SEARCHLIGHT SOUTH AFRICA

No 11

October 1993

R9.00 / £3.50

SEARCHLIGHT SOUTH AFRICA

Vol 3, No 3 (No 11)

A Marxist Journal of Southern African Studies

Cover Photo by: Julian Cobbing – taken from the journal **Umgqala,** No 4, 1987.

SEARCHLIGHT SOUTH AFRICA

Published Quarterly
Addresses: 13 Talbot Av, London N2 OLS, Great Britain
PO Box 66314, Broadway, Johannesburg 2020

ISSN: 0954–3384

Co-Editors: Baruch Hirson, Paul Trewhela.
Printed and Bound in Great Britain by UTL, London.

Back copies are still available – except for Vol 1, No 1. We hope that readers with incomplete volumes will avail themselves of this opportunity of securing missing issues. The cost per copy has remained unaltered since our inception at £3.50 per copy, or R9.00 in South Africa. We regret having to charge institutions double and also must request £1.00 per copy (for p&p) from readers outside South Africa or the UK.

Notes to Contributors

We still want contributions for No 12, and invite readers to send us material for publication. Articles and reviews, accompanied by IBM ASCII files on disk – if possible – should be submitted to the editors, typed or printed out, in one–and–a–half, or double spacing.

Articles should be between 4,000 and 7,000 words, but we will be flexible and will consider longer pieces. Short articles (other than letters) will only be accepted if they are of exceptional interest. Letters commenting on recent articles in Searchlight South Africa, or relating to current events in South Africa, will be printed as soon as possible. These contributions should not exceed 1,500 words and may be shortened to fit available space.

Pseudonyms may be used but we need to know the author's identity.

If substantial alterations would improve an article or review, the editors will communicate with the author before proceeding with publication. The editors reserve the right to alter grammar, spelling, punctuation or obvious errors in the text. Where possible, references should be included in the text, with sources listed at the end of the article, giving author, title, publisher and date.

A Note to Our Readers

The End of a Series

The next issue of *Searchlight South Africa*, Vol 3, No 4, (No 12) will see the end of the journal in its present form. No journal continues for ever. *Searchlight South Africa* has provided a humane and socialkist viewpoint on South Afrca and world events from 1988 until 1994, traversing a period of both great and little change. The editors regret they can no longer hope to produce a quarterly magazine. In fact, from our inception we have run late and our hopes that we could appear more regularly have been unsuccessful. Instead, a new series will commence. In this we will appear yearly, under the same title, but hopefully in a larger edition.

We have taken this decision for a number of reasons. Firstly, a glance at back numbers will show that two persons, Paul Trewhela and Baruch Hirson have written 80 per cent or more of each issue. Embarrassed at the lack of other contributors, Hirson has also used other names for some of the articles he wrote.

Most of our attempts to find further contributors failed. Nonetheless there were some articles from others. For these we were thankful. We only wish there had been more. Perhaps there are writers who will contribute to the new series. The problems confronting South Africa in the coming period require ongoing debate and discussion and we hope to contribute to that end.

The lack of contributors is our main reason for having to change course. But that was not all. The distribution of *Searchlight South Africa* was far from successful. The journal was banned in South Africa initially and, even after this was lifted, the postal authorities or the police prevented copies getting to our subscribers. We only had sales in Britain, the circulation elsewhere being minuscule. In Britain, the closing of left-wing bookshops made it difficult for us to find outlets, and the recession made people think twice before buying journals. Conditions in South Africa are even worse. In a poverty stricken country, sales of journals, even at our much reduced price, did not bring us a fraction of the price of production. We relied on the largesse of friends, but even that has its limits. We feel now that taking the begging bowl around, once again, is not possible. Money will have to be raised to produce No 12, and cash must be found for other projects. It is time to say, enough is enough.

This is not meant to be a catalogue of excuses, but it must be added that ill-health and personal problems have added to our difficulties. On a more positive note we must say that partly due to the delay in publication we have more material than we can possibly print in this issue. We have had to hold back a reply to the review of a book by Hillel Ticktin, published in *Searchlight South Africa* No 10. Hillel resigned from the editorial board following this review. His reply and a comment will appear together. Also held over is an investigation into allegations of state espionage by the two top ANC and

CPSA officials who ran the London office of the ANC, Solly Smith and Francis Meli. There is also an article on the Unity Movement in preparation. These and other articles will appear in Vol 3, No 4.

