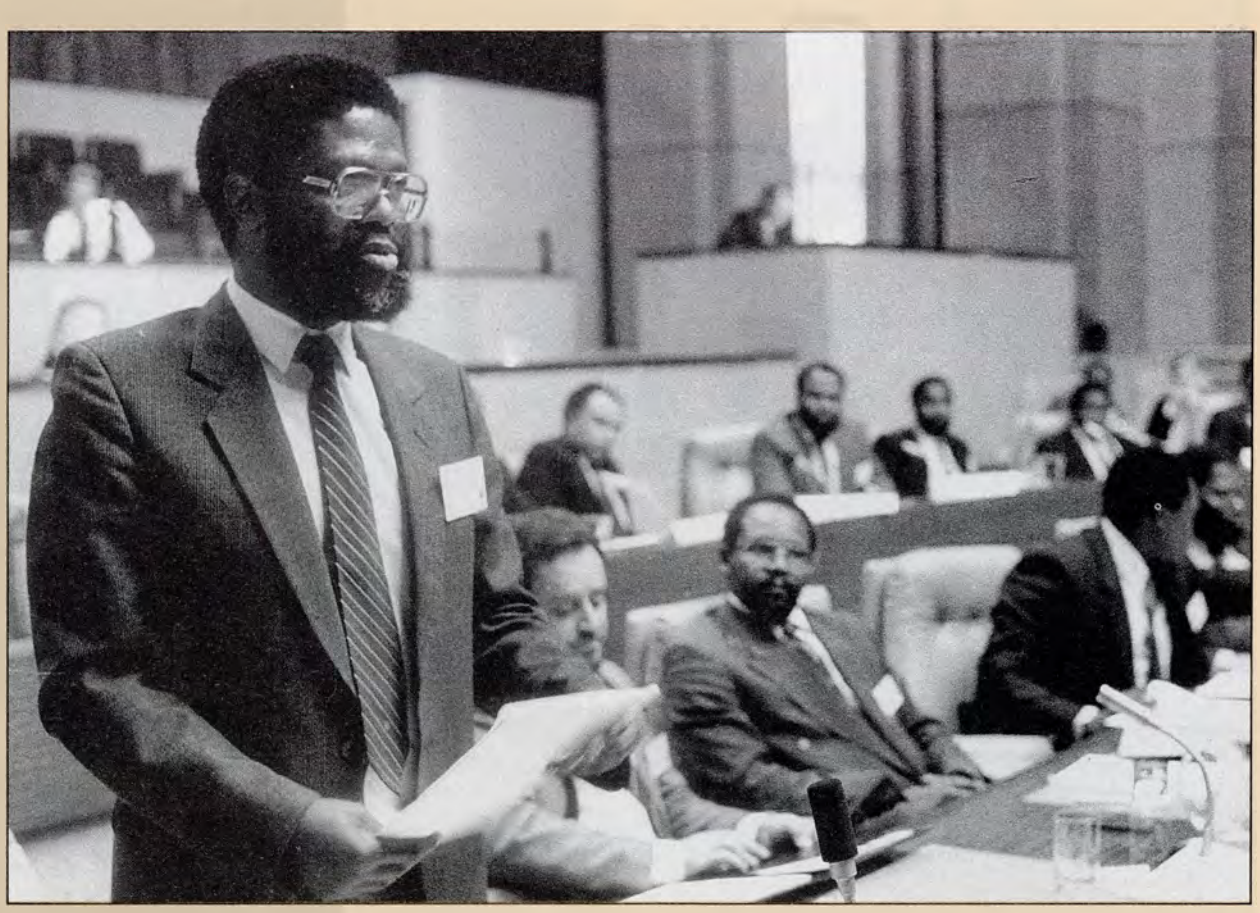
Self-help

In Alexandra, the Alexandra Civic Organisation (ACO) is looking into setting up self-help projects to help finance itself. The attraction of such projects is that ACO would not be dependent on any organisation. However, the downside of such projects is that they absorb a great deal of energy and generally yield very little money.

It is commendable that Sanco is taking steps to cut its dependence on foreign funders. However, it is venturing into dangerous waters by embarking on a host of financial ventures without developing national guidelines to direct such ventures.

The ANC's national executive committee recently adopted a code of conduct for the organisation's officials and employees, which compels them to divulge all financial interests to a special committee.

Sanco could consider a similar move to ensure, as Mayekiso says, that agreements reached with contractors are 'clean' and that civic officials are not bought by developers. ■



PIC: KENDRIDGE MATHABATHE

■ **JUNIOR PARTNER?** Sanco's president, Moses Mayekiso, addresses the LGNF

LGNF off to a false start

Sanco should admit that the Local Government Negotiating Forum (LGNF) has failed, and initiate a new, more inclusive process, argues **ELTON NGCOBO**

HOPES THAT THE CURRENT IMPASSE on the local government front would be resolved through the Local Government Negotiating Forum (LGNF) have sadly not materialised.

Mainly though the arrogance of participants on the LGNF, including Sanco, only those organisations which can claim a national base have been allowed to take part.

However, these organisations have not been able to reach consensus. An LGNF meeting scheduled for 18 August, where the draft local government transitional bill was to be discussed, did not happen. Subsequent meetings have also been postponed, and there is uncertainty about when another LGNF plenary will take place.

Civics that have not been granted a voice at the LGNF are concerned by the lack of progress. The local government transition act was meant to have been passed during the current session of parliament to usher in the transition to democratic local government, albeit during the "pre-interim phase". This session has come and gone and officials have not even attempted to explain the delay.

Government officials, such as those in the Natal Provincial Administration (NPA), have already reviewed the fourth draft of this bill. Despite requests from civics to Sanco and the LGNF, we have not even seen the first draft or other information relating to the LGNF. Some civics have not even seen agreements reached at the LGNF.

These problems have forced some of us in our civic organisation to critically analyse the proceedings of the LGNF and to question whether the process has any merit.

Our conclusions are:

● Forum is exclusive

The composition of the LGNF (comprising of the state and Sanco) is highly exclusive and ignores a number of important role players. This may explain the delay in implementing agreements reached on 30 June at the LGNF.

Neither the state nor Sanco are fully representative of all stakeholders in local government. This can be expected of the government, but one would expect that the non-statutory bodies would be loathe to participate in

a forum without several significant players.

There is general agreement, even within Sanco, that Sanco does not and cannot represent all civics in the country, nor are they equally strong in all regions. Ben Jacobs has expanded on this assertion in *WIP*. Briefly, Sanco is not well organised in informal settlements (hence the existence of organisations such as the Western Cape United Squatters Association), nor has it made inroads into rural civics.

National guidelines for restructuring local government need to be informed by local and regional dynamics. We question whether technical committees sitting in Johannesburg can understand these dynamics without input from important regional and local players.

● Poor communication

The channel of communication and education is extremely poor, especially within the non-statutory half of the LGNF.

The Natal Municipal Association (NMA) has been circulating and discussing the LGNF proceedings regularly, but this has not been happening within Sanco. As a result, civics have been invited to the forums initiated by the statutory side without any idea of proceedings at the LGNF.

The lack of input from the local — mainly non-statutory — to national level is just as disturbing. It appears that the LGNF has allowed the participation of local and regional statutory bodies, like the NMA, but has kept out non-statutory organisations on the basis that we are not national. Is Sanco aware of this, and does it have power to challenge it?

● Misleading

The terms of reference of the LGNF (ie to establish national guidelines to remove the imbalances of the past) is ambitious, and hence misleading.

The LGNF is an interim structure established undemocratically to attempt to find some form of national interim solution to the local government crisis. The most it can do at the national level is to suggest general principles.

As an organisation based in Natal, we identify certain peculiarities that do not exist nationally, eg the Joint Executive Authority and the Natal/KwaZulu divide, which has created pockets of KwaZulu in Natal.

Likewise, the peculiarities in the rural and informal areas are merely mentioned by the LGNF, and not addressed, thus giving the forum an unacceptable urban bias.

The LGNF's hope that a broad brush approach will address these peculiarities is foolhardy. Even more foolish — if not arrogant — is the LGNF's insistence that only national organisations participate.

● Junior partner

Sanco is participating as a junior partner in the LGNF, and is being misled by government officials who are not committed to the transition to democratic local government.

This is supported by the following:

● At a steering committee meeting established on the Natal north coast to investigate local government restructuring, the local National Party MP for Verulam, S Naidoo, said he had been told by Y Makda (the deputy minister of local government, and co-convenor of the LGNF) that the agreements were far from being implemented. This was said as late as 25 September, despite a time frame for transition having been agreed on.

● In mid-September, the NPA's MEC for local government, Val Volker, expressed outrage in the *Natal Mercury* newspaper at the imminent establishment of a negotiating forum to investigate democratising local government in Durban.

Volker has insisted that any forum created for this purpose must be set up in terms of the Interim Measures for Local Government Act (IMA), which the democratic movement in Durban vociferously rejected in 1991.

It was agreed at the LGNF that the IMA would be replaced by the local government transition act in September. But the transitional act has not even been discussed in parliament, which indicates that National Party insiders anticipated that agreements were not going to be implemented.

Significantly, Sanco has not commented on the failure of parliament to pass the transitional act.

● In some areas, the non-statutory groups have battled to consolidate themselves (eg in the mid-south coast). In contrast, the statutory side has mobilised with ease. However, Sanco has not paid much attention to this, which is key to ensure the levelling of the political playing field.

Worse still, non-statutory organisations are not allowed to function in tribal areas. This seems to have been overlooked by those obsessed with establishing national guidelines.

Possible solutions

There are other concerns. For example, in Natal a number of areas are administered directly by the NPA, such as Inanda. This means the NPA is the local authority. However, the LGNF has not indicated whether the NPA should also be restructured along a 50% statutory, 50% non-statutory basis.

To solve the shortcomings listed above, the non-statutory side needs to admit that the first (pre-interim) phase has come and gone, and that agreements have not been implemented.

Subsequently, the process should be suspended and the participants should allow themselves and the process to be critically assessed. Sanco should do this with all the civics.

Sanco and the statutory side should then commit themselves to compiling an inventory and analysis of all local government restructuring in the country, including those under the IMA.

Subsequently, a moratorium should be imposed on all local restructuring. This is of particular concern to us, as we have noted that the state has used the LGNF as a delaying tactic to allow white municipalities to amalgamate with white local authorities under the IMA, hence pre-empting the appointment of non-racial councils before the enactment of legislation.

Sanco should also motivate for the inclusion of all civics (and indeed all local government stakeholders) in the process. Clear lines of communication must be established both to and from the LGNF, and transparency at the LGNF must be non-negotiable. ■

• *Ngcobo works with the Amahlongwa Interim Civic Organisation (Natal South Coast). The views expressed are his own.*

Civic associations face a number of difficult decisions. What is their role once a democratic government is in place? Should civic leaders serve in local government structures? At the same time, civics have to deal with deteriorating conditions in many townships.

RECONSTRUCT spoke to civic leaders from three historically influential areas in the civic movement — Soweto, Alexandra and Port Elizabeth — about the transition and the crisis in township services.

Civics in transition

RICHARD MDAKANE, general secretary of the Alexandra Civic Organisation (ACO).

How does ACO view the recent defection of white Randburg and Sandton councillors to the ANC?

We have been negotiating with them for more than two years, and some are very progressive. Of course, they used to serve the apartheid structures but because of all the political developments, there are realignments of forces. We appreciate this realignment, as this is going to reshape the balance of forces at the local negotiating forum between Alexandra, Sandton and Randburg. I also do not think this is a sudden change of political affiliation, as a few councillors have supported the mass democratic movement for quite some time. Of course, some people will see it as political opportunism, but my organisation is seeing it as a realignment of forces at a local level.

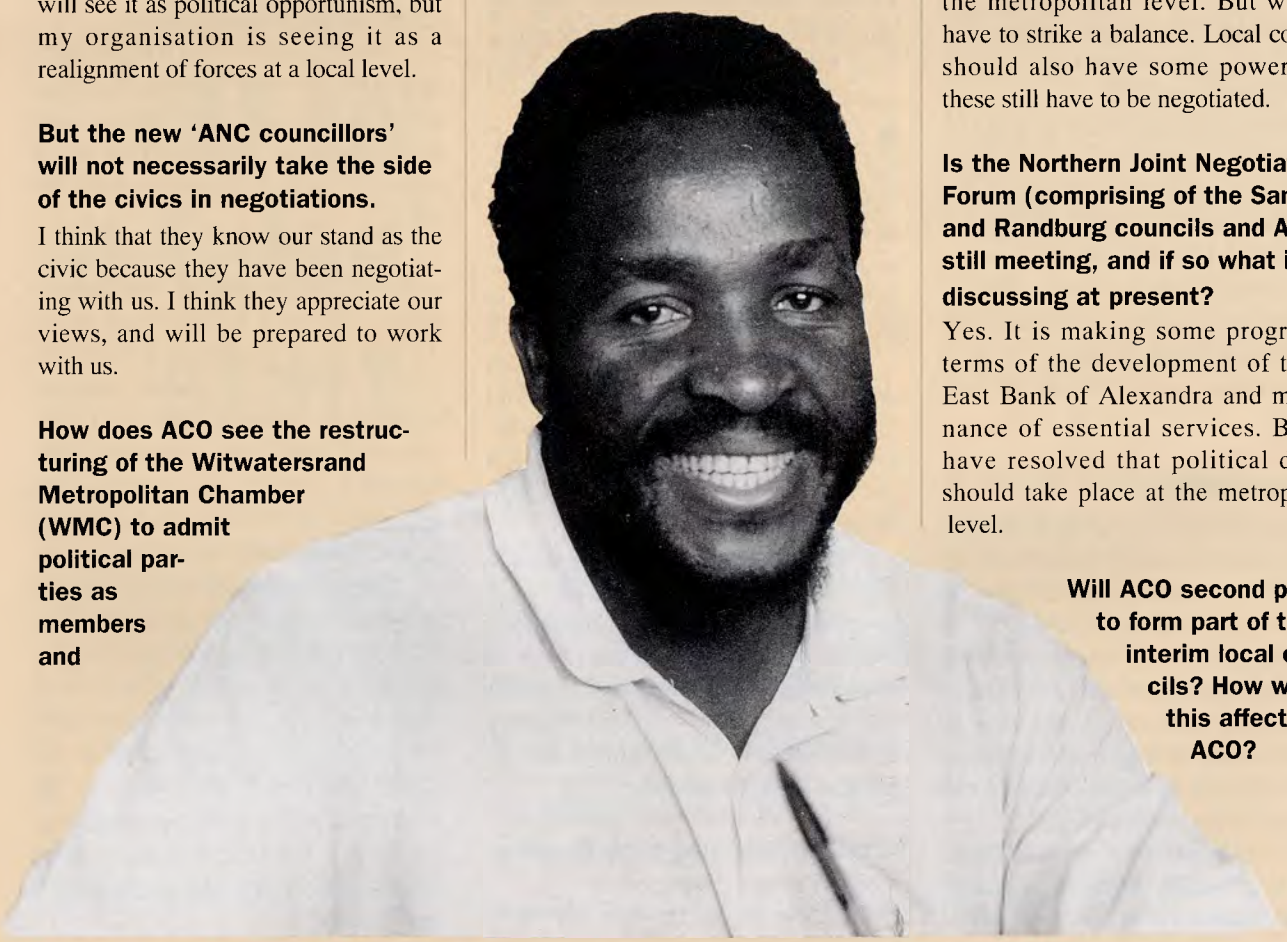
But the new 'ANC councillors' will not necessarily take the side of the civics in negotiations.

I think that they know our stand as the civic because they have been negotiating with us. I think they appreciate our views, and will be prepared to work with us.

How does ACO see the restructuring of the Witwatersrand Metropolitan Chamber (WMC) to admit political parties as members and become a two-sided table, like the Local Government Negotiating Forum (LGNF)?

ACO supports the LGNF resolution that metropolitan negotiating forums be two-sided. We think it makes negotiations much easier if the table is two-sided.

We see the two sides being the statutory or ruling side, which will include the National Party, and the mass democratic movement side. In KwaZulu, Inkatha is part of the ruling side. So when a forum is formed in Natal, Inkatha must be part of the statutory side.



What structures would ACO like to see established in the Witwatersrand metropolitan area? Do you favour strong metro government, with limited decentralisation to local councils?

I would support a strong metropolitan government that would be able to redistribute resources and reintegrate our previously divided communities. Allocation of resources, planning, development and budgeting should happen at the metropolitan level. But we also have to strike a balance. Local councils should also have some powers, but these still have to be negotiated.

Is the Northern Joint Negotiating Forum (comprising of the Sandton and Randburg councils and ACO) still meeting, and if so what is it discussing at present?

Yes. It is making some progress in terms of the development of the far East Bank of Alexandra and maintenance of essential services. But we have resolved that political debate should take place at the metropolitan level.

Will ACO second people to form part of the interim local councils? How will this affect ACO?

We will release members of political parties who have been called by their organisations to contest local elections. But they will go there as members of those parties. ACO will remain outside those organs.

Realistically, most civics are going to be badly affected by the elections at a regional and local level. We are already affected at a national level. I think the organisation will be able to produce a second layer of leadership. This takes time, but ACO has already started to develop this layer in anticipation of the elections, and I think we are relatively prepared.

In 1980s, civics strived to set up 'organs of people's power', such as street and block committees. Is ACO still committed to building these local democratic structures?

We are still committed to building strong organs of people's power, or what some people are calling organs of civil society.

We strongly believe these structures are going to be very important in the difficult time of reconstruction. The legacy of apartheid is going to be with us for some time, and these structures will assist us to promote participative democracy and reintegrate our communities.

How does ACO report back and get mandates — especially about complicated metropolitan negotiations — to build the participatory democracy you are committed to?

We have demarcated Alexandra into 13 area. Two areas are not functioning because of violence.

In the other areas, we call general meetings and give reports and ask residents to give us their thinking.

The ordinary people are often well informed about the functions of local government. These meetings are very helpful to the organisation. Participation has been very encouraging, but there is room for improvement.

There has been a communication problem, as it is sometimes very difficult to simplify some of the concepts developed in these forums.

Aside from general meetings, we also have central committee meetings where binding decisions are taken, which give the way forward for ACO. Then we have monthly meetings with fraternal organisations in Alexandra, where we report back on local government developments.

Aside from ACO, there are other civic organisations in Alexandra that claim to represent residents. How does ACO relate to the East Bank Residents' Association (EBRA) and the Alexandra Property Owners' Association (Alpoa)?

Some of these organisations were formed with the intention of dividing the community. We have had meetings with the East Bank Residents' Association to draw them closer to ACO rather than conservative councillors in the northern suburbs.

ACO enjoys support on the East Bank. People are struggling to repay their bonds and have been coming to us in large numbers for help. We are able to accommodate East Bank residents in ACO, and do not see the EBRA as posing a threat.

Alpoa has a few members. The land was forcefully expropriated from the people of Alexandra, and Alpoa says it must be returned.

We all agree on this. But we say you can't reverse apartheid suffering by creating more suffering. Some members of the community were given residential permits to stay in the backyards. It is very difficult to expect people to leave these yards without being given an alternative.

We are in the process of meeting with the legitimate home owners to try to work out a process.

Only ACO can solve the problem of the resale of property in Alexandra.

There are different interests in Alexandra, and the civic must try to reconcile conflicting interests. But if we have to choose, ACO must side with the poorest of the poor; people in one rooms, shacks and hostels.

Civics say that once a democratic government is in place, they will be 'watchdogs'. What does this mean?

There are a lot of academic debates about the future of civics. It is very difficult to say what the role of the civic movement will be because conditions are going to change.

But the civic movement will remain outside the organs of government. It will pressurise the future government to reconstruct our country. This will not be the same pressure that we put on the apartheid government, as we presume that the new government is not going to be hostile to a reconstruction and development programme.

The civics will also help to formulate policies. I think there are going to be standing committees, and personally I would like to see some negotiating forums, such as the National Housing Forum, turned into standing committees.

I think the ratepayers' associations are also going to change, and become part of the civic movement.

If the civic movement relies on government for survival, it will be difficult for them to retain their independence

How do you see civics being financed in the future?

Some comrades argue that the civic movement should be funded by the government, because the government is getting that money from people through taxes. Others say the civic must be self-reliant. If the civics rely on the government for survival, it will be very difficult for them to retain their independence. Then the civics will be conveyor belts of the government.

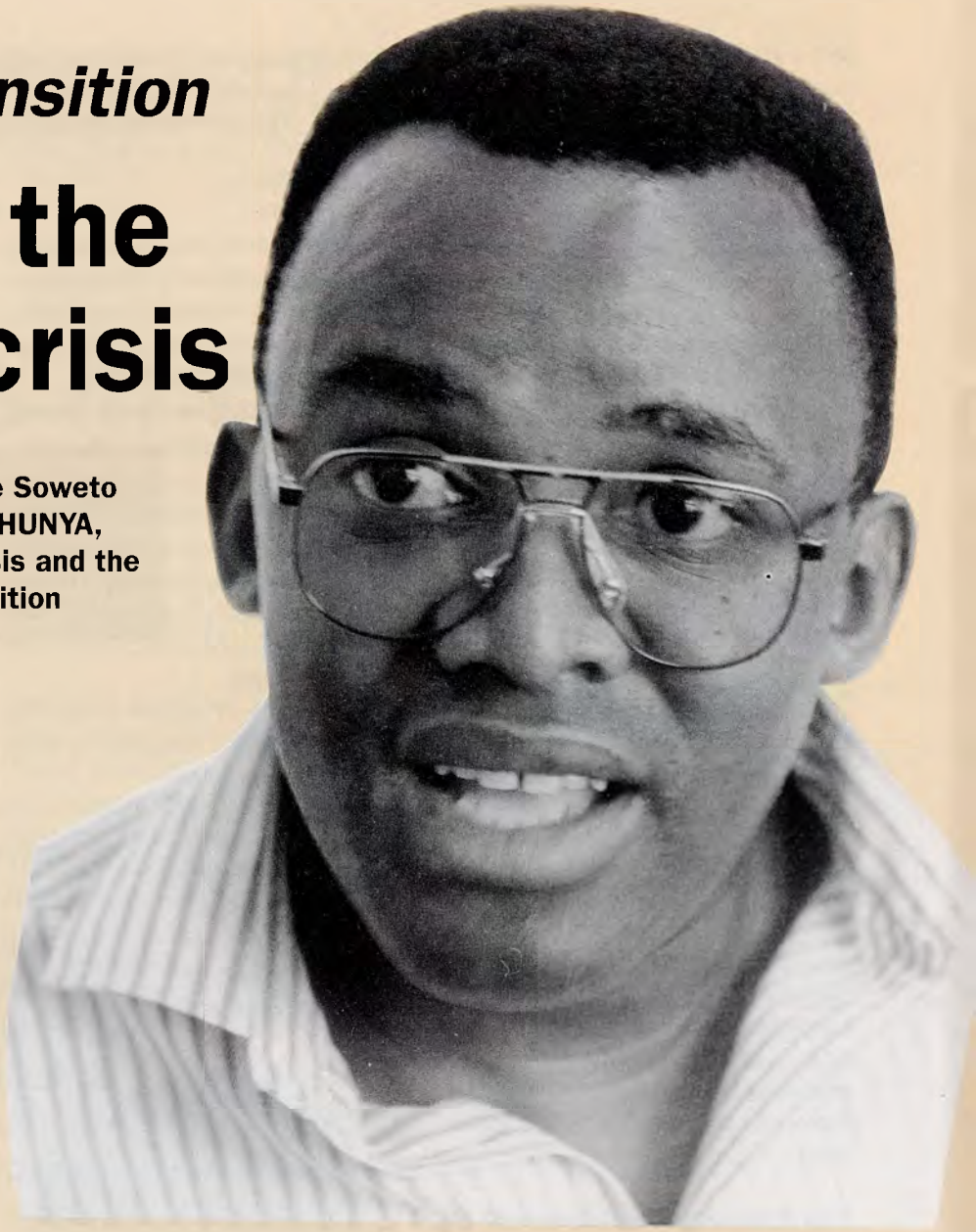
In Alexandra, we are looking into developing projects that are going to generate resources. We are looking at self-help projects such as brick-making, where a percentage of the profits will go to the civic. But these need management skills.

I think the international community will continue helping us. The international community must be persuaded to give money to the running of the civics themselves, not just to civic projects. The civic movement is very young and lacks skills. ■

Civics in transition

Tackling the Soweto crisis

The general secretary of the Soweto Civic Association, PAT LEPHUNYA, speaks about the Soweto crisis and the civic movement in transition



PIC: KENDRIDGE MATHABATHE

What steps does the Soweto Civic Association consider necessary to resolve the township's service crisis?

We have been negotiating in good faith, but our good faith has been taken for granted and played upon. Two particular situations show this.

About three months ago, the Transvaal Provincial Administration (TPA) wanted to pull out of the Wits Metropolitan Chamber (WMC), saying that they thought they could strike better deals at the Local Government Negotiating Forum (LGNF) and the World Trade Centre.

The SCA fought that and the TPA was brought back to the chamber. But what the TPA meant when it said it favoured deals from the LGNF came out clearly when they were supposed to deal with Dobsonville councillors.

The TPA had agreed, as part of a package to deal with the Soweto crisis, that the Dobsonville council should be dissolved. But then they started saying the Dobsonville council should be dealt with in the context of the LGNF agreement; in other words, it should become part of the interim structures. The simple reason is that these councillors are National Party members. The TPA thus wanted to take that LGNF agreement and impose it on our situation. But the mandate of the SCA is that there can be no deals when the councillors are there. We are not part of LGNF agreements. We believe strongly in our independence and autonomy and that deal is not going to work out in Soweto.

The SCA feels that the TPA is trying to buy time. They are using the LGNF to buy time, and hope to escape the mess in Soweto.

What is the SCA's bottom line?

Because our good faith has been abused by the TPA, we have put forward certain non-negotiables.

One is that we want funds made available to bring the infrastructure of Soweto to acceptable levels. We are not prepared to talk of lifting the boycott until money is availed for this.

We are also saying that the introduction of Transitional Metropolitan Councils (TMCs) does not automatically mean the boycott will end.

The TMCs only satisfy the needs of the middle class, who will go into local and regional government structures and parliament. It does not satisfy the needs of ordinary people in terms of improving infrastructure.

The only way to resolve the crisis is when these non-negotiables are met.

Political organisations have recently become involved in the Soweto crisis, but who will take ultimate responsibility for ending the rent and service boycott? (Bearing in mind that as we get closer to elections, political organisations are less likely to make an unpopular call.)

Nobody will resolve the boycott except the SCA. Nobody will pay unless being told to do so by us. These political organisations are not in touch with the masses. We are in touch.

Is the SCA strong enough to call

for the end of the boycott?
Yes. But we want to see actual work to improve the infrastructure before we can talk about anything else. Where they get the money is not our business.

Do you think the Dobsonville crisis will be sorted out?
I don't think the TPA has the political will to do this. I think the TPA is hoping is that, when the term of the councillors expires on 31 October, this will automatically deal with the Dobsonville situation. If the TPA dismisses the councillors on the basis of that date, it will still be in breach of the agreement.

The ANC has linked the resolution of the Soweto crisis to the establishment of interim local structures. Does the SCA support this position?
We would support this. But furthermore, we are saying that the introduction of the TMCs does not necessarily mean the end of the boycott. There is a history of the state not honouring agreements.

We want concrete improvement.

Do you see your constituency as being mainly working class people?
Historically, our constituency has mainly been ordinary working class people living in the four-room houses, backyard rooms and shacks.

But increasingly, the middle class has been coming to the civic for help. The reason for this is economic: many of these people have bonds that they are battling to repay. Increasingly, we are dealing with bond-related problems.

In our fight for democracy, an alliance was formed between the middle class and working class. But to the ordinary working class person, democracy does not mean voting. It means improving your living conditions.

Everyone wants this, but in any society it is usually the needs of the middle class that are met. The middle class goes to parliament. Institutions like banks usually only give bonds to the middle class.

It is an international phenomenon that the state runs away from meeting working class needs. Governments, particularly in the Western world, are coalitions between the middle class and capitalists against the working class. As civics, we have to ensure that working class needs are met.

Will the SCA put forward people to go into the TMCs etc?
That is still debatable. We have taken a resolution that we will not be part of any government structures. But it might happen that people want SCA people to be involved in these structures. At that time, we might have to consider this as individuals. But this depends on conditions prevailing then.

Political parties are expected to go into the Metropolitan Chamber. Will the chamber then be restructured along the lines of the LGNF, as a two-sided table made up of statutory and non-statutory delegations?
Based on the agreement at the LGNF, the chamber has agreed to restructure as a two-sided table.

But this poses problems. It is difficult to define the non-statutory bodies. There are a number of organisations that have been closely associated with apartheid, but which are not statutory bodies, such as the National Party.

Personally, I would prefer to see a three-sided table. We should have the state bodies, or statutory bodies; secondly, those bodies associated with apartheid, like the NP, Sofasonke, white ratepayers' associations, Inkatha, the Democratic Party. The third category would be those bodies who have chosen to be part of the struggle against apartheid, such as Cosatu, the ANC, PAC, Azapo and the civics.

In the past, civics organised 'organs of people's power', such as street and block committees. Are you still committed to building such, and is it still possible given that the political conditions have changed?
There is not that same enthusiasm to build street committees, but this does not mean there are no street committees. In Soweto, block committees are strong. It is only the street committees that are not existing in all areas.

The difficulty of sustaining the block committees is that there are different people with different interests involved. Some are interested in political organisations, and others are not.

But while there is a dominant political liberation movement, there are other organisations in Soweto. The block committees unite people across the political divide.

Once there is a more democratic government in power, civics say they will remain as watchdogs. What does this mean?
The SCA will continue to represent the interests of Soweto residents on a non-partisan basis. As a people's organisation, we will be able to lobby government structures etc to ensure that people's needs are met. A democratic government does not mean people's needs will be met. The legacy of apartheid will remain with us.

Nobody will resolve the rent boycott except the SCA. Nobody will pay unless told to do so by us. The political organisations are not in touch with the masses. We are in touch.

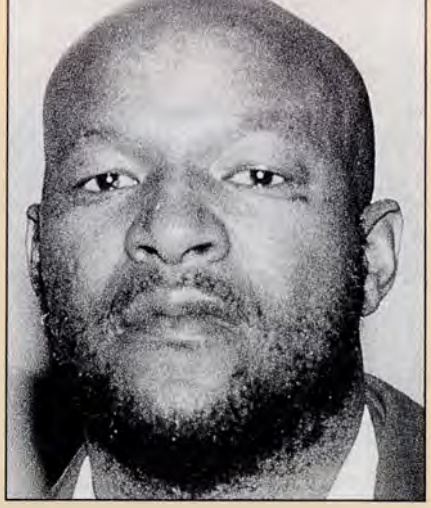
What do you think of the recent defections by white councillors to the ANC?
We are not impressed by these defections. The majority of the defectors in Randburg and Sandton are very problematic individuals. Some are enemies of the civics. Their defections are based on personal interest, rather than political principles.

I think their aim is to sub-regionalise the Witwatersrand area to safeguard their personal needs, using the democratic movement as a vehicle.

But at the same time, the ANC is for everybody. Different groupings in the ANC have their own interests, but nobody should prevent anyone else from joining the ANC or any other political party of their choice. ■

Civics in transition

The people's watchdog in PE



PIC: SAM MAJELA

MIKE TOFILE, general secretary of Sanco's Port Elizabeth branch

Are you satisfied with progress being made at the Local Government Negotiating Forum (LGNF) with regard to defining guidelines for democratic, interim local government?

We are satisfied, but a lot of work still has to be done. People are coming from different political cultures. How are they going to look beyond their party political differences and deliver goods to the rest of the country? How will the city be linked to regional and national levels of government? Will there be legislation preventing or forcing joint programmes between cities on local government?

On two levels (regional and national) how will people participate in decision-making and how are people on the ground affected? Also, irrespective of the national decision taken with respect to legislation on local government, the people must be given an opportunity to discuss it.

Do you feel your civic and the Eastern Cape region are able to express themselves at the LGNF?

We are fairly represented. But this does not mean we should bar ourselves from broader representation. Presently, the Port Elizabeth One City Forum does not have representation to the LGNF. The constitutional and institutional committees have been mandated to discuss the framework of the LGNF and to look at how we can fit in.

We in Port Elizabeth set the agenda for the LGNF by insisting that:

- all interested groups, government bodies, political organisations, civics and the business section should come together;
- the principle of sufficient consensus should apply when a decision cannot be reached because of differences or a stalemate;
- any dispute at the talks be taken back to the people to be discussed.

Will your civic second people to the interim local councils?

We will identify and recommend people for nomination, but we will not second any member. If we seconded anyone, that individual would have to report directly to Sanco, but we don't want one individual to be responsible but the whole interim council. The council will have to be transparent and will have to report back to everyone.

What local government structures would you like to see in Port Elizabeth?

We are interested in one city. If we talk of one city, there is no need for multiple local authorities. We want all the areas to be integrated to form one organisation of local government. This local government should set up its own administrative structures in line with the LGNF guidelines.

Are you involved in the process of setting up democratic local government in PE?

Yes, through the One City Forum. Negotiations started almost three years ago and organisations signed a declaration of intent. Presently it is agreed that an interim council consisting of a chamber made up of 40 constitutional representatives and 40 non-constitutional representatives be set up. Representatives will be appointed not elected. This will constitute the pre-interim phase. A structure for the interim period is still being negotiated and the final period will follow after elections under new constitutional principles.

Is your civic still committed to building 'organs of people's power', such as street and block committees, which in the past helped reduce crime levels?

The police were not combatting crime in the townships, so we set up street and anti-crime committees. But the police do not want to recognise these. However, when it is convenient for them they refer matters to the anti-crime committees.

The anti-crime committees are an alternative in a situation where there is an absence of proper policing mechanisms. We have tried to hold workshops with the police but these have not materialised because of a lack of commitment on the part of the police. Sanco's legal and constitutional department is now calling all bodies interested in community policing to get together. The police are invited.

What role should the civics play once a new political system is in place?

Civics have always been the watchdogs of the people. We have always been a component of the liberation movement. We do not belong to any organisation, but our motto is to fight for the national democratic struggle. We will side with any party that wants to install a democratic system in South Africa.

After April 27, we will still be around. Conditions after the elections will determine what form we will exist in. We will, however, always remain watchdogs for the people.

After the elections, all the civics in Port Elizabeth should meet to form one structure and also to define the role of the joint civic. ■

– ECNA

Forum yet to prove itself

Pietermaritzburg's 'mini-Codesa' is far from perfect, but its mere existence in the war-torn region is amazing. **ANTON KRONE** reports

ALTHOUGH FEW PEOPLE IN Pietermaritzburg's low income communities are aware of it, a forum of all major players in the city has been meeting over the past year.

It is remarkable that the forum could sustain itself alongside bitter regional strife. But what has made this possible, whose interests prevail and what has the forum achieved?

The forum started with pronouncements about a 'mini-Codesa' in June last year. This set the tone for the initial period, which focused on political restructuring (its one facet), rather than social transformation (its other facet).

Much of the forum's driving force has stemmed from elites across the political divide, with minimal influence and participation from the disenfranchised.

The political facet

Debate in this facet has been centred on one-tier versus two-tier local government. However, all parties have been hesitant to commit themselves to a fixed position.

After an initial flurry of curiosity, most working groups now have apology lists outstripping attendance. The active composition of all forum structures is overwhelmingly weighted in favour of statutory groups and business.

Representatives from democratic structures are invariably non-township based and participation is patchy. Community based formations are very weak, and seem unaware that their fate is being decided upon. In short, the playing fields are far from levelled.

Inkatha has told the forum it will never accept nationally determined guidelines on local government, and favours a local solution. Groups to the right — from the city council to Inkatha, the National Party (NP) and Democratic Party (DP) — have come out against interference by an interim metropolitan council. The assumption is that it will be business as usual under an umbrella 'coordination' structure.

The Natal Provincial Administration (NPA) — which administers about half Pietermaritzburg's population — has refused to join the forum, despite protestations by the ANC and Inkatha to the minister of local government. It has also refused to fund the forum, although it is purported to have a budget for this. Clearly, the NPA has its own agenda aimed at preserving regional control under an alliance of conservative forces still punting the Interim Measures Act.

Without NPA membership, the forum is fatally flawed. However, it has launched, and parties have signed a statement of intent committing themselves to a policy framework for managing the city.

■ **HIDDEN AGENDA:** The white council has tried to entrench development at Ambleton

Developmental facet

Developmental issues were initially overshadowed by a political agenda. However, the occupation of land within the municipal borough precipitated a crisis in the city, which the forum had to confront if it was to retain any credibility.

These new settlements are bounded by Indian, coloured and white communities, whose conservative interests are represented at the forum via the indian and coloured local affairs committees and white farmers' associations. The settlements are demanding permanent status while their neighbours are clamouring for their removal.

The city council burnt its fingers last year trying to remove the Happy Valley community. Paralysed by division over whether to remove or upgrade these settlements, it has been incapable of responding.

The democratic alliance and NGOs placed the matter on the forum's agenda and have pushed for a resolution. Indications are that permanent recognition will be granted to these settlements.

A policy framework has also been drawn up for managing the city. This rules out unilateral state restructuring, binds parties to transparency and accountability and prioritises development.

Provision is made for community controlled development, infill and densification. Developments that relegate the poor to the periphery are ruled out, and permanent recognition to areas like Happy Valley is planned.

Although there is now a common framework, unilateral decisions from the council have persisted. The council has referred its 'hot potatoes' to the forum, but still acts unilaterally around hidden agendas. For instance, it has attempted to entrench Ambleton — a development rejected by the democratic alliance — by providing funds for a community development trust.

In short, the forum is yielding mixed results. The democratic alliance's capacity to engage is weak. However, the forum is forcing parties to confront the hard realities of what it takes to provide good government and promote real development. Parties have also discovered more common ground than expected in such a polarised region. ■

• *Krone works for the Built Environment Support Group in Pietermaritzburg*

Bringing light to a new SA

A host of new energy policy proposals have recently been put on the table by the University of Cape Town's Energy for Development Research Centre (EDRC). **KERRY CULLINAN** reports

THE EDRC IS IN THE PROCESS OF presenting its energy policy proposals to a wide range of organisations. First to see the proposals were international and local energy experts and politicians, who were invited to a workshop in Cape Town in late September.

The aim of the policy project, says the EDRC, is "to develop policy options for widening access to basic energy services for the urban and rural poor".

This task is somewhat daunting. According to the EDRC's research:

- Only about 36% of South African households are electrified.
- 87% of black schools and 3 000 clinics countrywide are without electricity.
- 430 different bodies distribute electricity in the country.
- The poorest households, which do not have access to electricity, pay far more than electrified households for energy.

If Eskom maintains the level of its current electrification drive (250 000 connections a year), the EDRC estimates that 65% of all households will be electrified by the year 2010.