In publishing the journal we hoped to communicate some of our ideas to our readers. In the process we learnt an enormous amount, jettisoned old stale ideas and advanced new perspectives to meet the changes we encountered. Naturally the final issue of the series will include an assessment of what we hoped to achieve with this journal and its successes and failures. We would welcome readers' views, some of which we will publish if permission is granted.

Furthermore, the end of this series of the journal, provides the time and space to continue a new venture. Starting last September Clio Publications produced its first title, *Strike Across the Empire: the Seamens' Strike of 1925 in Britain, South Africa and Australasia*, by Baruch Hirson and Lorraine Vivian. Readers of the journal were offered a reduced pre-publication price. A second title is now almost ready to go to press. It is the biography of the man who can be described as the grey eminence behind the formation of the Communist Party in South Africa. Entitled, *The Delegate for Africa, The Life and Times of David Ivon Jones*, it is based on a previously unknown collection of letters which provides insights into the life of Jones and social, religious and political conditions in Wales, New Zealand, South Africa and revolutionary Russia. Written as two extended essays by Baruch Hirson and Gwyn Williams, this will be of interest to socialists everywhere. The book will be published by Core Publications, the name Clio having been claimed by an Oxford firm of the same name.

There are several other books in preparation. These include a biography by Hirson of Frank Glass/Li Fu-jen, the first full time organizer of the CPSA and then the first left oppositionist in South Africa before he went to Shanghai where he worked with the underground Trotskyist group. The third title will be a book by Paul Trewhela, on the ANC in exile, extending the articles that have appeared in *Searchlight South Africa*. This will be followed by a study of Ruth Schechter, friend and devotee of Olive Schreiner, and the Cape Town radicals of the 1920s. Thereafter we hope to publish a study of the Gool-Rassool family in Cape Town.

We hope that these books will get the support of our past subscribers and readers. We aim to keep the price of the books as low as possible and in each case there will be an announcement of reduced prices for pre-publication purchases. We hope that this can include *Revolutions in my Life*, the South African years of Baruch Hirson, to be published soon (we hope) by the Witwatersrand University Press in Johannesburg.

With a salute to our readers and contributors!

The editors,

Baruch Hirson, Paul Trewhela

THE NEGOTIATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH AFRICA

For over twenty-five years it has been well known that there was close co-ordination between the Israeli and South African governments. Precisely where co-operation started and ended has not always been clear, but there was little doubt about contacts between the governments, the armies and the military intelligence forces, and co-operation in the manufacture of armaments and the development of the atom bomb.

Despite the many differences in the nature of these two societies, their histories and their economies, the factors bindings these two governments together were no secret. The minority governments of both countries found a common purpose in the suppression of the dispossessed majority. In Israel it was the Palestinians who had been the majority until driven from their land, when most were herded into territorial enclaves or into neighbouring territories. There they were confined to refugee camps, without security, and without meaningful existence. In South Africa the discrimination on grounds of ethnicity was more blatant and more complex. The Africans, indigenous to the country; the Coloureds, mostly the offspring of settlers; and the Indians, who had been brought into the country as indentured labourers, were all stripped of political rights – their political organizations mostly banned – and herded into urban or rural ghettoes.

The lack of civil rights for the majority in both countries was in addition to the exclusion (except for a small minority) from the centres of property, of professional skills and of finance. Those who did find gainful employment were mainly confined to poorly paid menial labour, the rest joined the large reservoir of unemployed labour. That was the way the capitalist enterprises of the two countries – structurally so different – were built, with ethnicity determining those who had privileges, political rights and a stake in the country's economy, and those who had no such place. In other words these two countries were prime examples of the reign of capitalist enterprise where ethnicity (and colour) was added to class differences in determining a person's place in society.

The discriminatory practices were not imposed by the ruling class alone. It is one of the tragedies of the regime of differentiation that workers who belonged to the dominant ethnic (or religious) group did little or nothing to protest against the subjugation of their fellow workers, and often approved it. In Israel the Zionist project (with its myth of social 'normalization' through the return to Palestine) led to the restriction of Palestinian rights to employment.[1] In South Africa there was another myth. Most Europeans who arrived in the country assumed from the outset that they were the masters and that either the Africans should be excluded from the towns, or were destined to be used as unskilled labourers or servants.

In both countries the privileged immigrants showed open contempt for the dispossessed. But there were differences which grew out of the structure of the countries' economies and the ideologies and history of the settlers. The financiers of the mines in South Africa, who were in many cases based in Europe's capitals, in their wage-cutting offensives early in the century, increased the ratio of black to white workers. Simultaneously, they used the ethnic divide in society, and at the work-place, to weaken the working class. In Palestine (and later Israel) there was a dearth of natural resources and there was never any really viable economy. This acted as a barrier to the employment of native Palestinians until after the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, while Zionist ideology kept the Palestinians who were employed in a subordinate position.

The similarities are obvious even if the factors that led settlers to the two countries were very different. Those men and women who migrated to South Africa over more than three centuries, came in the wake of European colonization. They came firstly as administrators and soldiers, and as servants of the Dutch East India Company. Then came settlers from Europe. Some were sent as soldiers, others were recruited as skilled workers or arrived to escape poverty or to better their living conditions; a minority arrived as refugees. Having established roots they became junior partners to their rulers and, irrespective of class, enjoyed their superior status as part of the 'white' community.

Some of the Jewish intelligentsia in eastern Europe were influenced by the nationalist ideologies of the ninbeteenth century,[2] however most Jewish immigrants to Palestine, in the late nineteenth or the twentieth century, came to escape poverty, discrimination and the anti-semitic pogroms in Russia. Yet their numbers were small because most Jews sought to migrate to the US or other countries. Then, faced with the greatest ethnic massacre of modern history after the rise to power of Hitler, and with most countries closed to them, the Jews scrambled in desperation for entry to this unattractive region in the middle East. There they found their path blocked by a British administration (the rulers of the region under a League of Nations' mandate), which played Arab against Jew in an imperial game of divide and rule. This part of history cannot be unscrambled – but it must be said loud and clear that, irrespective of the emergence of Zionist nationalism, the problem was created by the racism and genocide that engulfed Europe. The tragedy of European genocide was then transformed into a new tragedy as Jews, this time as authors of a new terror, drove large numbers of Palestinians out of their country. Those few left-wing Zionists who had a larger perspective and spoke of a 'bi-national state' surrendered their call and embraced the slogan of a Jewish national home.[3] In so doing they became indistinguishable from the majority of Zionists.

Although racism developed out of the local conditions of these two settler countries, they were not disconnected from events in the western world. The settlers of South Africa and Israel both came into existence as part of the

migration out of Europe. Individuals moved in response to conditions that were often intolerable but this did not shield them from manipulation by imperialist (or colonizing) powers. In the process they carried with them the ideologies of Europe and the USA, with the beliefs of 'racial' superiority that reigned there. Furthermore, dependent on Europe and the USA, the new colonies were satellites of the big powers.

Inevitably both the Zionists and the settlers in South Africa became the instruments of big power influence in Africa: South Africa by its presence at the foot of the continent and Israel by virtue of its position alongside the Suez Canal – the gateway to the East when ships were the major transporters of men and goods.

The Pariah States

Israel only came into existence as a state in 1948 and, in its first years of independence, to the embarrassment of South African Jews, the Israeli government condemned apartheid. However, as Palestinian (and general Arab) resistance to the new state grew and was organized, the Israeli and South African regimes grew ever closer. They both found themselves in the camp of the West in the cold war, largely because they feared Soviet involvement in the Middle East and Southern Africa respectively. These two pariah states found that their interests converged and the basis for a covert alliance was established. The military machines of both countries drew closer. There was exchange of military information and technology and, when South Africa was subjected to international sanctions, the Israelis assisted the regime in sanctions-busting.

The Israeli state was involved in the wars of 1948, 1956 (with Britain and France over Suez), 1967 and 1973. After a large section of the Palestinians fled into surrounding territories all signs of Palestinian discontent was suppressed and Israel extended its grip over regions of the Middle East. This included major incursions into Lebanon, involving the destruction of large regions of the country and the formation of a Christian militia in the south of the country, the seizure of portions of Jordan and the Golan Heaights, and the domination of Muslims by Jews. Similarly the South African government banned all opposition 'liberation' forces inside the country, extended its control of South West Africa (Namibia), and destabilised supposedly antagonistic states within and outside its borders. In particular, its security forces provided support for the Smith regime in former Rhodesia, and played an active role in destabilising Mozambique and Angola, in terrorising Zambia and Lesotho and controlling Swaziland. No forms of terror or slaughter were too dreadful. A bloody *Realpolitik* reigned.