This is not enough, argues the EDRC. What is needed is a "concerted, integrated energy plan". For example, 500 000 connections a year will bring electricity to 85% of all households by 2010.

A key component of the centre's policy proposals is that there should be a national flat rate for all domestic consumers of electricity, as opposed to rural areas having to pay more for power.

A realistic figure is 20c/unit (excluding VAT), a 2c increase on the current national average of 18c/unit. To achieve one flat rate, the distribution of electricity — presently being handled by local authorities — would have to be rationalised.

However, workshop delegates pointed out a number of obstacles to achieving both a national rate and rationalisation.

"What happens if there is no national framework for elec-

■ **Untangling the bureaucracy caused by apartheid**

tricity distribution, and regional governments are given exclusive power over electricity distribution?" asked the Local Government Negotiating Forum's (LGNF) Andrew Boraine.

Boraine also pointed out that electricity was a major source of income for local authorities. This income was then used to cover other, less profitable aspects of local authorities' work. "What will happen to local government finances if local authorities are no longer in control of energy supply?" asked Boraine.

Billy Cobbett, the ANC's local and regional government coordinator, added that it would be extremely difficult to introduce a standard tariff in some areas.

"The average national tariff may be 18c/unit now, but there are thousands of different tariffs. In KwaNdebele, for example, some people are paying 1c/unit. In Port Elizabeth, electricity would have to be increased by 65% to reach the national average," said Cobbett.

Counting the costs

According to a number of surveys, people using electricity spent significantly less than those using other energy sources. A survey done in Khayelitsha, for example, found that those with electricity spent an average of R67 a month on energy, while those without spent R127.

But the entrance barriers for poor people trying to change to electricity are high. Appliances like electric stoves are expensive in comparison to primus stoves.

In addition, the supplier is faced with high connection costs. The centre estimates that it costs approximately R3 000 to connect each informal shack in urban areas to electricity. This figure rises to as much as R7 000 for scattered rural settlements.

However, delegates and EDRC staff emphasized that this was a once-off cost and the positive spin-offs should be felt for some time.

The EDRC has proposed that an Electrification Fund be set up to raise the bulk loan finances necessary for electrification, and to allocate grant finance to poor consumers as fairly as possible.

The EDRC has also proposed that energy centres be established in communities to educate consumers on how to use energy efficiently and safely and advising them on which appliances to buy. However, conference delegates asked where the money would come from to establish such centres.

Coal

The EDRC's proposals, while concentrating on electricity, also looked at other sources of energy popular among poor households.

In the PWV area, coal is a very important energy source. Almost 70% of households use coal, which can be bought relatively cheaply as the Eastern Transvaal coalfields are nearby. Some 45% of electrified homes in the PWV also still use coal.

Coal is an important source of energy in the Durban metropolitan area and Pietermaritzburg, probably as these areas are close to coalfields in Northern Natal.

Coal is popular because it can provide three services at the same time. It can heat water, heat living spaces and provide energy for cooking all at once.

The major disadvantage of the bituminous coal used in South Africa is that it causes air pollution, which seriously affects the health of poor South Africans. Acute respiratory infections are the second greatest cause of death in South African children.

The EDRC thus proposes that the development of low smoke coal is given "highest priority". Three varieties of this coal are being developed in Southern Africa. Only one, Wundafuel, is ready for domestic distribution. However, at this stage it is significantly more expensive than the coal used at present. It also proposes a tax on 'dirty' coal to discourage its use.

Paraffin and gas

Paraffin is also very popular. It is the country's main energy source for cooking. It is also the biggest source of energy for poor homes in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and East London.

Its main advantage, consumers say, is that it can be bought in small quantities from local shops. This was especially important for poor homes operating on very tight budgets.

However, consumers also identify many disadvantages. It is a fire hazard, especially in informal settlements where homes are often made from flammable material. Children are vulnerable to being poisoned by paraffin by drinking it accidently. It blackens pots and causes skin irritation.

To reduce the cost of paraffin, the EDRC argues that its distribution should be streamlined. Oil companies should be persuaded to be more directly involved in distribution to domestic consumers. Low cost child-proof bottles also need to be developed to eliminate the danger of poisoning.

Gas is also a fairly popular source of energy, particularly in the Cape. However, it can only be bought in fairly large amounts.

As with paraffin, gas distribution could be streamlined to reduce its price. Smaller canisters could also be produced. Communities, which generally fear using gas, also need to be educated about how to use it safely.

Batteries are used for appliances like televisions and radios. However, these are expensive and need constant recharging.

Where to now?

The EDRC has essentially become the think tank responsible for future energy policy development.

Eskom and the EDRC are in close contact. The EDRC is also providing research backing to the National Electrification Forum.

Its 'road-show' of policy proposals is aimed at promoting a common vision among influential players of what is needed to address the energy needs of poor South Africans.

'What happens if regional governments are given exclusive powers over electricity distribution?'

Judging by the fact that Eskom and ANC officials could share ideas and debate policy openly at the EDRC workshop, the centre has already achieved considerable success.

● The bulk of this article is drawn from research done on urban energy patterns. The next issue of RECONSTRUCT will look at some of the EDRC's other research in more detail. ■

The World Bank likes capital subsidies too

By PATRICK BOND

In 'The case for capital subsidies' (Reconstruct 13), Conrad van Gass leaves out an important reason for why this type of subsidy is all the rage. If the World Bank and IMF effectively set NewSA's budgetary limits on redistribution, then capital subsidies become all the more likely.

Consider this scenario: as a low-income yuppie, I get a once-off capital subsidy for my little toilet in the veld, and am convinced that is all I'm ever going to get. My energy now goes into acquiring zinc and plywood cheaply to build the shack.

Come next year, the World Bank parachutes in with a housing loan. Before we know it, the amount budgeted for capital subsidies is chopped as part of Bank loan 'conditionality'.

Comrades who haven't yet received their capital subsidy may scream and shout a little, but when they appeal to me to join their protest march to the national housing board, I'll simply reply, what's in it for me and other once-off recipients? We've got ours already.

Meanwhile, in plush Washington offices, World Bank policy wonks smile as the Pretoria protests subside, congratulating themselves on winning the technoground with their cost-cutting capital subsidies.

It doesn't have to be this way, of course. A subsidy for a full house could instead come in the form of a long-term, low-interest loan, via which government grants match private sector market-rate investments and the democratic state accepts responsibility to meet people's housing needs affordably.

Defend subsidies

What is different? In contrast to the capital subsidy approach, this scenario creates a far larger constituency depending on long-term interest subsidies to pay the monthly housing bill. It is a built-in interest group that will politically have a much better chance of opposing subsidy cuts. And that's the best — and perhaps only — defence against a Zimbabwe-style outcome, where the Bank and USAID rapidly wiped housing subsidies off the face of the state.

My two scenarios are a bit tongue-in-cheek, of course. But given the harsh realism behind the scenarios, isn't this sentiment precisely what progressives are meant to bring to the table? After studying the Bank, IMF and USAID for a number of years, it still strikes me that the best way to engage these institutions is through principled, well-researched opposition to their policies.

At first blush there may well be some seemingly rational, utility-maximising reasons to endorse this or that Bank programme. But the Urban Foundation and Development Bank of SA (DBSA) — the Bank's stormtroopers all these years — have shown convincingly that orthodox financing principles lead nowhere fast.

We should have more confidence in our critiques, based on the practical politics and traditional demands emanating from the democratic movement. In other words, let's be more sceptical

Planact clarifies

The cover story of Reconstruct 13 contained incorrect information from a 1992 draft report by a former Planact staff member, which requires clarification. Planact acknowledges the existence of — but does not 'argue for' — site-and-service capital subsidies (quite the contrary). Planact, in conjunction with many of the community-based organisations we have been working with for the past eight years, believes that sufficient funds are available to finance real housing, not just shacks and toilets, for all those who presently lack adequate shelter.

Planact estimates that the amount of private sector finance available for housing at market rate of return could amount to R50-billion spread over the next decade, in the event a comprehensive housing policy, sufficient state subsidies (also of R50-billion) and a national housing finance bank are agreed upon. Ideally, this would come in the form of a blended fund which would allow projects and programmes to get at least R20 000 (the cost of a basic unit) and to each 'end-user' at an affordable interest rate (or in grant form, if need be).

● Allan Horwitz works for Khanya College, not Sached Trust as reported in the last edition of Reconstruct.

about capital subsidies, housing vouchers and anything else the Bank and its allies promote.

There are also good technocratic reasons to plump for interest rate instead of capital subsidies. The main advantage of loans is their flexibility, since the subsidy portion can be reassessed whenever there is a major change in borrower circumstances, such as unemployment or reemployment. Once-offs prevent this and are therefore less efficient in redistributing society's resources.

Worried about 'income cheating' on means test for interest subsidies? Might the recipient lie and thus pay a lower monthly loan repayment than s/he can afford? Try then the model being discussed in several PWV community-driven projects, in which an 'upward incentive means test' has been devised through offering several different housing types, each more expensive, thus each offering a greater incentive to declare household income accurately (since, by declaring high, the borrower gets access to a better house).

Wholesale finance

Moreover, with a loan subsidy, the budgetary allocation to low interest loans can change every year according to economic conditions and social needs. Indeed, it should be possible to budget ahead quite accurately if we have a rough sense of borrower income levels and if we can acquire long term, fixed-rate 'wholesale' financing from insurance companies and pension funds.

This is a better source than ordinary banks, which insist on potentially turbulent variable-rate financing. Indeed, it is to fixed-rate investors, such as worker pension funds, that Cosatu and Sanco are looking at for access to housing funds, especially since the banks continue to redline most low-income projects.

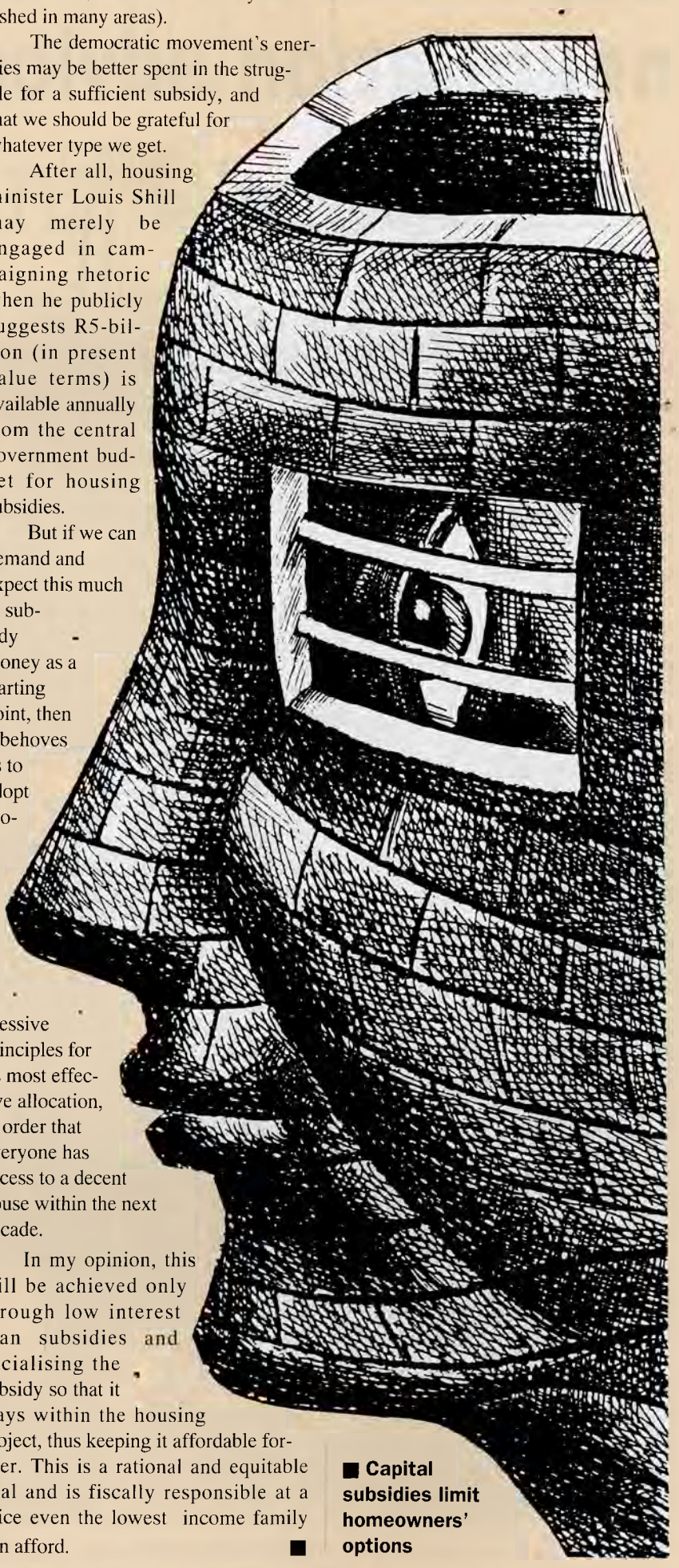
Finally, by providing low interest loan subsidies, government can catalyze, utilise and subsidise the services of community-oriented loan funds of various types — in particular community-based People's Banks — and thus help build community capacity and institutions where they did not exist before. (The low-interest loans could also be offered in blanket form to borrowers, such as community development trusts, which are already established in many areas).

The democratic movement's energies may be better spent in the struggle for a sufficient subsidy, and that we should be grateful for whatever type we get.

After all, housing minister Louis Shill may merely be engaged in campaigning rhetoric when he publicly suggests R5-billion (in present value terms) is available annually from the central government budget for housing subsidies.

But if we can demand and expect this much in subsidy money as a starting point, then it behoves us to adopt progressive principles for its most effective allocation, in order that everyone has access to a decent house within the next decade.

In my opinion, this will be achieved only through low interest loan subsidies and socialising the subsidy so that it stays within the housing project, thus keeping it affordable forever. This is a rational and equitable deal and is fiscally responsible at a price even the lowest income family can afford. ■



■ **Capital subsidies limit homeowners' options**

Superb video offers negotiation advice

'The meeting in Middelfontein', produced by the Development Action Group (DAG). Reviewed by **JOSETTE COLE**

HISTORIANS LOOKING BACK ON THE 1990s will identify the period as the 'negotiations era'. Most historical and political analyses will focus on high-powered national constitutional negotiations and key political players of the time.

Less will be said about the scores of communities engaged in a parallel political process known as "local-level negotiations".

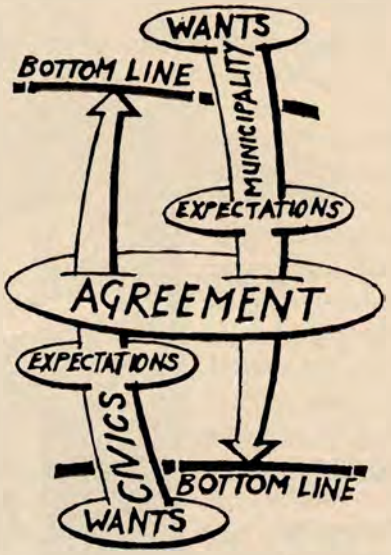
During the 1990s, community struggles for land, services, and development moved from the barricades of the 1980s into the boardrooms of local and regional government authorities where community representatives, NGO advisors, and local government officials negotiated local development settlements.

While CODESA 1, 2 and the Kempton Park negotiations proceeded in fits and starts, this less visible, more localised, but similar process accompanied the constitutional proceedings in black communities all over the country.

At these meetings, those without formal power and resources sit across the table from a variety of government representatives, rapidly developing strategies and experience in negotiated 'development' settlements.

DAG, a Western Cape NGO working in the field of urban development, has produced a video on these negotiations. 'The Meeting in Middelfontein' and the accessible workbook that accompanies it (available in English, Xhosa, and Afrikaans), is aimed at providing communities with "a training tool to assist communities to participate more effectively in complicated negotiation processes".

Following decades of hardship and anti-apartheid struggle, the fictional community of Middelfontein wins the political space to negotiate a better deal for itself.



■ **HANDY HINTS:** A booklet of advice accompanies the video

As the narrator reminds us, the resources demanded by the community's residents — land, services, and housing — are the direct result of the social legacy of the apartheid era.

Visually and technically superb, the tightly produced video uses authentic locations, local actors and residents in a Western Cape informal settlement to capture the realities and pitfalls that typify local-level negotiations.

As a training tool, it succeeds in highlighting the essential issues confronting a community, as well as any 'technical' advisors, who venture into the murky and complex arena of negotiations.

We are introduced to the community negotiating team, assisted by a member of DAG as the 'technical' advisor, going through the complicated negotiations process .

These include explaining the community team's objectives:

- obtaining a clear mandate;
- gaining the support of the wider community for the negotiations process;
- preparing to meet local and regional authorities;
- negotiating with the authorities;
- reporting back to a community meeting with residents unfamiliar with the politics of negotiation.

Each stage of the process is peppered with tips for local communities and NGOs on what to expect, what to avoid, and how best to tilt the balance of forces in favour of disadvantaged groupings.

If you have been involved in, or played a supportive role in local-level negotiations, you will easily identify with the dynamics portrayed.

The video's 'soap-operatic' style vividly captures the posturing and positioning of both sides; conflicts around who controls agendas, language, and venue; tensions between officials of local and regional authorities; deadlocks; caucuses; compromises; problems of "selling" the settlement to those unexposed to the process and that negotiations remain an ongoing site of struggle.

As an education-training tool, 'Meeting in Middelfontein', is an undoubted success. DAG needs to be applauded for bringing to light the changing nature of grassroots struggles in the 1990s.

The video's quality, humour, and stylishness conveys something of the absurdities and comedy that inevitably accompanies any visual portrayal of the South African political reality.

However, the conflicts, divisions, violence, attempts at leadership co-option and the politics of patronage — most directly linked to the site allocation process — which accompany most community 'negotiated development' processes in the 1990s are also captured in the DAG video.

Community development in the 1990s is essentially a political, not a technical, process. While recognising that this is a story that goes beyond the scope of the DAG training video, it nonetheless needs to be conveyed by somebody, somewhere.