To a majority of Jews in Israel it appeared that they were fighting for their survival. With memories of the holocaust ever present, they feared another massacre of Jews, this time by Muslim forces. The bellicose statements by Islamic fundamentalists, and the programme of the Palestinian Liberation

Organization (PLO), made this seem all the more possible. For entirely different reasons, including the belief in 'racial' superiority, the whites in South African also feared an onslaught by the blacks. In this case propaganda outdid reality and was contradicted by claims that Africans were incapable of mounting a serious offensive.

The events in Israel and South Africa shadowed cold war measures in the West. Great power rivalry with the USSR, made the US the patron and protector of South Africa in one continent, and Israel in another. Without wishing to over-simplify the course of events that followed the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, there can be little doubt that the collapse of Soviet hegemony and the fall of its minions in eastern Europe led to the end of an era of two-power control of world events. The hegemony of the US was assured and, in the wake of a depression that was not unconnected with this change, there came the dismantling of controls that had been considered essential. Russia became the willing tool of the US in these changes and the ANC (together with the South African Communist Party) was pressured to make its peace with the de Klerk government.

The position in the Middle East also had to alter. The terms of the change had been spelt out some years previously by George Ball, one-time Under Secretary to the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. He had stated that peace for Israel depended on the establishment of a Palestinian state ('a rump Palestinian state in the West Bank', he wrote). In this event, Israel's security worries could be met by 'denying the new state any armed forces of its own and limiting the number and kinds available to the police'. This, he concluded, if the 'Holy Land' was not to erupt into warfare.[4]

Ball's crystal ball read future events incorrectly, but his prescription for a new 'rump Palestinian state' was precisely what has now been offered, if one town and a sand strip can be called a state. In the event the catalyst for change was the Gulf War of 1991. Iraq, once championed, charmed and armed by the western powers, misinterpreted the aims of the western powers and invaded Kuwait. Saddam Hussein, the tyrant who had destroyed the organized left in his country andgassed the Kurds out of their villages, and waged war on the Shia fundamentalists of Iran, had miscalculated. His erstwhile patrons had no intention of allowing him to establish control of the oil rich Gulf states. He had served his purpose in halting the Iranians. For that he was feted, but that was all. His bluff was called and his armed forces were crushed. In the process those forces that supported him were to be humiliated. Among these was the PLO, led by Yasser Arafat. Since the 1960s this had developed as a 'Third World' armed nationalist movement in exile much like the ANC. It was funded, armed and trained in the Soviet bloc.

After the Gulf War, the Palestinians who had worked in Kuwait were expelled, and the organization, which had relied so heavily on the largesse it received from Arab states, found itself without rich benefactors. For this movement there was obvious defeat and its ability to continue its already unequal struggle with Israel was over. It was only a matter of time before a

broker appeared to spell out the position: accept a 'rump' state or be damned. Without securing the release of political prisoners, or the end of action against PLO activists, or indeed most of the demands made during decades of struggle, Arafat accepted.

The situation in South Africa, determined by local events and therefore very different, nonetheless ended in similar terms. The armed forces of the ANC never entered South Africa and its acts of sabotage never threatened the state. The only effective local struggles were organized at grass-root level and co-ordinated by the United Democratic Front (UDF). Alongside this there was an organized trade union movement that was built without ANC assistance. The initial successes of the UDF were impressive but the unarmed population was powerless in the face of the army occupation of the townships. As a result the internal revolt of 1984-86 ended in a massive defeat. However much the internal resistance movement declared that the battle continued, it was obvious that the Mass Democratic Movement (which took the place of the UDF when it was banned) was in disarray. This prepared the way for events which were to follow, but not before the South African army suffered defeat at the hands of the Cuban backed Angolan army and the USSR called quits as the Soviet regime disintegrated

Shaking Hands, in Private and in Public

The withdrawal of the Soviet military presence in the region, principally in the form of the Cubans, was the crucial pre-condition for the move to formal negotiations. In the same way as Israelis met illegally with Palestinians (albeit secretly), groups of businessmen, academics and students also met leaders of the ANC. The situation in both cases came near to farce. While contact with the 'enemy' was prohibited by law, and Palestinians who entered 'peace talks' were supposedly untainted by membership of the PLO, Israeli cabinet ministers flew to Norway to meet leaders of the PLO. Similarly, in South Africa, where it was illegal to quote any ANC leader, Cabinet Ministers sent their envoys to the open prison where Mr Mandela was confined, and Mandela was taken to meet the then President, P W Botha. After several delays, in which the many political risks were examined, Botha's successor F W de Klerk released Mandela, unbanned the ANC, PAC, SACP and other organizations, and opened talks.

Mandela found de Klerk an 'honourable man'. And so too are they all honourable men, even if some are reluctant to shake hands in public. What a spectacle that was in Washington, when President Clinton had to prompt Prime Minister Rabin of Israel to take the hand of President designate Arafat. The man who was available to lead the Palestinians into a 'rump' state had no such qualms. His hand was freely available. In South Africa, where handshakes and smiles are now a matter of course, the question is whether a country that threatens to break into splintered and warring regions, will provide the first black President with any more than a 'rump state'.

It is not necessary to introduce a hidden hand theory of history to see what happened, in broad terms. The fine details of how the opposing sides were brought to the talking table is less certain. The Norwegian government played a part in the Middle East talks; such intermediaries were not needed in South Africa. But these details, interesting in themselves, do not explain why the talks were suddenly organized. The crucial factor for the Israeli and South African governments was the severe straits of the economy, and with this the ability to continue the struggle. In the case of the opposition movements there were also considerations of funding, but the central issue was the defeat of the latest offensive – of the *Intifada* in Palestine, and the township revolt of 1984-86 in South Africa. To these must be added, in the case of the PLO, the rise of Hamas, the fundamentalist Islamic group, as a rival in the Palestinian ghettoes.

The parallels between the two countries do not end here, although the consequences are more obvious in Palestine. The offer of limited autonomy (in Gaza and Jericho) is derisory and unacceptable to the majority of Palestinians. Despite the hopes of many that the bloodshed will stop, the proposals provide little in political terms, and nothing for most of the inhabitants in material terms. If the negotiations are not brought to a precipitate end by violence, then outside the flying of a new flag, the singing of a new anthem, the creation of a new police force, and entrance into the state bureaucracy for the political leaders and their friends, the only change will be the transformation of a political elite into the suppressers of their people.

Various apparent changes have been discussed in South Africa in talks over the past two years. All that has transpired, despite the putting aside of the apartheid legislation, has been the surrender of issue after issue by the leaders of the ANC.[5] They have junked their economic programme, vague as it was, given way on federation, accepted power sharing and a government of 'national unity', and effectively accepted the right of the whites to veto major issues like control of the security system after the coming elections. They have also dropped their demand for a constituent assembly, and watched passively as the educational and health care systems have been dismantled.

Yet even after making all these concessions the country is falling into a state of chaos as right wing whites and Homeland leaders – orchestrated by Gatsha Buthelezi – destabilize the country. The election set for April 1994 (itself questionable when the population is not yet registered for the franchise) must be in doubt and could be postponed *sine die*. Even if it does take place as announced, it is obvious that de Klerk and his followers will do their utmost to prevent the ANC gaining a large majority. In the circumstances the only answer that Mandela can find is to extend the vote to 14 year olds – a proposal that might win votes but would make nonsense of democratic procedure. Whatever happens the forces ranged against a settlement have the capacity to keep the country in turmoil for years to come.

In like fashion the proposed settlement in the Middle East is in danger of being aborted by opposition from right wing Israelis and a Palestinian opposition, backed by forces from the surrounding states. The only difference with South Africa is the impossibility of an alliance being maintained between the hard liners in the two antagonistic ethnic communities.

There are a series of very urgent problems that must be honestly confronted by a journal like *Searchlight South Africa*. Among Jews the most important alternative to a Zionist (that is, nationalist) programme in the Middle East has for over a hundred years been various arguments for international socialism. As a solution to the 'Jewish problem' this alternative is obvious in the thoughts of Marx, and animated socialist such as Rosa Luxemburg, Leon Trotsky and many others. This particular current, associated in Isaac Deutscher's phrase with the 'non-Jewish Jew', has suffered an enormous historical collapse of uncertain duration, amid both the triumph and ruination of capitalism in a new international economic depression.