Without it, the true story of local-level community negotiations in the 1990s will never be fully understood or appreciated. ■

• For more information about the video, phone DAG at (021) 448-7886

Breaking the mould

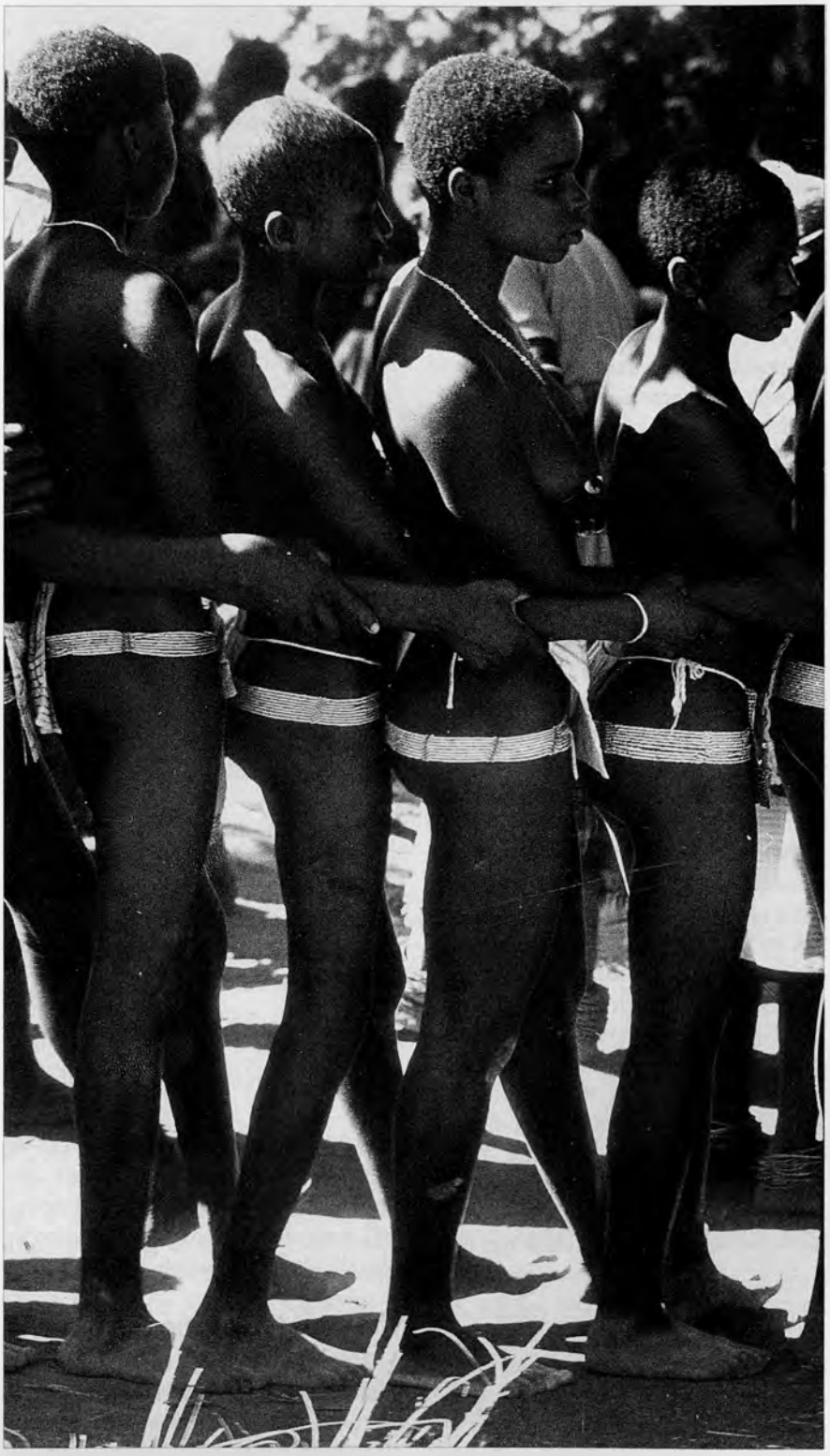
Amid the many buzzwords batted around by development workers and agencies, 'gender sensitivity' probably ranks as number one. But what do they mean? And how do we translate such trendy concepts into reality? **JENNY SCHREINER** offers some pointers

CLEARLY "GENDER SENSITIVITY" means more than having men make the tea at the next meeting, or running sewing classes for women, or starting a women's farm project. Or does it? The words have become code for complex and heatedly debated issues, in the development world and daily life.

Also known as the "Women in Development" (WID) versus "Gender and Development" (GAD) debate (more buzzwords that barely do justice to the scope of the debate and its centrality in our lives), it revolves around this question: Are women's needs best addressed by setting up projects that focus on women? Or is this best achieved in projects that incorporate men and women, but that are "gender sensitive" and committed to transforming gender relations?

First, a few steps back. By the early 1970s, international development workers were beginning to recognise the category of "women" — which was still seen as wives and mothers. This approach became popularised during UN Decade of Women (1975-1985) as "Women in Development".

One result was the creation of many projects that focused on women and were geared to provide them with, say, home economics training, domestic skills, nutritional education, first aid



■ **QUEUE HERE FOR DEVELOPMENT: Rural women are usually last in line**

and health education. Many of these projects failed.

The failures — and a chorus of criticism against the condescending approach — led to a shift in analysis. Gradually, women came to be seen as economic agents.

Scores of agricultural and informal sector projects were set up, small factories were started, and so on. These projects were forced to confront the fact that many women are at once workers, wives and mothers. And gradually it dawned on development agencies that projects which focus on women still leave untouched the underlying —unequal — gender relations. It became clear that gender relations are part of broader social relations. One result was the "Gender and Development" or GAD approach, which yielded the "gender sensitive" criterion.

The debate around gender sensitive development hinges on the distinction between *practical* and *strategic* gender needs.

Practical needs refer to the daily problems faced by women in the course of their work — their "double day" of paid labour and household work, lack of childcare and so on. Strategic needs slot into the social relations that sustain women's subordination — who controls resources, who benefits from them, legal discrimination, and so on.

But this understanding is severely limited. Under capitalism many obstacles prevent women from taking part on an equal footing with menfolk. The distinction between strategic and practical gender issues degrades the practical needs of women. It obscures the crucial link between women's broader political and legal rights, and the conditions under which women live and struggle.

Development work aimed at empowering women must be based on a clear understanding of how broader political and legal rights are connected to the basic problems of daily life.

We cannot reject a project because it concentrates on child care. A creche can be set up in ways that challenge the division of labour (between men and women) in relation to child rearing — perhaps through a parent's education programme. It could challenge employers to assume responsibility for the care of workers' children. The bottomline is how we manage to integrate political issues and the goal of transformation into the project.

So, the GAD approach recognises different gender needs and tries to transform oppressive gender relations. Usually it includes some training and education for the affected women. Projects are not necessarily focused on "women's issues" but might be directed at community issues such as housing or health.

And WID includes projects that deal with "women's issues" but lack the commitment to change gender relations that make for specifically "women's issues" instead of "people's issues".

Why development is a women's issue

Men in suits might design the plans, manage the processes and reap the praise. But development is a women's issue — particularly a black working class women's issue ...

- **Women make up 53,6% of the population, but only 36% of the workforce.**
- **In the workforce, working class women occupy the least skilled, lowest paid and least unionised jobs.**
- **African working class women occupy the most vulnerable positions in the workforce.**
- **Many women classified as 'unemployed' actually work in the informal sector, where 86% of the 2,4-million people so employed earn less than R250 a month.**
- **Many women are invisible in work and unemployment statistics because they are categorised as 'housewives'.**

On top of this, apartheid has denied black working class women most of their fundamental needs and rights — shelter, food, healthcare, clothing, education and access to land.

Black working class women have been excluded from formal political institutions of the state, from the current process of negotiation and from decision-making within the broad liberation movement and civil society.

The proof is in the planning

A development project's success or failure depends to a great extent on its planning. Some of the standard planning assumptions have dramatic gender implications:

- It is often assumed that men and women will benefit equally from the project.
- It is assumed that income is shared equally in the household, so women will benefit from projects which give men an income.
- Households headed by women are seldom recognised, although they are hardest hit by poverty and most in need of development.
- There is a presumption that the man adequately represents the views of all the household's members, so women are once more rendered silent.
- Farmers are assumed to be men, although in Africa they are generally women.
- Age and gender differences and divisions are dismissed among the "the poor", "peasants" or "workers".
- Women's contributions through housework, seasonal farming and storage tasks, and child rearing are not recognised.
- Planning seldom takes into account that most women have several jobs.

Sussex University's Institute of Development Studies has taken this bull by the horns by starting a training programme to promote development planning from a gender sensitive angle.

Part of the training explores how distinct gender relations are formed in different classes and cultures. The debate of how applicable western feminism is to African women is by now a familiar one. Similarly, by imposing western models of gender relations, we might doom development projects to failure — leaving the real gender relations in that community untouched.

The programme also concentrates on a critical aspect of gender relations: the division of labour in productive and reproductive work. The gender division of labour not only shapes who does what, it also ascribes value to different kinds of activity, and spreads skills and allocates resources in particular ways.

Finally, the programme tackles the horrifying extent to which women internalise ideologies of gender difference and inequality.

The individual consciousness of women involved in development projects is central to empowerment. It must be demonstrated that alternative ways of living, working and relating to others are possible and acceptable.

In our context the arena of cus-

tomary law and traditional practices takes on great importance. A good example was the effective sabotage of a National Union of Mineworkers farming co-operative recently when the local chief withdrew women members to do unpaid and forced labour at a crucial point in the season.

Development is not simply about income generation and resources. It's about empowerment, gaining control over one's life. This requires that women be organisationally developed.

The development of women participants starts with a clear understanding of the project's goals, who is in the project, why they have joined, what expertise is available in the project, what the division of labour is, and the goal of the collective.

Development work is not always run collectively. Often projects have managers who allocate and staff who execute tasks, with a fairly clear divide between strategic and practical tasks.

If development work is to be empowering in racial, class and gender terms, the process of building and strengthening a collective as a progressive social form of organisation, which facilitates growth and learning, should be made integral to the project.

A standard critique of development work is that projects designed to serve the needs of black working class women are often researched, planned and run either by men or middle class women from outside the community.

Here's a possible development scenario. It's a rural development project, with a staff of about 15, of whom seven are women and the rest are men.

A couple of the women are activists from outside the community. The others are drawn from the local community. The women tend to be less confident, less skilled and less trained in strategic thinking and planning than the men. Some of the men are middle class "intellectual" activists, others are from the local community.

The staff speak different languages with varying degrees of fluency. They have different levels of literacy, and are distinguished by race, class and gender differences.

When the project began, the activists within the staff were central to unifying and building democratic practices within the group. They helped develop a common approach to the work. The men or the middle class women dominate access to resources and the skills to use them. In many ways, working class women are weakened by involvement in a project like this.

The acid test for such a project would be to examine the relations between the staff and the growth of staff members after the project has been running for about a year.

Have the activists — women and men — passed on their skills to others? Do decisions still depend on their input? Have the women from the local community improved their literacy, become more articulate and picked up the skills to play a more active and assertive role as staff members?

Often these changes in the power and skill relations within development projects are barely addressed, particularly when it comes to women staff members. Such processes do not simply happen by osmosis, with skills and abilities "rubbing off" on others. Skills consciously have to be shared among staff members. And there needs to be training that allow for the development of women — particularly black working class women.

There are other important elements: affirmative action, training in political and technical skills, a code of conduct to deal with the implementation of affirmative action and with matters like sexual harassment, and more.

The task of making gender sensitivity an integral part of development work starts with a detailed analysis of the community, in order to develop a grasp of the gender, racial and class relations operating there.

Tailor the tactics

It is possible to identify some aspects that can bring development strategies in line with the needs of working class women:

- **Job creation:** These programmes should not confine women in unskilled and under-paid labour, they should be aimed creating long-term jobs, and those jobs should not be reserved for men (with women getting the short-term ones).
- **Access to land:** Women's access to land should not depend on their relationship with a man.
- **Access to credit and financial backing:** Again, women must have this access in their own right and with full legal powers.
- **Education and training:** This includes skills training for adult women and formal education for girls and young women.
- **Safe living and working environment:** Practical obstacles that block women's equal participation in life must be removed;
- **Equal opportunities:** Women should not be penned into certain job sectors or subjects at school or university; training and affirmative action could help set right such discrimination.
- **Reproductive rights:** Not only should parenthood be a choice for women, but in order to participate in society on a more equal footing they require access to adequate health, childcare and educational services.
- **Organisation:** Unorganised women are isolated and cut off from the organised strength of their community and class (which becomes becomes male-dominated, as a result).
- **Discrimination:** Legislation that hampers these advances must be removed.
- **Stereotypes:** The gender stereotypes that narrow the scope of women's involvement and growth must be tackled by challenging traditional attitudes and practices.

The challenge is huge but not overwhelming. Because, ultimately, beyond having the "correct" line and mastering the buzzwords, gender sensitivity is a matter of plain common sense — and will. ■

■ WAITING FOR A MIRACLE: Women need action, not words

PHOTO: FRANCINE JOSS

X marks the spot

Land deal aims to win KwaZulu over

Inkatha might not need an election to control Natal — the government is ready to hand over large pieces of the province in a highly-controversial land deal. **ESTELLE RANDALL** reports

WHILE A "BREAKTHROUGH" IN negotiations for a democratic South Africa was being hailed in the media, central government was simultaneously concluding a number of controversial land deals with bantustan authorities.

These deals give bantustan governments joint administrative control over state land. This is likely to severely curtail a future government's ability to meet the land needs of rural communities.

In August, it was announced that some 500 000 hectares of state land in Natal would be transferred to joint administrative control with the KwaZulu government. The announcement comes after almost a year of secret negotiations between the South African and KwaZulu governments.

The deal has been slammed by several groups. Democratic Party land affairs spokesperson Kobus Jordaan said the deal was "the most sinister piece of legislation" he had encountered.

ANC Midlands deputy chair Blade Nzimande described the move as an attempt to hand over Natal to Inkatha without an election.

"They are trying to create no-go areas for the ANC. The government should take full responsibility for what could happen," Nzimande said.

National ANC spokesperson Carl Niehaus added there was no logic in the arrangement. He said the ANC was unhappy about the unilateral transfer of land when South Africa was talking

about integrating all these areas into regions within a united South Africa. He warned that the ANC would take action if the transfer went ahead.

And in an editorial, *The Natal Mercury* said the government's timing "... smacks of opportunism. While putting negotiations at further risk, it is also in danger of turning land in an already hotly disputed area of the country into a political football."

The Goldstone Commission has also warned central government that the land deal could exacerbate violence in Natal. The commission recommended last December that further transfers of land to KwaZulu be suspended because "to proceed at the present time would, in the opinion of the commission, seriously aggravate the violence."

The deal also seems to fly in the face of concerns from the government's own Land Rights Advisory Forum (LRAF). LRAF chairperson Louise Tager called for a freeze on all transactions involving state land, saying it was difficult to understand the rationale behind the government's joint administration plans with bantustan governments around state land.

The fact that the government can ignore warnings from the Goldstone Commission and its own LRAF casts doubt on the power of these structures.

In response to these voices of opposition, the government continues to assert that the land deal — and those it concluded with the other bantustans in 1992 — amounts to a routine administrative matter and will not involve an expansion of bantustan government control over land.

It denies that the deal is a political manoeuvre to win friends on the eve of South Africa's first democratic elections.

But the government has failed to explain what joint administration entails, despite repeated requests from land activists for an explanation.

Recent revelations about the mismanagement of funds by bantustan governments, including KwaZulu, make it even more difficult to understand how joint administration with these structures could improve either genuine access to land for the landless or the provision of services to rural communities.

There are an about 1,4 million landless people in Natal. Land is a valuable resource for reconstruction and reconciliation.

In its 1991 White Paper on Land Reform, the government admits that existing state land is the only land still available for allocation to black farmers and landless communities.

Several rural communities have submitted claims to the state's Advisory Commission on Land Allocation (Acla). Many of these communities have strongly opposed the transfer of land they are claiming, either to bantustan governments or to private individuals.

However, the current land deal pre-empts Acla's findings and undermines communities that have attempted to get their land problems resolved peacefully and through channels set up by the state.

The deal is clearly an attempt to lure KwaZulu back to the negotiations process and to strengthen its power in the drive to a federal future. Until now, KwaZulu does not seem to have been impressed by these overtures. ■

● *Randall works for the Asssociation for Rural Advancement (Afra)*

What does the deal mean?

In terms of the deal, the following will happen to the land in question:

- **The KwaZulu government will jointly administer about 500 000 hectares of state land in Natal.**
- **Ownership of part of the land will be transferred to the KwaZulu Finance and Development Corporation, the KwaZulu Conservation Trust and the KwaZulu Monument Council. Ownership of traditional rural tribal land may be transferred to tribes and tribal authorities.**
- **Developed land may be leased or sold to farmers jointly selected by Pretoria and Ulundi.**
- **Some land may be given to tribes and tribal authorities as compensation for land taken away from them.**
- **Some land, such as townships, will remain under central government and will be administered by the Natal Provincial Administration (NPA).**
- **A technical committee made up of the departments of regional and land affairs, agriculture, KwaZulu and the NPA will identify beneficiaries to the land and activate and monitor transfer of the land to them.**

Where is the land?

Despite repeated requests from the Association for Rural Advancement (Afra), the government has refused to specify the exact location of the land involved. All the state has revealed is that it involves tribal land, conservation and forestry areas, agricultural plots, townships and villages and land on which there are state buildings.

However Afra's research has revealed that the land in question is in the following 39 districts in Natal: Alfred, Babanango, Bergville, Camperdown, Dundee, Eshowe, Estcourt, Hlabisa, Impendle, Inanda, Ingwavuma, Ixopo, Klipriver, Kranskop, Lions River, Lower Umfolozi, Lower Tugela, Mahlabatini, Mapumulo, Msinga, Ndwedwe, New Hanover, Newcastle, Ngotshe, Nkandla, Nongoma, Nqutu, Ntonjaneni, Paulpietersburg, Piet Retief, Polela, Port Shepstone, Richmond, Ubombo, Umlazi, Umvoti, Umzinto, Underberg, Vryheid.

Clermont and Edendale will remain under the Natal Provincial Administration (NPA).

PHOTO: MARIA OLGA ALLEMAND R

■ **PEOPLE'S POWER: Mass action has played a major role in rebuilding the Chilean Left**

Rebuilding the Chilean Left

Twenty years after the Chilean coup, the Left in that country is regrouping in preparation for the 1994 general election. WIP invited veteran Chilean politician and activist **MANUEL CABIESES DONOSO** to South Africa to share his thoughts on those changes

SOMETHING NEW AND BETTER IS emerging in Chile. Twenty years after the 1973 coup, we have realised that the Left must be synonomous with fundamental values ... democracy, social justice and thorough-going participation.

The Left is regrouping around these values and trying to avoid sterile and superfluous arguments. We have to concentrate on the huge problems of rebuilding the Left.

The true test for us will be on December 11 next year, when Chile will hold a general election. This will clarify the current political state of play, and we will know exactly how strong the Left is.

In the last election, in 1989, Patricio Aylwin — a Christian Democrat, who supported the coup — was elected president with 60% of the votes. Since 1990 the coalition government has been weakened — to what extent we'll see in December. The coalition is made up of Christian Democrats and the Socialist Party (which used to be the party of Salvador Allende). And, as its name indicates, it aspired to socialism. Yet it has accepted the role of administrating neoliberalism with a socialist as economic affairs minister. He has become the most fervent defender of

the neoliberal system, despite all the social injustices it is responsible for.

Leftwing alliance

The Chilean Left, which continues to fight for social changes and social justice — a project we still call socialism — is constituted by the Allendist Democratic Movement of the Left (Mida). Mida includes the Communist Party, which retains a national presence and has a strong influence in the union movement. It was, though, hard-hit by the military dictatorship which ruled Chile from 1973 to 1989.

The other members of Mida are six small splinter groups from the Socialist Party and from another group that used to have a strong presence but suffered severe losses during the dictatorship, the Revolutionary Movement of the Left (MIR).

In last year's municipal elections, Mida got 6,4% of the votes. In the coming general election, our strategic target is 10%, or 900 000 votes — which is low but nonetheless would reveal a tremendous degree of consciousness given the current realities. It would also allow us to develop a longer-term political project.

Mida is an experience in development, the seed of a greater force. I don't think it has any similarity to SA. It's a recomposition of the political forces of the Left.

Always a minority

It is today clear (though it's always been *theoretically* clear) that the political Left is not in itself enough to bring about change. It could be very lucid, with a tremendous capacity to lead, but it will always be a minority among the people — a small cadre of leaders selected from among the people, regardless of how big the parties of the Left are.

The Left, which is more than the political parties and organisations, has to understand the broader social sectors. Therefore we should have programmes of struggle that are capable of mobilising and organising huge masses of people. I believe this is not possible using the old party formulas that were used when I was younger. Not only have we suffered an ideological crisis throughout the world, we have also suffered an organic crisis. We need to confront this with clarity and courage.

Lessons from the coup

It's not easy to 'import' lessons from other parts of the world. But South Africans on the brink of democracy can learn a lot from the Chilean coup of 1973.

Part of our problem was the narrow election victory achieved by the coalition of popular forces in the 1970 election. The coalition had a relatively weak majority of about 37%, which meant there was a lot of space in which forces opposed to change could organise.

It started to happen soon after Dr Salvador Allende won the election; Richard Nixon was in the White House, Henry Kissinger was head of state, and together they plotted to squash the process of change in Chile.

They used a range of methods, both clandestine and legal.

They pushed extreme rightwing groupings to violence — the most important of which was the assassination of the commander-in-chief of the army, General Rene Schneider, who was a 'constitutionalist'. Then the CIA started to finance rightwing newspapers and radio stations, as well as political parties and rightwing paramilitary groups.

Blockades

On the legal side, the US organised an economic blockade. Up until then, Chile had received a lot of loans and credits. But under the Allende government, the country didn't receive a cent.

One of the first economic measures undertaken by the Allende government was to nationalise the copper mines, one of the cornerstones of the economy, which had been owned by US corporations. The high rate of compensation sought by these companies was rejected by Allende, which led to a series of international boycotts and embargoes organised by the US.

Inside the country, the CIA and the wealthy Chilean clasess organised — and financed — protests against the government.

For example, for two months they practically paralysed the transport system with a truckdrivers' strike which also blocked highways and roads. This led to supply shortages in the cities. They also organised protest actions by small retailers and businessmen.

Distortions

But we made our own mistakes, too. The political forces backing the government of Popular Unity (UP) lacked the capacity to mobilise and organise the people. We suffered some political and ideological distortions.

But our biggest problem was the fact that, in the Chilean Left, there was a strong belief that our armed forces were different from their counterparts in other Latin American countries, which had been plagued by coups.

This notion was present among a few of the military commanders of the time, some of whom were later asassinated by General Pinochet's men. The commander of the navy had to be arrested by the coupmakers, for example. The same happened to the chief of the military police.

But generally, we underestimated the ability of the Chilean armed forces to absorb the changes that were occurring.

Other serious errors stemmed from the history of our country. Chile had a long history of democratic governments. Chilean democracy had not suffered any interruption from 1925 until 1973. One product of that political history was an excessive affection and respect for the institutions themselves. And history demonstrated very clearly, at least in our case, that the dominant classes do not share that sort of respect.

If the Chilean experience confirms one thing, it is that the popular forces must prepare for a long and increasingly more complex struggle. And that we must never, ever, trust the enemy. ■

— Manuel Cabieses Donoso

■ TINPOT: Pinochet is no longer president, but he still heads Chile's army

The elements which have been grouped together in Mida are working together to overcome our ideological weaknesses and become better organisations. Of course, it is also important to recover what we lost during the dictatorship because of the repression.

Rapid organisation

One thing we have realised since 1970 is that we erred by trying to mobilise people very rapidly, rather than relying on more traditional methods of organising. In 1970, when Allende's Popular Unity (UP) government was voted into power, the basic social organisation was relatively weak; today it's even weaker.

The main trade union federation, known as CUT, was characterised by a top-heaviness. The unions affiliated to CUT performed rather irregularly and tended to focus on specific types of activities which basically consisted of collective bargaining once a year. Among the general population, on the outskirts of the cities, the level of social organisation was relatively weak. They, like student and other organisations, tended to be top-heavy.

The neoliberal project

In rebuilding the Chilean Left, we declare ourselves enemies of capitalism — particularly its free market and neoliberal form. We have the "advantage" of having suffered the effects of neoliberalism, imposed on us by a dictatorial regime.

Neoliberalism has cost Chilean workers the important gains they achieved through long and painful struggles. The right to strike exists legally, but is practically non-existent. A union can vote and choose to strike — but after 15 days on strike, if there is no agreement with management, scab labour can be employed and the strike will fizzle out. Management is allowed to negotiate indilvidually with each worker; so it grants benefits to workers individually, not by way of the unions. That is how you explain the fact that there are 11 000 unions, most very small. And together they represent only 14% of the country's labour force.

Chilean workers have lost access to health. The neoliberal model privatises health services, even cemeteries. Education is now private, with private universities flourishing. You will not find the child of a worker in those universities. There is a shortage of one million houses.

The secret of the neoliberal economic model is to push the exploitation of workers to the extreme — lower wages, long working hours, etc. A UN report estimates that between 1974 and 1989 Chilean workers were dispossessed of $83-billion — by way of lower income, longer hours, the removal of essential services and super-exploitation. We demand that this social debt be repaid, by bringing back the social services that were taken away.

The struggle is not yet over

Veteran activist Manuel Cabieses Donoso founded Punto Final newspaper in 1965. In 1973, his newspaper was closed by the Pinochet dictatorship and Cabieses was detained in several prison camps until 1975, when he went into exile.

Cabieses returned to Chile in 1979, working underground against the dictatorship, and was a founder member of the Revolutionary Movement of the Left (MIR). He later became founder and leader of the Allendist Democratic Movement of the Left (Mida).

Cabieses has relaunched Punto Final and is currently editor-in-chief. Later this year he is due to face charges of slander and incitement for an article he wrote about Pinochet during the late '80s. Because of Chile's bizarre legal system, Cabieses will face charges under both the military council and the civilian government. He faces imprisonment of 800 days on each of the charges.

New conditions

Chile in 1993 is a totally different country from Chile of 1973. This has tremendous implications for the Chilean Left which, to a certain extent, has not been able to adapt to the new situation.

To impose the neoliberal model, it was necessary to anihilate the organisations of the Left. The military dictatorship almost achieved this. The toll was horrific: There were 15 000 dead and 2 500 "disappeared". And it has proved impossible to apply justice; not a single member of the armed forces or police have been charged with any of these crimes.

But what is important today is that the popular, democratic and revolutionary organisations were virtually silenced. We have been undergoing a very slow process of reconstruction which has grown in strength a bit since 1990.

The Chilean Left is still debating the mistakes we made in 1973. We believe it would be wrong to try and repeat the road of the UP. We know what the end of that road looks like. Anyway, the masses will not follow us on that road because they know where it leads to.

I believe the road the forces of the Left must follow should be to achieve a decisive social majority which should be well-organised and should extend into all sections of our soceity, including the armed forces. This demands profound changes and adaptations in our organisations and their methods of working.

Luckily, the events of the past few years, the changes in political and ideological thinking, have opened the possibility — at least for the Latin American Left — to develop styles of working and organisation that are democratic, and to abandon authoritarian habits. We are stimulated by these new realities.

And although the road forward is not altogether clear, we have in our favour, across the world, the tendency towards building these democratic social and political forces. ■

● *This is an edited version of a presentation to a public forum at Johannesburg's Phambili Books. WIP is grateful to Phambili Books, and to CUSO for their support in bringing Mr Cabieses to South Africa*

How the US protects Israel

UN Security Council attempts to keep Israel within some sort of human rights framework have generally run into one obstacle — the United States. With its ability to veto Security Council resolutions, the US has repeatedly prevented any UN action against Israel — delaying a political settlement in the region. This list of vetoes, stretching back to 1972, gives a sense of just how often the US has given the thumbs-down

10/9/72: UN condemns Isreal's attacks against southern Lebanon and Syria. Vote: 13 to 1 (US veto) with 1 abstention.

26/7/73: Affirms the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, statehood and equal protection. Vote: 13 to 1 (US veto) with China absent.

8/12/75: Condemns Isreal's air strikes and attacks in southern Lebanon and its murder of innocent civilians. Vote: 13 to 1 (US veto) with 1 abstention.

26/1/76: Calls for self-determination of Palestinian people. Vote: 9 to 1 (US veto) with 3 abstentions.

25/3/76: Deplores Israel's altering of the status of Jerusalem, which is recognised as an international city by most world nations and the UN. Vote: 14 to 1 (US veto).

29/6/76: Affirms the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Vote: 10 to 1 (US veto) with 4 abstentions.

30/4/80: Endorses self-determination for the Palestinian people. Vote: 10 to 1 (US veto) with 4 abstentions.

20/1/82: Demands Israel's withdrawal from the Golan Heights. Vote: 9 to 1 (US veto) with 4 abstentions.

2/4/82: Condemns Israeli mistreatment of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip and its refusals to abide by the Geneva Convention protocols of civilised nations. Vote: 14 to 1 (US veto).

20/4/82: Condemns Israeli soldier who shot 11 Muslim worshippers near Al Aqsa mosque in the Old City of Jerusalem. Vote: 14 to 1 (US veto).

8/6/82: Urges sanctions against Israel if it does not withdraw from Lebanon. Vote: 14 to 1 (US veto).

26/6/82: Urges sanctions against Israeli if it does not withdraw from Lebanon. Vote: 14 to 1 (US veto)

6/8/82: Urges an end to economic aid to Israeli if it refuses to withdraw from Lebanon. Vote: 11 to 1 (US veto) with 3 abstentions.

2/8/83: Condemns continued Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, denouncing them as an obstacle to peace. Vote: 13 to 1 (US veto) with 1 abstention.

6/9/84: Deplores Israel's brutal massacres of Arabs in Lebanon and urges its withdrawal. Vote: 14 to 1 (US veto).

12/3/85: Condemns Israeli brutally in southern Lebanon and denounces the Israeli "Iron Fist" policy of repression. Vote: 11 to 1 (US veto) with 3 abstentions.

13/9/85: Denounces Israel's violation of human rights in the occupied territories. Vote: 10 to 1 (US veto) with 3 abstentions.

17/1/86: Strongly deplores Israel's violence in southern Lebanon. Vote: 11 to 1 (US veto) with 3 abstentions.

30/1/86: Deplores Israel's activities in occupied Arab East Jerusalem which threaten the sanctity of Muslim holy sites. Vote: 13 to 1 (US veto) with 1 abstention.

6/2/86: Condemns Israel's hijacking of a Libyan passenger airplane. Vote: 10 to 1 (US veto) with 1 abstention.

18/1/88: Strongly deplores Israeli attacks against Lebanon and its measures and practices against the civilian population. Vote: 13 to 1 (US veto) with 1 abstention.

1/2/88: Calls on Israel to abandon its policies against the Palestinian uprising which violate the rights of occupied Palestinians, to abide by the Fourth Geneva Convention and formalise a leading role for the UN in future peace negotiations. Vote: 14 to 1 (US veto).

15/4/88: Urges Israel to reaccept deported Palestinians, condemns Israel's shooting of civilians, calls on Israel to uphold the Fourth Geneva Convention and calls for a peace settlement under UN auspices. Vote: 14 to 1 (US veto).

10/5/88: Condemns Israel's 2 May incursion into Lebanon. Vote: 14 to 1 (US veto).

14/12/88: Strongly deplores Israel's commando raids on Lebanon. Vote: 14 to 1 (US veto).

17/2/89: Strongly deplores Israel's repression of the Palestinian uprising; calls on Israel to respect the human rights of the Palestinians. Vote: 14 to 1 (US veto).

9/6/89: Strongly deplores Israel's violation of the human rights of Palestinians.

11/7/89: Demands Israel return property confiscated from Palestinians during a tax protest and allows a fact-finding mission to observe Israel's crackdown on the Palestinian uprising. Vote: 14 to 1 (US veto).

31/5/90: Calls for a fact-finding mission on abuses against Palestinians in Israel-occupied lands. Vote: 14 to 1 (US veto). ■

Source: Washington Report on Middle East

Palestine's tears

Cry the beloved non-country

Think of a way to describe the recent deal between the Israeli government and the PLO. A miracle? Historic? Innovative? Veteran Palestinian activist **EDWARD W SAID** suggests we use the word 'sellout'...

THE "HISTORICAL BREAKTHROUGH" by the PLO and the Israeli government signals a new phase of reconciliation between two enemies. But it also leaves Palestinians very much the subordinates, with Israel still in charge of East Jerusalem, settlements, sovereignty and the economy.

Although I still believe in a two-state solution peacefully arrived at, the peace plan raises many questions.

It is unclear in its details (no-one seems to grasp all its aspects), even though it is clear in its broad outlines:

- Israel will recognise the PLO.
- It will allow "limited autonomy" and "early empowerment" for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, one of the most miserable places on earth, and Jericho, a small West Bank town 100 kilometres away.
- Yasir Arafat is allowed to visit but not to take up residence.
- A few hundred members of the Palestinian Liberation Army, at present in Jordan, will be permitted to handle internal security, ie. police work.
- Municipal oversight of health and sanitation, as well as education, postal service and tourism, will be covered by Palestinians.
- The Israeli army will reposition itself away from population centres but will not withdraw for a while.
- Israel will control the land, water,

PHOTO: NEAL CASSIDY

■ **SPEAK UP: PLO leader Yasir Arafat at the Palestine National Council**

overall security and foreign affairs in these "autonomous" areas.

● In the West Bank, for the time being, Israel will dominate the area between Gaza and Jericho, the Allenby Bridge to Jordan, and almost all the water and land, a good percentage of which it has already taken.

One question remains: how much land is Israel in fact going to cede for peace?

Small-town government

Clearly the PLO has transformed itself from a national liberation movement into a kind of small-town government, with the same handful of people in command. PLO offices abroad — all of them the result of years of costly struggle whereby the Palestinian people earned the right to represent themselves — are being closed, sold off, deliberately neglected.

For the more than 50% of the Palestinian people not resident in the occupied territories — 350 000 stateless refugees in Lebanon, twice that number in Syria, many more elsewhere — the plan may be the final dispossession. Their national rights as people made refugees in 1948 (solemnly confirmed and reconfirmed for years by the UN, the PLO, the Arab governments, indeed most of the world) now seem to have been annulled.

Embarrassment

All secret deals between a very strong and a very weak partner necessarily involve concessions hidden in embarrassment by the latter. Yes, there are still lots of details to be negotiated, as there are many imponderables to be made clear, and even some hopes to be fulfilled or dashed.

Still, the deal before us smacks of the PLO leadership's exhaustion and isolation — and of Israel's shrewdness. Many Palestinians are asking themselves why, after years of concessions, we should be conceding once again to Israel and the US in return for promises and vague improvements in the occupation that won't all occur until "final status" talks three to five years hence, and perhaps not even then.

We have not even had an explicit acknowledgment from Israel to end the occupation, with its maze of laws and complicated punitive appparatus.

Nothing is said about the 17 000 political prisoners who remain in Israeli jails. And can the Israeli army march in at will? Who decides and when?

Any "peace agreement" must contain the understanding that Palestinians have a right to freedom and equality and will concede nothing from that right. Limited "self-rule", after all, is not something around which to mobilise or give long-term hope to people.

Above all, Palestinians now must have the widest possible say in their future, as it is largely about to be settled, perhaps irrevocably and unwisely.

Death of democracy

It is disturbing that the Palestinian National Council has not been called into session, and that the appalling disarray induced by Arafat's recent methods has not been addressed.

I count no more than five people holed up in Tunis (including Arafat) who, with little legal background or experience of ordinary civil life, have hatched decisions affecting almost six million people. There has been no consultation to speak of.

In the territories, the occupation has been getting worse, and this after ten rounds of fruitless negotiations. When I was there earlier this year no-one I spoke with failed to make the connection, blaming Arafat and the delegation members in equal measure. Then in August three leading negotiators resigned, bewailing Arafat's undemocratic methods, implying that while they bled themselves dry with the Israelis, Arafat had opened up a secret channel for his negotiations.

With the PLO in decomposition and conditions in the territories abysmal, there never was a worse internal crisis for Palestinians — until Arafat rushed into the Israeli plan, which in one stroke rids the Israelis of an unwanted, insurrectionary problem that Arafat must now work at solving for them.

I admire those few Palestinian officials who bravely aver that this may be the first step toward ending the occupation. But anyone who knows the increasingly slapdash, not to say irresponsible, methods of Arafat's leadership — hi lack of care, precision and seriousness — is advised to start working for a different future.

No political settlement of a long and bloody conflict can ever fit all circumstances. To be recognised at last by Israel and the US may mean personal fulfillment for some, but it doesn't answer Palestinian needs or solve the leadership crisis.

Our struggle is about freedom and democracy; it is secular and, for a long time — indeed, up until the past three years — it was fairly democratic. Arafat has cancelled the intifada unilaterally, with possible results in further dislocations, disappointments and conflict for both Palestinians and Israelis. In recent years Arafat's PLO, our only national institution, has refused to mobilise its various dispersed constituencies, to attract its people's best talents.

Now it may try to regain the loyalty and compliance it expects before it plunges into a new phase, having seemed to mortgage its future without serious debate, without adequate preparation, without telling its people the full and bitter truth. Can it succeed, and still represent the Palestinian nation? ■

A savage turn

Dossiers compiled by human rights organisations testify to the savage turn in Israel's counter-insurgency operations this year.

Between February and May — the months immediately preceding and following the closure of the territories — 67 Palestinians were killed by the IDF in the Gaza Strip alone, 29 of them in May, making it the bloodiest month of the uprising.

A staggering 1522 residents were injured, of whom 474 were children. Live ammunition caused 98% of the injuries. Ten 'search operations' were carried out, rendering 450 people permanently homeless (or, as one local put it, 'refugees from refugee camps') and causing over $50-million damage to property.

Meanwhile, Palestinians were beaten, their houses raided, their localities curfewed, with such monotony that most lawyers and human rights researchers simply gave up counting.

Today, as peace dawns, there are still 17 000 Palestinians in Israeli prisons and detention camps, two-thirds of whom are from Gaza and most of them rounded up in the last year.

Why Gaza says yes, mostly

It's the 70th month of the uprising; the 27th year of the Israeli occupation; the night before peace ... In Gaza **GRAHAM USHER** encounters an outpouring of joy spiked with dread

An Israeli soldier sits astride a wall outside Gaza Central Prison, clasping his helmet. In peace — as in war — Gaza seems to elude his understanding.

A large crowd, uncontrollable, surges into the square. Pictures of Abu Ammar — Yasir Arafat — are everywhere. A pounding chant rises: "Gaza, Gaza. Jericho first, then Jerusalem."

"Hamas," a boy, no older than 14, tells me, "is finished."

Another youngster shakes his head in disgust, "They have forgotten Palestine." He drags his bicycle wearily onto the road and rides away, an outcast from the party.

Then a father strides towards me, a son and two daughters in tow. He shakes my hand furiously. I don't know him, but gregariousness in Gaza is as ingrained as resistance.

"What about the peace? What do you think?"

I reply, honestly, that I don't know.

"It's good," he says.

We watch a group of about a dozen young men gather round an Israeli soldier who chats with them in Arabic. The father lifts the youngest daughter onto his shoulder and kisses her gently on the forehead. "It's good," he repeats. "Because of the girl."

The conditions of withdrawal

Let's rewind the film, to April of this year. The occupied territories are being rocked by some of the most intense outbursts of Israeli-Palestinian violence since the *intifada* began in 1987.

The Israelis are scared, not just *in* the occupied territories but *of* them — in west Jerusalem, Jaffa and Ashkelon. On March 29 the daily *Yediet Aharnot* comments: "If the present wave of violence continues it will only be a matter of time before an overall confrontation breaks out and the real balance of forces between the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) and the stabbers will be brought into play. Again the Palestinians will be the ones to pay the price."

A day later Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin casts an iron curtain across the territories and announces "tough new measures" to "take Gaza out of Tel Aviv". "It is better," he declares, "for the Arabs not to be swarming around here."

For the next two months, IDF foot-patrols, sometimes 40-deep, trawled through Gaza with the task of "reclaiming the towns and camps from masked gunmen" while "search operations" — deploying anti-tank missiles, explosive charges and helicopters — blew up scores of houses, displacing hundreds of families.