Nothing contributed so much to this collapse as the monstrous parody of socialism over so many decades in the Soviet Union. There, anti-semitism and nationalist chauvinism raged in more open or more covert forms, in mockery of the original ideals of socialism in the early days of the revolution – a reality about which leaders of the South African and Israeli Communist Parties deluded themselves and others. This perversion, concealed behind the myth of 'socialism in one country', proved fatal to any talk of progress, and has sullied the ideals of socialists everywhere.

In the international climate following the collapse of the eastern bloc, racism, nationalism and ethnic wars have sprouted like weeds after rain. The socialist perspective of international harmony between peoples, based on a unified international working class movement and the ending of relations of exploitation, has suffered defeat and is in disarray, despite some assertions to the contrary. Trumpeted by George Bush in the US, a capitalist 'new world order' is presented as the only present and foreseeable reality. The nationalist leaders of the ANC and the PLO, together with their communist allies, have predictably and readily conformed. They are now hostages to the capitalist order and its ethnic conflicts, to which they have submitted. They now become ready agents in overseeing these conflicts.

This journal would dearly welcome an end to the fratricidal killings and sectarianism in both regions. But there can be no genuine peace in the Middle East and no genuine resolution of conflict and oppression in South Africa in the absence of social change. A botched 'peace' or a botched 'democracy' does not meet the needs of the people of the Middle East or southern Africa. But while the talks take place there is an even more sinister development that makes nonsense of talk about peace. In Israel the military continues to 'flush out' militant groups at will, killing and maiming people, destroying homes, terrorising the Palestinianb population. In South Africa the military machine is unreformed. Its personnel able to enter the capital of the Transkei, a supposedly independent territory, shoot up its youthful in-

habitants and claim that these children were part of an armed terrorist group. Although detaials are sparse as we go to press, it is obvious that there has been no change in either country in the pattern of armed repression.

On matter deserves special mention. One of the ANC demands was for the release of all political prisoners. Many have been released and President de Klerk was quick to let right-wing killers walk free. Undoubtedly Rabin will make some deal with the PLO on the release of Palestinians from Israeli jails. But it is unlikely that they will concern themselves with the fate of **Mordechai Vanuna**, kidnapped by the secret bureau Mossad, and sentenced to life imprisonment for revealing Israel's atom bomb programme in the British press.[6] Those in Israel who support a peace accord and those who have shown concern for prisoners of conscience, must call for his speedy release.

The problems faced by people in these regions are part of a much larger problem. Although there are small groups in most countries espousing the need for a socialist outlook, they are ineffectual and often confused. In a period of destruction and warfare, of brutal killings and the desecration of human rights, none are big enough to rally large scale support for peace and social change.Precisely during this period the editors of this journal find it necessary to argue the need for a humanist, and internationalist socialism.

There are no easy solutions and noready formulae along which to proceed. The ideas of socialism must be appraised and reappraised and placed against our understanding of world conditions today. If the 'socialism' that once presented itself in the Soviet Union is now buried, then long live a socialism that can bring hope to humanity.

References

1. The dominant philosophy on the Zionist left, following the writings of Ber Borochov, was that the Jews needed to form a strong peasantry and working class through settlement on the land. That is, they alone would constitute the new working class after migration to Palestine. They also claimed that there was no significant indigenous population.
2. The appeal of nationalism draws heavily on popular historical perceptions.. The belief in a return to Jerusalem, in the wake of the Messiah, was always an integral part of Jewish religious consciousness in the dispora. In the creation of a state, the appeal to the bible with its messianic belief in Jerusalem as the Jewish 'Holy City', has shaped Zionist ideology. The Palestinians also base their claim to Jerusalem on the presence there of one of their most holy mosques, the Dome on the Rock. This religious conflict adds a further dimension to the tension in the region and also militates against the establishment of a secular society (or societies).
3. The concept of a (socialist?) bi-national state is itself problematical, but it never carried much weight and was submerged in the general appeal to Jewish national solidarity.
4. **Los Angeles Times**, 17 January 1988, quoted in Ralph Schoenman, **The Hidden History of Zionism**, 1988, Veritas Press, California, p 123. In referring to this book I do not wish to associate myself with some of the author's conclusions.
5. This has been discussed in several articles in **Searchlight South Africa**, and is referred to again in the current issue.
6. Vanunu is held in solitary confinement in Ashkelon prison in Israel. This inhuman form of detention, used by the security force in South Africa for periods of 90 or 180 days with devestating effect, was and is unacceptable. In Vununu's case it is cruel to the extreme.