Special IDF units masquerading as Palestinians infiltrated camps and villages to flush out *intifada* activists. Across the Gaza Strip, observation posts were set up with "open fire" regulations so broad that they were tantamount, in the words of one Israeli journalist, to a licence to kill.

The political message rammed home by the Israeli terror was summarised trenchantly by a senior IDF source: "[The closure] did have a profound psychological effect on those under closure. It shattered their illusions that terrorism will simply cause us to abandon the territories without any word of agreement or arrangement. They should realise they will get absolutely nothing without negotiations."

In other words, the territories — via the political and military oppression wrought and veiled by the closure — were to be held hostage until and unless the Palestinians came round to Israel's way of thinking at the peace talks.

As for human rights abuses, extra-judicial executions, the enduring illegality of occupation — these were to be converted into bargaining chips.

"You (the Palestinians) want to solve the problem," said Rabin in April. "The place to do that is around the negotiating table. So it is permissible for me to keep the territories closed as long as possible."

Let's do a deal

In May, Rabin announced that the separation of the territories from "sovereign Israel" would be indefinite. Attacks on Israelis inside the Green Line had dropped, even though armed attacks on the IDF within the territories continued.

At about the same time, Rabin signalled his readiness to do a deal on an "interim settlement" that could be tested in Gaza. "If you can find a Palestinian ready to negotiate about Gaza, let me know," he told one interviewer.

He wasn't kept waiting. Thanks to the canny midwifery of Norwegian foreign minister Jurgen Holst and his Israeli counterpart, Shimon Peres, Arafat delivered the *Gaza/Jericho First*

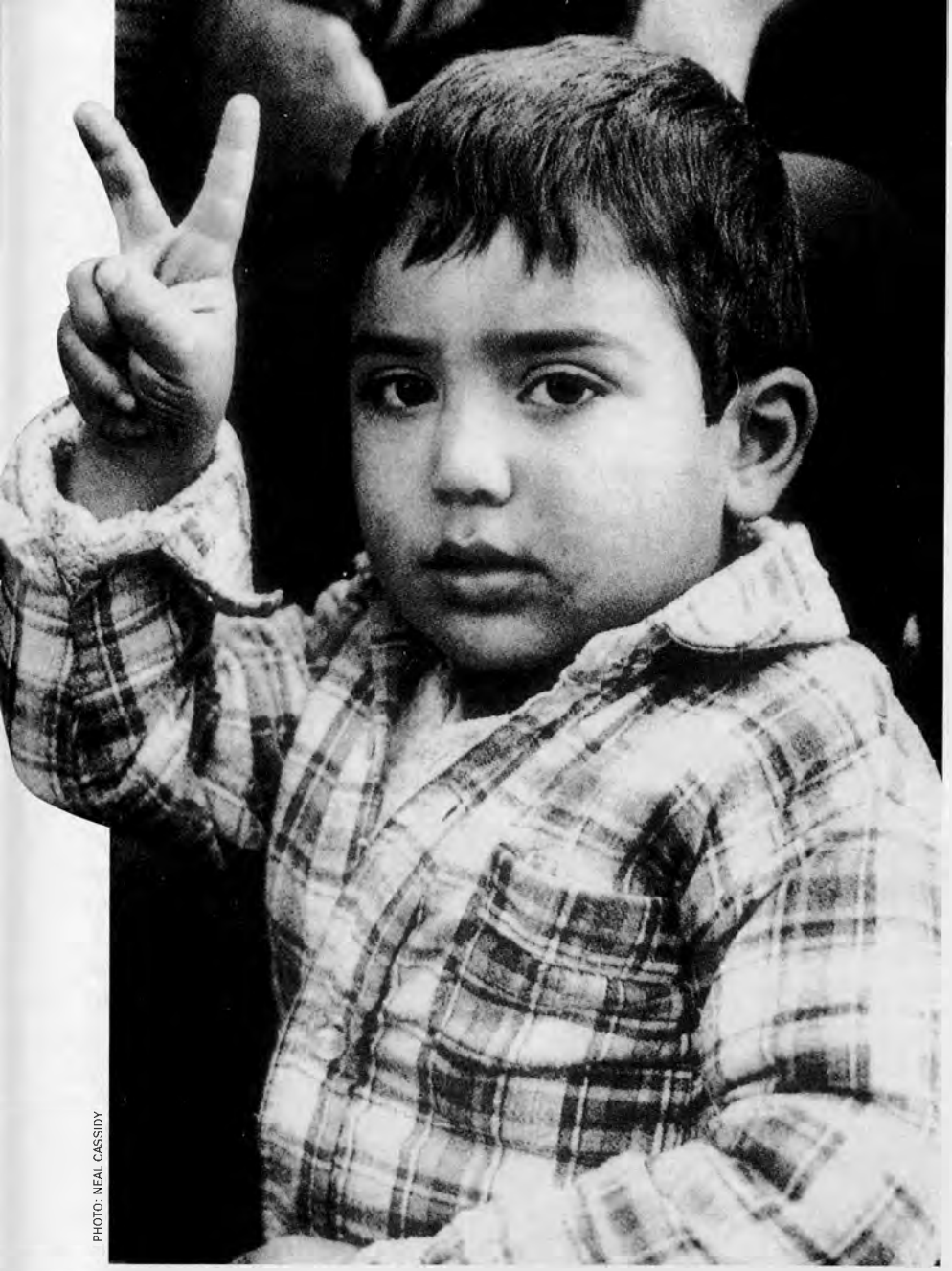


PHOTO: NEAL CASSIDY

■ **PEACE: Even young Palestinians are divided on the merits of the new deal**

plan. The rest is history.

But the victor is Rabin. He has translated Israel's near-hysteria of March 1993 into a mandate for his government to extricate itself from Gaza on its own terms.

What *Gaza/Jericho First* amounts to is autonomy in Gaza and Jericho, first. Recall that autonomy for the "Arab residents of the territories" is what Rabin's Labour Party has been advocating — and the PLO has historically rejected — ever since it was mooted at Camp David in September 1978.

Some support

Despite its flaws, several opinion polls show two-thirds of Gaza supports the accord. Given the severity of the occupation — compounded by an economic siege that has catapulted unemployment to nearly 60% — this is hardly surprising. "Anything," people say here, "anything is better than what went before."

Yet there is a curious ambivalence, a kind of schizophrenia about the Gaza Strip: Palestinians celebrate deep into the night. They have their photos taken by jittery Israeli conscripts. All the while, a hushed rage smoulders. Periodically it explodes in the ugliest of forms.

On 12 September, three Israeli soldiers were ambushed and killed while patrolling east of Gaza Town. The next day, a Palestinian wired with explosives blew himself up as he entered a police station. Later that evening, another, decked in a national flag, approached a soldier in Gaza Square. The soldier stretched out his hand and the Palestinian stabbed him. He was shot on sight.

Viscerally and psychologically, Gazans are at the crossroads. They could go either way.

Palestinian delegation chief Haider Abdl Shafi, who hails from Gaza, says: "I tell you plainly that the (peace) negotiations are not worth fighting about. The critical issue is transforming our society. Only once we achieve this will we be in a position of strength."

If the agreement provides enough political and civic space for Palestinians to set about renewing their institutions, democratising their life, mobilising around issues of social justice, then maybe something can be salvaged.

But if it augurs only an apartheid of separate political development shackled by Israeli economic domination, and the camps are torn down only to be replaced by ghettoes, and the ghettoes become the turf of rival militias, then "we may cease to exist as a people," says Abdl Shafi.

Don't ask

My visit to Numeirat ends at the house of Abu Musa. He is not the sort of Palestinian that Western journalists usually court in Gaza, being neither a bearded Islamist nor a stone-throwing youth.

Abu Musa is a fisherman and he is old — 60 years old. He has lived under the British, the Egyptians and the Israelis. He comes from Magdal, now called Ashkelon, and lost everything in 1948 when Israel was established.

Like many of his generation, he regained his national identity through work and education, putting three of his brothers through university. How does he feel about *Gaza/Jericho First*?

"I feel like a man who has lost a million dollars and been given ten." He pauses for a moment, then leans over to touch my arm.

"But you see, I lost the million dollars a long, long time ago. So I will keep the ten. We cannot go on the way we are. I accept, I accept. After so many rejections, I accept."

"But please don't ask me how I feel." ■

Cuba's tears

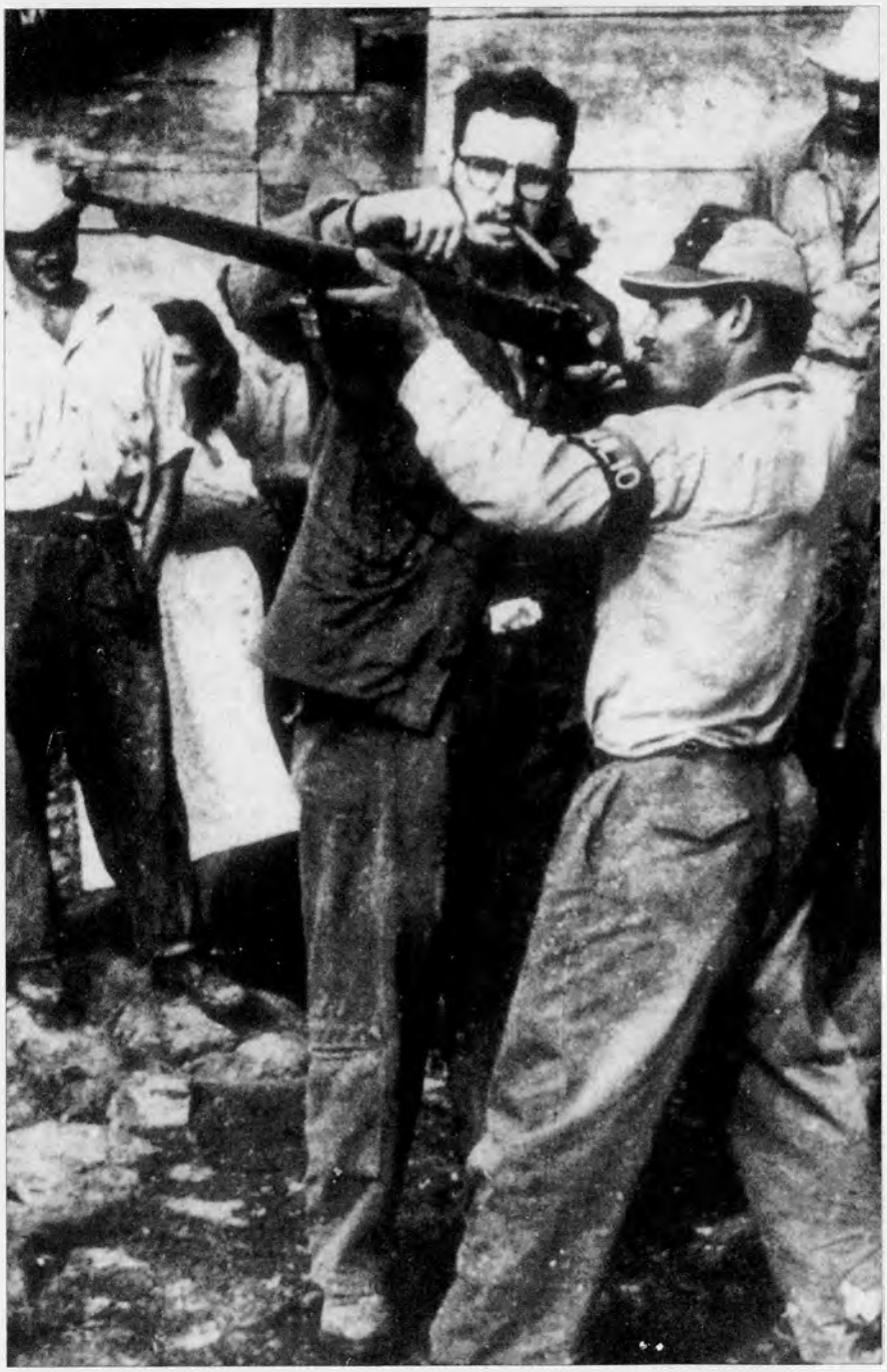
There is an island that must be seen: a model that is being phased out. Hurry to visit before the last traces are obliterated, for the victors will not put up with any leftovers — and in Miami, people are already fighting over the spoils. **GÜNTER GRASS** pays his respects

OUR TRIP TO CUBA BEGAN AT East Berlin's Schönefeld Airport; from German Democratic Republic days the airport still has that penetrating Prussian-socialist odour of Lysol that no Western chemicals have been able to dissolve. Someone asks us to take two packages of medicine to Havana; the intended recipient, a doctor, is identified by his address on the packages. Such medicines are lacking on the isolated island. The blockade imposed by the US decades ago, and recently tightened, includes a ban on medical supplies. This is supposed to be a humanitarian measure, intended to promote human rights in Cuba at long last.

We will soon witness the results of this get-tough policy: the pharmacies with bare shelves, the desperate resort to the natural methods of healing espoused by "green" medicine, the pitiable condition of old people especially, who show the marks of the rationing of all foodstuffs — which is barely keeping famine at bay.

Dependence

Of course it can be shown — the evidence is plentiful — that the isolated island's dependence on the Soviet Union (forced not least by the blockade) left Cuba with a centrally-planned economy whose chronic tendency toward shortages cannot respond to the present emergency. But there is no mistaking the fact that the winner of the cold war wants to starve out Cuba, which means 11-million people. The allied countries stalwartly support this stupid and inhumane goal. Deliveries of powdered milk, begun in the days of the GDR, have been cancelled, while Ger-



■ **GLORY DAYS: Late 1958, and Fidel Castro — cigar firmly in mouth — teaches a new recruit how to use his rifle**

man chancellor Helmut Kohl has chosen to provide that model democracy Indonesia with a number of leftover warships from the GDR fleet. The hypocrisy of the victors knows no bounds.

Wretched

Yes, it's true. The triumphant reports in the Western press are quite right when they tote up the successful outcome. Havana looks wretched. Shop windows are empty or else they display a few dreary wares, testimony to the growing shortages. Bookstore shelves do not groan under letteristic overproduction. Where foodstuffs are sold for ration coupons, people have to stand in line. These people do not express any particular faith in communism, yet a few days later they will participate, albeit reluctantly, in something called an election.

The results, after a turnout alarmingly close to 100%, cannot but confirm the existing power structure, which has undergone only slight and all-too-cautious changes.

No, these were not democratic elections following the Western model. To be sure, they were carried our properly, as we observed in the town of Trinidad. There were election booths and a folded ballot. But nothing like a recognisable opposition was allowed to present itself to the voters. Instead — as was stressed again and again — for the first time voters had a choice of candidates, among them surprisingly many who did not belong to the ruling party of this one-party regime: doctors, scientists, artists. Take, for example, the writer Miguel Barnet, who won 98% of the vote in his electoral district, yet received the news of his landslide diffidently, saying this represented too great a responsibility. It was his first time running for public office: he had always been an outsider, not only as a Christian, but as someone who had not been allowed to publish any of his books in the 1970s — those had been the worst years. Now all this recognition! He felt crushed; so much was expected of him.

Barnet has often travelled abroad. His books are now widely distributed. The difficulties he experienced at the hands of the party and the Writers' League did not lead him to turn his back on his country and escape animos-

The new blockade: How Cuba handles Aids sufferers

One of the most controversial aspects of Cuban health care — and a direct result of the US blockade of the island — is its approach to Aids sufferers.

Since October 1992, 150 Aids cases have been diagnosed in Cuba. Extensive testing revealed 850 HIV-positive people. Compared to most third world and developed countries, these statistics are phenomenally low.

But Cuba's way of dealing with Aids — to quarantine HIV carriers in a sanatorium — has stirred controversy throughout the western world. The US (which implemented the blockade 33 years ago) has slammed it as a violation of human rights.

Because of the blockade, the Cuban government had to assess its ability to contain the spread of Aids. And the shortage of medical supplies, plus the lack of knowledge on the island about how to treat Aids victims, called for drastic measures.

A national programme was launched to test all people likely to have come into contact with HIV — in particular, people who travelled outside Cuba, or who had contact with tourists, and soldiers who had returned from battle in other parts of the world. Acting on the premise that Aids is a sexually-transmitted disease, and that HIV-positive people are potentially contagious, the Cuban government then ruled that those who tested HIV positive should be isolated in sanatoria to protect the unaffected population.

Although the government has emphasised that the quarantine programme is not intended to be permanent, and has already made several amendments to conditions in sanatoria, the policy remains controversial.

Not prisons

The western media image portrays the sanatoria as prisons with high fences and guards. This was not the impression I gained from visiting the Los Cocos sanatorium in Havana and from speaking to families of HIV-positive individuals in Santiago.

Los Cocos is situated in pleasant surroundings with extensive grounds and recreational facilities, including a swimming pool. Residents do not live in dormitories but in small individual or couple units. Couples who are both HIV-positive live together. It was pointed out to me that many couples met and married in the sanatorium. Four hourly daily visits from friends and family are permitted.

The sanatorium, and all it has to offer — including meals and medical care — are free of charge. Residents who had to quit their jobs to move to the sanatorium continue receiving their salary and others receive allowances.

Residents expressed different views about the sanatorium. A few middle aged men and women said they were thankful to the government for providing them with comfortable surroundings and medical care which their families would not have been able to offer.

But younger residents spoke of restlessness and a feeling of being trapped. "I want to live with the people, with my family. I want to dance and swim with my friends. Sometimes I think I'll die tomorrow, so I want to get away from here and enjoy the time I have left," J, a 27-year-old man, told me.

Health officials pointed out that conscious efforts were made to ensure that the sanatoria are not places of death. Once patients become very ill they are sent to the Institute for Tropical Medicine for treatment — and it is here that most patients die.

Gentle persuasion

Not all HIV-positive Cubans go to a sanatorium willingly. However, "extreme methods of force" — although sanctioned by the government — are avoided, according to health workers. After much discussion and psychological support, patients who initially refuse to go are "gently" persuaded to do so.

This aspect of Cuba's Aids policy is particularly controversial and has raised strong criticism in the west.

Deputy health minister Hector Terry stresses that the government "spares no resources to make sure our people get the best health care. This is what we are trying to maintain in our battle against Aids..."

Cuban health workers are particularly proud of the fact that the government pays full salaries to sanatorium inmates, and that health care is provided free of charge.

They compare this to the US, where Aids treatment costs several hundred dollars a day and is way beyond the reach of many Americans.

"An Aids sufferer in the US could die of hunger after losing his job, or die prematurely because he could not afford a hospital bed and medicines," one health-worker pointed out. "We will not abandon our people like that." *— Shereen Singh*

ity by going into exile. He sees what cannot be overlooked — that the established revolution is painfully attempting to free itself of its inherited dogmatic rigidity and no longer wants to be confined to patterns imported from the Soviet Union. Instead, the revolution is harking back to its origin and finding the beginnings of its tradition in the example of the liberal bourgeois revolutionary Jòse Marti. (Even Fidel Castro was not a communist when he, along with a few other men and women, and eventually with popular support, launched the revolution and in 1959 overthrew the dictator Batista.)

Nobody — not Miguel Barnet, nor anyone else with whom we spoke in Havana, Trinidad, and Pinar del Rio — wants a second Batista. They suspect that one is just waiting in Miami to hop on a plane. And they all alluded, more or less tentatively, to the need for reforms. But no-one, I was told, could be allowed to turn the results of the revolution into its dreaded opposite. I heard this from older men and women working in the tobacco fields around Pinar del Rio. The revolution had given these people a self-respect and a measure of social security, and they were less likely to notice the absence of liberal rights than would foreigners on a brief visit or those Cuban intellectuals who, more than two years ago, wrote an open letter to Fidel Castro in which they rightly demanded full freedom of expression.

The intellectuals were dealt with harshly. Poets Maria Elena Cruz Varela and Jorge Pomar were condemned to two years in prison. Shortly before Pomar was arrested by the police, he was beaten up by the infamous "rapid commandos". Today he is out on parole, forbidden to leave the district in which he lives until his sentence is up (some time this year). Varela is in a prison hospital. Her term, too, is scheduled to end this year.

Health care

The units by which the West measures democracy have become questionable. Now that capitalism alone, with all its liabilities, remains, it should become evident that in many areas Cuba not only stands up well in comparison to capitalist countries but that it has accomplished some exemplary things through its revolutionary transformation. The health care system available throughout the country provides one general practitioner, whose services are available at no cost, for every 800 families. No other third world country offers such coverage. In each village we saw a two-storey house (usually the only one), which had living space upstairs for the doctor and a nurse with their offices on the ground floor. The results are reflected in reports issued by the United Nations and the statistics compiled by other respected international organisations: the low infant mortality rate and high life expectancy could provide a model, not only for the so-called underdeveloped countries but perhaps even for the US, whose new president, responding to the scandalous conditions in his country, has begun a search for reforms. I am referring not to showy things like high-tech model clinics or organ transplants — Cuba has those, too, by the way — but rather to a socially equitable system of care, of a sort Mexico has not even begun to realise.

Anyone who wants to see Fidel Castro gone should think carefully about how to fill the vacuum that this large and flawed man would leave

We had no sooner left the isolated island than we witnessed unmistakable deprivation in the Maya villages of the Yucatan Peninsula, and the slums of Mexico City, which seem to spread further every day.

I know an exemplary health care system means little in a period when ideological stubbornness insists on the elimination of social safety nets. In their stupidity, the cold war's victors keep looking for reassurance that the enemy has been rooted out. But who would be helped by the restoration of Cuba's old power elite? Surely not the Cuban people. I would think that the powerful US has enough misery at its own doorstep — whether in Mexico or Haiti — not to mention the rising curve of social distress within its own borders.

The world has no shortage of wars and civil conflicts, but it has a desperate need for socially-equitable distribution. If it has learned anything from the most recent calamities and from the tragedy in the former Yugoslavia, Europe might take the first step and lift a blockade that will result in untold hunger and suffering. If political insight is in short supply, perhaps Christian neighbourly love — a term not much in evidence nowadays — will come into play: pity for Cuba!

Quality of life

After a short visit, I know this pitiable and lovable island has something to offer besides shortages and a nice climate. For example, there was the 94-year-old woman who still sorts tobacco leaves, as she has since she was 10, right next to the little platform in her cigar factory, where they still read aloud to entertain and instruct the workers, as they once did for Hamburg's cigar-wrappers. Or there are some of the 30 000 Cubans who studied in the GDR, learned German and now look after tourists, who flaunt their prosperity with their hard-currency dollars. And something that remains unforgettable: on this so fortunate and unfortunate an island, descendants of all those who came over the ocean, whites, blacks, and *mulattos*, know how to live together without the aggressive racism that results in daily killing in Cuba's neighbour.

To put in a word for Cuba also means bringing up the unavoidable figure of Fidel Castro. Perhaps, although his rhetoric still has vitality, he has outlived himself. People said that about Yugoslavia's Marshall Tito as well, until one day he was no longer there. Today, Europe's shameful failure teaches us to judge Tito's accomplishments more generously. Anyone who wants to see Castro gone should think carefully about how to fill the vacuum that this large and flawed man (like Tito) would leave. ■

● *Published with the kind permission of the author. Thanks to Krishna Winston and* Dissent *for this translation from the original German.*

culture

Africa after dark

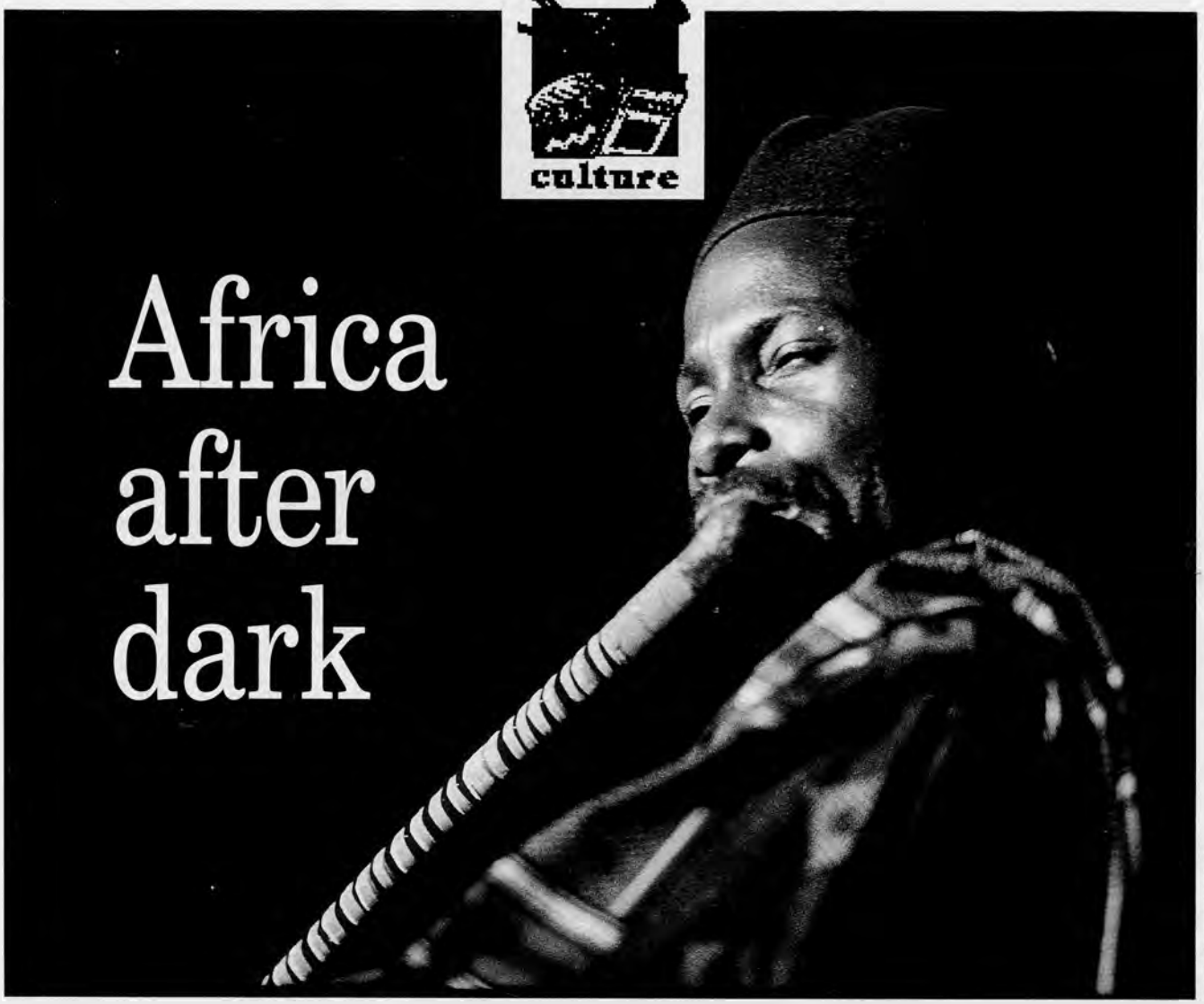


PHOTO: RASHID LOMBARD

'We Africans know the night must be shared with our ancestors,' says Prince Ado, a Nigerian spiritualist who intertwines religion with fashion. 'You see, surviving the night is a whole other matter than surviving the day.' **TM SIMONE** and **D HECHT** try their luck...

EVERY NIGHT, IN AFRICAN CITIES like Lagos, Ouagadougou, Luanda, Nairobi, people are searching for a life that transcends mere survival.

Clubs and discos are sometimes proud structures that ignore the surrounding poverty, referring instead to a world of musical heroes like Salif Keita, Papa Wemba and King Sunny Ade.

Or they can be shacks in a sleepy little village, to hang out in, dance a little, and listen to a traditional or a modern African song, to Bruce Springsteen or Ice-T.

Addis Abbaba, Ethiopia

At the Blue Nile Bowling Club a local band called Tekere Zenawi is warming up for a set. The party will go all night long.

The music, with its origins in ancient Ethiopian tradition, has come to sound like a mix of apocalyptic Las Vegas show tunes, free jazz and Arab-style pop. A female voice wails over baritone saxophones, creating a sense of foreboding that resonates well with this crowd of rich and poor.

Most of the lyrics are about throwing one's body at the feet of a wayward lover. "I can't get enough of him," the vocalist sings, "I've made up my mind to die for him/To love him is to lose him/I wish I was his sister."

Under soft neon lights, strange scenes are underway. A group of neatly-dressed female university students fraternise with a group of "toughboys" from the slums.

Another group of young women is clad in flashier cocktail dresses made from bright polyester. They are poor market girls sent by their parents to find husbands. The boys showing interest in them are not the same "toughboys" going for the educated women, but the sons of well-to-do civil servants. They wear hooded gowns made from tired sackcloth, and look like monks from the Middle Ages.

The dancing style is like the mating ritual of a strange species of bird. Men and women face each other, eagerly and vigorously moving their shoulders up and down, often with hips and feet completely still. They gaze into each others' eyes as if they are insane with love. But by the next song, the partners have changed.

As the night wears on and the music heats up, the crowd becomes more animated, forming a sea of bodies which jumps up and down like convulsive pistons. Noses are bloodied, feet are broken.

The music pounds and the bodies slam. "Tonight", a man comments, "this dance is a carnival, a parody in which the poor pretend to be rich, and

the rich, poor. And all they want to do is fight and fuck each other."

Exim, Ghana

One day a year, young and old spend the night on the beach in this small coastal town in western Ghana. The all-night festival maintains a tradition that dates back hundreds of years, celebrating a time when the goddess of the ocean first carried white people to their shores. Today, the goddess appears in the guise of a mermaid, specifically Daryl Hannah as she appeared in the movie *Splash*.

A poster of the blond American movie star hangs on a wall in Exim's Mami Wata (Mother Water) shrine, surrounded by blood sacrifices. During the festival, there is a ban on all African music — even drumming. Instead, a sound system plays Russian polkas, Madonna, Indian religious music, Beethoven and Michael Jackson. On this night everything must be non-African, including peoples' style of dress and dance.

Brazzaville, Congo and Kinshasha, Zaire

The intersection of Boulevard Djoue and Rue Mere Marie in Brazzaville, Congo, is a crossroads for the world-beat soukous music scene. A constant stream of nocturnal merrymakers flow from the more than 50 clubs in the neighbourhood.

Here, and on the Zaire side of the Congo river, in Kinshasha, crowds of late-night scenesters look more like they are going to a cocktail reception or a yachting party than a sweaty night-club in a squalid stretch of town.

A particular mix of French high fashion with BaCongo tradition has created *le Societe des Ambianceurs et des Personnes Elegantes* or "le Sape". This is a society for those who wish to create ambience and elegance — a society where poverty does not mean you can't look like a million dollars.

Amid the poverty and despair, many people desire not just a good meal and some clean clothes but such non-essentials as natural fibre (never polyester) and correct colour coordination. They may live in one-room hovels, shared with 10 or more people, but as long as they can lay hands on a fashionable three-piece suit or elegant dress, they see themselves as more fortunate; at least they have the *appearance* of a better life.

'A true master can stand in his underpants and completely demolish a rival'

— Cheri Mallet, no fixed address, but owner of an Yves Saint Laurent suit

For "le Sape", names like Jean-Paul Gaultier, Giorgio Armani, and Chanel are invocations to a spirit which crosses ethnic and class boundaries. It's more than just imitation of Western taste: Sape is bound-up in the BaCongo tradition which venerates fine cloth, eleborate hairdos, manner and the general refinement of one's appearance.

A local saying is: "To look bad is to be wrong." Yet the "Sapeuses" (those who practice Sape) know that there is more to being chic than designer labels. There is the sacred BaCongo concept of *tsala*, of looking good no matter what you wear.

"A true master can stand in his underpants and completely demolish a rival," says Cheri Mallet, who has no fixed address, but owns an Yves Saint Laurent suit.

Khartoum, Sudan

Happy Land may be the only disco in Sudan's sprawling capital, a city far from happiness. Poverty and the nation's oppressive Islamic laws combine to make life almost unbearable. The worst conditions are reserved for non-Muslim Africans who have fled the famine and war of their native south and found a horrible refuge of make-shift, mud and cardboard shacks in the desert surrounding the city.

With no sanitation or running water, the squatters' primary source of income is the illegal brewing of alcohol, for which they risk being flogged and imprisoned by the authorities. The government has also been cracking down on music and dancing. Yet for some inexplicable reason they allow Happy Land to stay open for two hours twice a week.

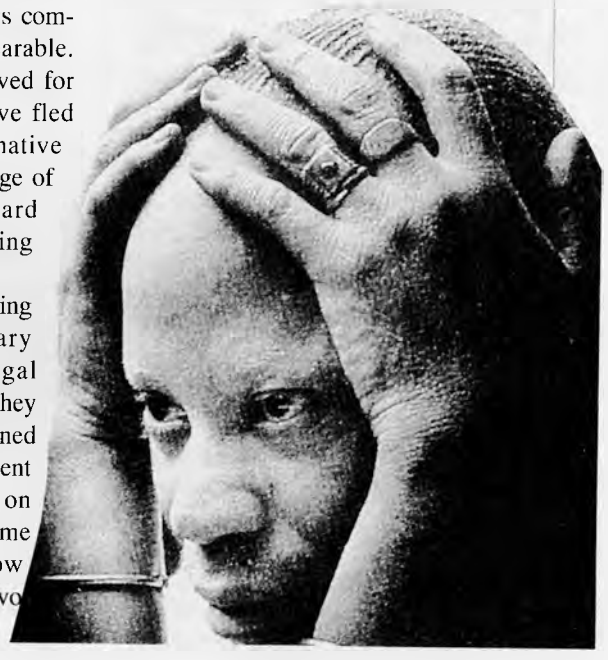
One evening we go there. It is empty. Then a few sweaty European expatriates from embassies and aid missions amble in. A little later a group of Chinese construction workers enter. Still the place is pretty empty. There are almost no African clients except for a couple of agents from the state security branch. On an ancient sound system, the DJ plays '70s disco. He doesn't want officials to get the idea that he has been smuggling in any Western music since it became illegal to do so.

It's only 40 minutes before the club has to close. The night looks like it's going to be a dud. Suddenly, one after the other, young African men come streaming in. All southerners, they have walked five and a half hours across the desert to get here.

None sit around and just talk. They are there to dance. The music becomes harder to hear, drowned by a frenzy of whooping and shouting. The expatriates try to leave, but they have to pass the dance floor to get to the exit and it's too crazy. So they retreat. For 30 minutes the crowd goes off the wall. Then the police arrive, the music stops and everyone quickly leaves the club.

Standing outside, they prepare for the long walk back across the desert. "You think this walk is something?" asks Asem Deng, one of the young southern Sudanese. "Most of us have come to this city of Khartoum from our traditional regions — at least a four-week journey — dead bodies leading the way." ■

● *Reprinted by kind permission of* OPTION *magazine USA*



The empire's new clothes

Why has it taken so long to figure out that the 'new world order' is exactly the same as the old one?

ON THE LEFT, HERE IN SOUTH Africa, but not just here, we have been suffering from an enormous inferiority complex these past years. The rhetoric of the "new world order" seemed irresistible.

I don't know how often I have heard comrades say "it is time that we grow up." What this usually means is that we should become more cynical, less idealistic.

I don't know how many times I have heard friends in political organisations, or trade unions, or in progressive NGOs refer to "the real world out there". This "real world" is where *we* are not — it is the world of the JSE, of the corporations, the world of Sol Kerzner and Bobby Godsell. It is supposed to be extraordinarily efficient, even heroic in its marketplace toughness.

In the past few years a whole generation of comrades have been trying to ape this imagined toughness.

I am not about to argue there is nothing we can learn from other places. I am certainly not pretending all is well in our organisations. But I am highly sceptical about just how real the efficiency and relevance of this "real world out there" is.

In the first place, my trite everday experiences don't quite square with the heroic rhetoric.

It is a thousand times more difficult to get simple information, for instance, out of my Yeoville branch of First National Bank than out of the (admittedly) labyrinthine ANC head office. Johannesburg General Hospital is in the midst of a massive cutback in spending. But my experience with over-stretched doctors, nurses and staff at the hospital (one of those supposedly inefficient public institutions) is altogether much happier than my attempts to get rudimentary assistance from Stuttafords at Eastgate, or sense out of my car insurers.

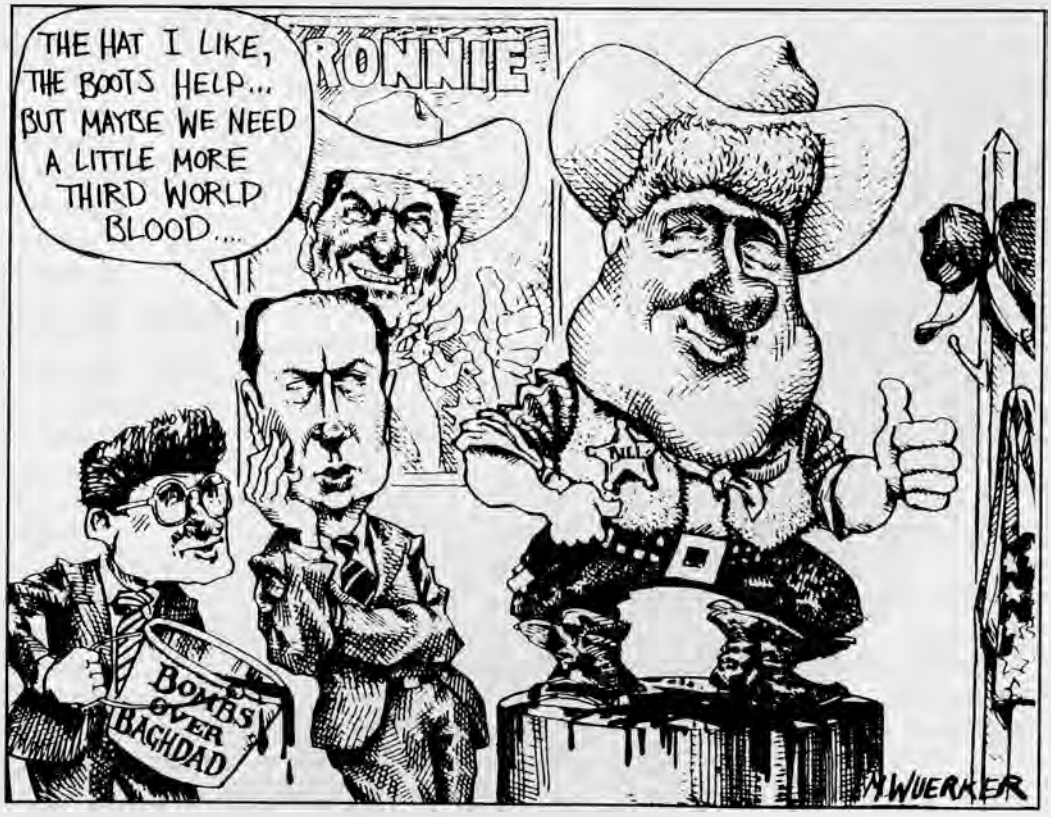
Maybe these are just personal experiences? Maybe.

Anyhow, these personal convictions (and irritations) were reawakened by two events at the beginning of October, far away from my small world of suburban banks, insurers and general hospitals.

But first a little background.

New world order

Our collective left inferiority complex came to a head in 1989. In that year, President Bush announced the dawn of a "new world order". The Warsaw Pact was crumbling fast. The super-power, two-bloc Cold War system which had dominated the globe since the end of the second world war, was a thing of the past. The Soviet Union was about to



GRAPHIC: COVERT ACTION

break into dozens of pieces.

The "new world order", in the eyes of its proponents, is several things. It is a world dominated by the United States, unshackled by its global competition with the Soviet Union. This US dominance, certainly at the political and military level (if not quite so straightforwardly at the economic level), is such that the US no longer has to operate nakedly under its own flag.

Its international politico-military interventions frequently fly the flag of the United Nations, in Iraq, Yugoslavia and in Somalia. They are called UN

■ READ MY LIPS: Scenes from Big Bad Bill Clinton's election campaign

peace-keeping missions, or UN famine relief operations, or anti-drug trade campaigns, as in Colombia. The political and military dominance of the US has certainly made our world more unipolar than it has been since Queen Victoria.

Economically, matters are a bit more complex. The arms race played a major role in eventually crippling the Soviet Union. But the US economy has also not emerged from the Cold War in such brilliant health. The Federal Republic of Germany (until its economy was engulfed by the political "success" of the collapse in the east) and Japan, both unfettered by major arms spending, have increasingly challenged US economic dominance.

But if, economically, the world is multi-polar, it is a multi-polarity that has seemed to be anchored around a global consensus. The "new world order" is one in which the word according to apostles Thatcher, Reagan, the IMF and the World Bank is gospel.

Worshippers of "the new world order" could have been forgiven for their growing arrogance. For almost a decade now, in country after country, the cult of privatisation, of monetarism, of deregulation, of massive cuts in social spending has become absolutely hegemonic.

As individuals we have all been reconstructed in the image of the marketplace. In hospital, in school, even in the post office, we have ceased being patients, or students, or citizens wanting to communicate. We have been told we are "consumers of services". And those providing the "commodities" (health workers, teachers and postal workers) are told to get smart or get out. Efficiency is increasingly measured, not in terms of how effectively social needs are met, but in profit margins.

All of this has become so hegemonic that it has been hard to think against the grain.

Hence our inferiority complex. Hence our silence in front of all those "wise" little throw-away phrases, like: "If we do this, how can we possibly compete with Taiwan?"

Who said we have to compete with Taiwan?

And in any case, what we need in South Africa is, for instance, houses. Unless I am very much mistaken, we can produce houses more cheaply in South Africa than we could import them from South East Asia.

I am not saying we never have to be cost-effective, or competitive internationally. But the assumption that international competitivity is the be-all of economic rationality is precisely that — a whopping assumption.

The empire naked

Anyhow, at the beginning of October this year, just for a moment, the world got a glimpse of the global empire beneath its "new world order" clothes. Just for a moment those seamless garments which have dazzled us were a little transparent. Beneath them the empire looked (dare we say it?) naked, and awfully like the old order.

In early October, as Yeltsin shelled an elected parliament with tank fire, western leader after leader lined up to salute him as "the embodiment of democracy". In an official statement the SACP wondered about this. To our surprise, a very wide range of the South African public shared our wonderment — even Denis Beckett, for heaven's sake.

The new crusades

In the same week US troops in Somalia began to take casualties, and suddenly we citizens of the new world order hooked into CNN began to sit up and notice. The old world order used to speak of anti-communist crusades. The new world order speaks of famine relief. To millions of TV viewers, not to mention the people of Mogadishu, the helicopter gunships firing into a bustling city didn't seem to have too much to do with humanitarian aid.

Of course, international opposition to the hypocrisy of the "new world order" has not just begun to emerge in the past weeks. In the past 12 months, for instance, several governments in Latin America have collapsed, thanks to popular struggles against the imposition of neoliberal economics. In Uruguay, a referendum was held on whether to proceed with privatisation. Seventy percent of voters said: No.

Around the globe, people are challenging the hypocrisy and moral standing of the "new world order". Yeltsin is not a democrat because democratisation is not the same thing as a headlong plunge into the "free market". The operation in Somalia is a mess because know-better western arrogance is imperialism, whatever flag it flies.

You don't have to be a fan of General Rutskoi in Moscow, or General Aidid in Mogadishu, to be a critic of the "new world order". To awaken from an inferiority complex is not necessarily to have all the answers.

But let us at least begin to say the obvious about the empire's new clothes. ■

PHOTO: THE STAR

■ **CIVIL OBEDIENCE: The developmental role of civics needs more debate**

Civic development

The incredible breadless sandwich

'Doing what comes naturally: A development role for the civic movement', by Monty Narsoo. Published by the Centre for Policy Studies. Reviewed by **JO-ANNE COLLINGE**

IN "DOING WHAT COMES NATURALLY", Monty Narsoo puts forward a "technical" solution to the intensely political issue of who controls development.

He argues that because of their mobilising nature, civic associations are suited to perform programme work — an area of broad mixing-and-matching and consensus-building activity which fills the gap between *formulating development policy* and actually *delivering the goods* by means of specific projects.

It's a tempting solution. But can you make a sandwich with just the filling?

Is it possible to assign the civic movement such an intermediate role in development when the state's role is unknown and there is a virtual absence of special interest groups ready to take on project work at the coalface?

Narsoo's proposal for a division of development labour in the sphere of civil society is argued on the following lines: Civic associations, born of and tempered in the liberation struggle, were hugely successful at resistance and mobilisation and became the pre-eminent voice of the community. Seeking a new role as apartheid gave its dying kicks, the civics fixed on development — where they aimed to ensure that the voice of the community would continue to be heard.

But the "community" proved to be a bit of an illusion: "The fact that people live in a particular residential area — even if it is one in which they were forced to live — does not dissolve the real interest differences between them," Narsoo observes.

Neither, he says, is "civil society" particularly "civil". He insists that many rosy-coloured definitions of civil society have given "insufficient attention to contending forces and the conflicts of interests within it. This creates crucial problems for an understanding of civil society's role in development."

Narsoo looks at three initiatives — in Phola Park on the East Rand, the Johannesburg inner city and the Free State town of Tumahole — where civic associations and more narrowly-organised structures clashed over the implementation of development projects.

In Johannesburg's flatland, the civic blocked attempts by a tenants' organisation to acquire and manage the buildings they presently rent. Although this move was made on the basis of the civic's concern that the rent should be

replicable, Narsoo observes that the conflict coincided with old splits in the civic.

In Phola Park, the civic association's redevelopment plan for the settlement was derailed from below, by sectors of the community to whom change represented a threat: illegal immigrants and criminal gangs. Their links to a strong defence unit gave them the capacity to challenge the civic.

In Tumahole the viability of a co-operative brick-making project was threatened by the civic's claim on the project for free material for its new office.

Controlling development

Narsoo concludes that the "interest differences within civil society are such that civic associations cannot, as they tried to do in the three examples quoted, assume control of development projects for entire communities." Not only is this undemocratic, he suggests, but solutions devised at one level simply will not work at another.

So, he assigns the "levels" different technical tasks in development. The general programme functions go to the more broadly-based civic associations; and the practical tasks of project implementation to the narrowly-based neighbourhood or special interest groups.

Programmes are there to "provide an environment which will enable projects to prosper" and to ensure projects can be replicated and effectively reach all eligible groups. "Programme work involves building policy, designing plans, monitoring and evaluating the implementation of policies and plans, and achieving consensus among a range of stakeholders and beneficiaries."

In passing, Narsoo considers the possibility that the power will not be tamed by the neat layering of functions, that technical solutions do not answer political problems. But he more or less sets this worry aside and gets on with the civics' job description. For me, this job description remains unreal; it has no roots — precisely because the issue of power, which lies at the heart of the problem, has been overlooked.

What if Narsoo had taken a different turn early on in his analysis and broadened his examination of civil society and conflict?

There is a tendency in some circles to treat "civil society" almost as a fetish — to view it as a thing apart, as a self-contained entity. The dynamic relationship between civil society and the state, sectors which surely define and redefine each other in any reasonably democratic society, just doesn't seem to enter this debate often enough.

When it comes to development, state resources and state policy are surely going to be the compass-reading from which most other initiatives are going to take their bearings. It is puzzling that Narsoo so completely discounts this.

Because during this transition phase, it is precisely the absence of clear policy within state and other institutions with development resources which makes it so easy for established community organisations to play the kind of gate-keeping role he describes in his Hillbrow case study.

The change to a legitimate, popularly-elected government will have a profound impact, not only on relations between structures of civil society and the state but *among* organisations of civil society. As local government claims its share of seasoned activists; as specific interests become more pronounced and better organised, it is by no means clear where civic associations will shake down in the scheme of things. It is also highly likely that local government will define within its own functions certain direct development work, including programme creation and implementation.

The ability of community groups — be they civic associations or other interests — to impose their will, will also inevitably be altered.

Dirty fighting

The drift of all this is not to suggest that with the advent of democratic rule there will be an automatic end to dirty fighting and power-play over development resources. It is to suggest that the rules of the game will change profoundly, and that the way in which groups within civil society engage the democratic state will be crucial.

The process has the potential to give relatively powerless groups increased clout and access to resources — to "empower" them, in current jargon. It has equal potential to reinforce the (sometimes stifling) grip of established groups or to establish patterns of outright patronage.

This strand of power won't go away if it is ignored. And it is likely to repeatedly encroach on, if not subvert, "technical" divisions of development labour which Narsoo so carefully develops.

But if we suppose, for argument's sake, that some agreement could be reached and safeguarded, in terms of which civic associations were assigned responsibility for development programmes, would they be the right structures for the job?

My impression is that Narsoo is right when he says that some civic associations would be particularly well-equipped for the package of activities the programme implementation entails — marshalling support, building consensus, combining expertise, particularising policy. But the emphasis falls on *some*. These would be civic associations, usually in larger centres, which have played a central role in peace talks, local government negotiations and the building of development trusts.

But I feel uncomfortable with generalisations about constituents of "the civic movement". Civic associations are as varied as the communities from which they spring. For every common problem they experience, there is a unique feature to be found. It is not even correct to say they are all products of long years of resistance — a whole crop of civics sprouted in the summer of 1990, after Nelson Mandela's release.

For every development case study where the civic association blundered by overlooking special interests, one could probably be found in which projects succeeded due to the civic's flexible approach to relatively mild social differences. A whole number of civics, I believe, have succeeded in project work; there is no reason why they should not continue doing it; and their circumstances present limited programme responsibilities.

In sum, I found Narsoo's booklet challenging. While I recognised immediately the problems he raised provocatively and pertinently, the solutions he offered exercised my imagination painfully. I just could not make the ideas sit comfortably within my understanding of development and the struggle for development. ■

Winning letter

Flaws in the party list

In all the talk of the elections scheduled for next April I have seen little discussion of one central issue that seems to be taken for granted.

Everyone seems agreed that the elections should be conducted by proportional representation, with the party list system the most likely option for allocating seats. I accept that drawing up constituencies would be difficult given the geography of apartheid, which split towns and regions along ethnic lines. But has anyone given serious thought to the problems that are inherent in the party list system?

The system, as it is generally practised, allows parties to list their candidates in order of preference. For every so many thousand votes the party will receive one member of parliament. Since every party knows roughly how many votes the party will receive, it puts its leading members at the top of the list. It then works downwards, until that unhappy region is reached where candidates know they have no realistic hope of getting elected.

Although there may be variations, such as regional lists, the systems all work roughly in the same way. All are a disaster, for they turn politics inwards instead of outward. By this I mean that the real political battle is no longer focused on voters, but on the dreaded party list. All potential candidates must do everything in their power to get as far up it as possible. To this end they engage in endless battles and factional activity designed to win a place for themselves and their friends.

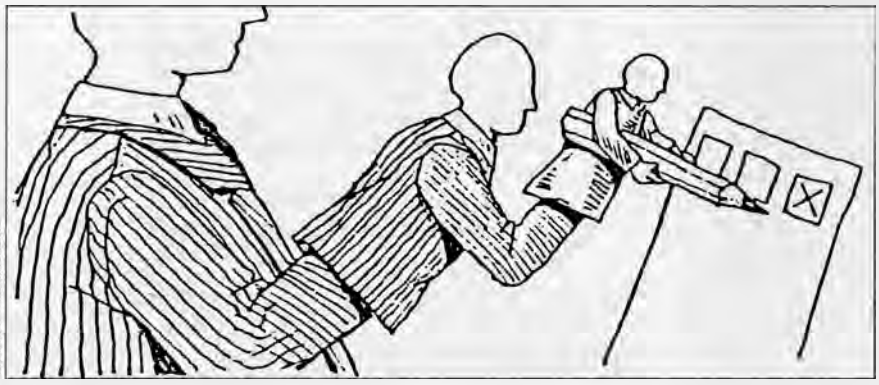
Anyone who wants to see how this works needs look no further than the Israeli Labour Party, where internal party battles are far more important than fighting the Right.

While it distorts inner party life, its effect on the public is even more negative. Instead of having an MP for a particular area, to whom they can go to with their problems, they are faced with a host of MPs — none of who has any real responsibility for their constituents. No voter can ever say in effect: "Help us get this road built, or more teachers for our school, or we will not vote for you again."

Since all votes are thrown into a central or regional pool, who can be held responsible?

Is it any wonder that Italians have just decided to scrap exactly such a system — a system that is being held accountable for the rotten and corrupt state of Italian post-war politics? How can South Africans be contemplating adopting such a flawed system?

— Martin Plaut, London, England



GRAPHIC: THIS MAGAZINE

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Socialism's identity crisis

Part 2 of the Laclau debate (WIP91), which dealt with socialism's "identity crisis", really got me thinking.

It seems everybody has their own definition of what socialism is; even Marx in his day refused to give ready-made formulas. He said socialism has no blueprint, and that if society is to be truly socialist, its details should be determined by the working class. Therefore, genuine socialism is democratic, with democratic control and democratic decision-making in establishing production plans and setting goals.

When we talk about socialism being in crisis, I think it is important that people don't confuse desire with reality. The crisis in Europe — particularly in what was the Soviet Union — is between the bureaucracy and the toiling masses, not between pro-capitalists and anti-capitalist forces.

Socialism is a science, and science is never complete. It is always open to new problems. And to advance socialism, we require practical experimentation and the confrontation of different interpretations of a constantly-changing reality.

Finally, there's the question of Stalinism. Stalinism is not communism or Marxism. Stalin and his successors used the words of Lenin and Marx, but that doesn't mean they were anything like Lenin or Marx. Just because Verwoerd, Vorster, Botha and De Klerk used the words of the bible to justify apartheid, doesn't mean that the people who wrote the bible are responsible for apartheid, does it?

— Thobile Maso, Transkei

(This letter has been edited)

SMOOTH

So, the ANC's Dali, ummm, daily is due to hit the streets in January, as fish 'n chips shops no doubt already know.

Whatever triumphalism you anticipate on the front page, brace yourself for encyclopedic coverage of the latest on savoir faire, lounge attire and silky pyjama sensations. Yup, fashion designer Dali Tambo is on the editorial committee. How so? Well, silly, he asked...

DIP's Pallo Jordan will be on-hand to add a modicum of respectability to a venture that's already netted more than R20-million from Times Media and mining multinational Lonrho. Presumably, Doonesbury cartoons will be banned. Stay tuned.

LOW BLOW

When the going gets weird ... you get ripped off, as a slew of struggle-type outfits are realising nowadays.

A sample. A hapless old hand at one of Joeys' oldest NGOs gets the chop for regularly deploying the organisation's credit card on travelling masseurs. Ooh, what a week, yeah just a bit lower, jissus, you won't believe the tension, yup yup right there, in the office, sjoe', you take Diner's Club don't you?

Or there's the whizz at another NGO who masters several signatures, not his own, and now whips about in a zippy new car called — what else? — a Sting ...

Doubtless there's something in the air. Here at Left Behind we were still nursing our wounded sense of trust in comrades when we ran across this report:

DP branch launch called off

Last night's planned launching of a DP office in the East Rand township of Reiger Park was called off because the branch chairman was arrested.

DP spokesman Shelly Loe said it appeared Sidney van Wyk was arrested in connection with fraud.

TRUE

The revolution advances like a bus, with its difficulties. When it changes speed, there are some who fall off. That's natural ... So we say that the petty bourgeoisie is always pulled between two interests. It has two books. On the one hand Karl Marx's 'Capital', on the other a cheque book. It hesitates: Che Guevara or Onassis? It is necessary to choose.

Burkina Faso's Thomas Sankara in a 1985 interview. This past October marked the sixth anniversary of Sankara's assassination.

GREAT WHITE EGOS

On Peace Day, did you hold hands and fight back the tears? Well, in that case count yourself lucky. If you'd been working at a certain esteemed and ultra-PC NGO you'd have been fighting back the urge to repeatedly knee a couple of your colleagues in the groin.

Heady with goodwill, the staff of this outfit were about to give peace a chance on the Braamfontein streets when they were assembled by one of the office supremos for a heart-to-heart.

Whereupon the (white, male, city-dwelling) overlord proceeded to lecture the (black, female, township-dwelling) staff on the meaning of political violence, its insidious character and its many, many forms and how Peace Day could make a difference and on and on ... To the brave comrades who remained peaceful in the face of such dastardly provocation, we salute you.

WATER OFF A DUCK'S BACK

Unless of course you're looking for local soccer results, and assuming you can make it past the editorials without being floored by a cardiac arrest, *Business Day*'s not a bad read. Especially the letters' page, after another silly outburst of free marketeerism ...

Dear Sir,
IF THE implication of Leslie Boyd's reported comments about low wages is that we need low wages for economic success, then surely Haiti would be the industrial capital of the world?

KETAN LAKHANI
Centre for Managed Change
Durban

SEPARATED AT BIRTH?

A recent visit to our country by Brazilian trade unionist Jair Meneguella left a lot of people wondering whether he had a brother in the South African economics business — namely ANC economics chief Trevor Manuel . ■

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE: Trevor Manuel (left) and Jair Meneguella

WORK IN PROGRESS

There's lots more Left

Has WIP whet your appetite? Are you hungry for more? Maybe we can help...

Work In Progress presents ***The WIP Papers***, a new series of occasional booklets on vital issues affecting the Left.

These short booklets are intended as supplementary reading to *WIP*'s ongoing coverage of key debates. They contain the full, unedited versions of key articles which have appeared in previous issues of *WIP*.

Three booklets are in production at the moment, and will be sent to subscribers early next year:

- ERNESTO LACLAU: Socialism's identity crisis
- NEVILLE ALEXANDER: Nation-building
- MANUEL CABIESES DONOSO: Rebuilding the Chilean Left

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DRAW DATE: 5 DECEMBER 1993

Just answer the questions and send your entry form (with your R10 entry fee) to:

ANC Women's League
Uno Competition
PO Box 61884
Marshalltown
2107

RULES:
1. The prizes will be awarded for the first correct entry drawn.
2. The judges decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
3. The prizes are not transferable and may not be converted into cash.
4. You may post as many entries as you wish. A R10,00 entry fee must accompany each entry. Cheques and postal orders must be made out to the ANC Women's League.
5. Winners will be notified in writing.
6. The competition is open to all.

ANC WOMEN'S LEAGUE COMPETITION

QUESTIONS:

On what date is National Women's Day?

.....

Which dealer is supplying the Fiat Uno?

.....

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....

.....

Tel (H) .....**(W)**.....

I agree to abide by the rules of the competition

Signature .....

WIP 92