WOMEN IN THE ANC AND SWAPO

SEXUAL ABUSE OF YOUNG WOMEN IN THE ANC CAMPS

Olefile Samuel Mngqibisa

Editors: Olefile Samuel Mngqibisa, a former soldier in the ANC army Umkhonto we Sizwe, presented important new evidence to the Commission of inquiry into human rights abuses in ANC detention camps, chaired by Mr Sam Motsuenyane, on 1 June this year.[1] His ANC 'travelling name' in exile was Elty Mhlekazi.

A crucial part of Mr Mngqibisa's evidence concerned the sexual abuse of young women exiles by members of the ANC security department. We reprint the evidence, and call on women's organisations in South Africa and internationally to respond. We are interested to know what views they take on the events related by Mr Mngqibisa. Questions that arise from Mr Mngqibisa's evidence concern what further investigation the women's groups think should be made, what efforts should be made towards assisting the women who were abused, and what support should be given to older members of the ANC community in Tanzania who were victimised because of their stand against these abuses. Those who protested at these abuses were labelled 'enemy agents', expelled from the ANC (a serious matter in exile in Africa) and left to fend for themselves. One died, alone, in shameful circumstances.

This is particularly important at present in view of the eagerness of nationalist groupings and the left, both in South Africa and internationally, to bury an issue of child abuse of the most extreme kind: the issue of murder, kidnapping and beatings involving the former Mandela United Football Club in Soweto, run by Mrs Winnie Mandela. The relation of Mrs Mandela to the ANC Women's League is discussed elsewhere in this issue. The evidence of Mr Mngqibisa puts women's groupings in South Africa and elsewhere to a similar test of their convictions. It is the old issue of whether the rights of women are to be subordinate to nationalist political considerations, or whether they require to be defended unconditionally.

These events took place at a centre named after Ruth First, co-author of a biography of Olive Schreiner, and former leader of the South African Communist Party, who was killed in Maputo in 1981 by a parcel bomb sent by South African state security. It is an indication of the insensitivity of the ANC to women's issues that it constructed a prison for its own members and named it after Ruth First. She was imprisoned without trial in South Africa, an experience she described in her book *117 Days*, and loathed the atmosphere of prison. Her husband, Joe Slovo was MK chief of staff when the prison was constructed in her name, and was a member of the NEC whose

members – Stanley Mabizela and Robert Manci – carried out the repressions.

There is now a definite genre of literature concerning women's struggles and women's issues that has arisen in South Africa, or which relates to South Africa. It is associated mainly with the ANC. Writers include Hilda Bernstein, Joyce Sikakane, Julie Frederickse and also Gillian Slovo. The material printed here should become part of the record.

Sam Mngqibisa's account reveals once again how comprehensively any kind of democratic accountability was subverted in the ANC in exile. Identical repression of criticism by exiles took place again at Dakawa in 1989, causing two groups of exiles to flee from Tanzania, and again in 1991, when Mngqibisa was himself arrested. Further jailings of Zulu-speakers followed in 1991, including the teacher Bongani Ntshangase, who was murdered in May 1992 in Natal very shortly after returning to South Africa.[2] A representative of the British High Commissioner later visited the prison.

In his evidence, Mngqibisa explains that he was sent to the ANC camp at Dakawa in Tanzania in 1984, having previously helped ferry units of MK over the Zambezi river from Zambia into Botswana and Zimbabwe. 'The river was infested with crocodiles and hippopotamus, and this was to test if I was a loyal ANC cadre.' He then relates the story of his experiences at Dakawa, where he was elected by the exiles to the post of chief of the logistics department in the camp. His account focuses on the conduct of Imbokodo, the ANC security department. This political police force was then known in Tanzania under the sweet-smelling name of PRO – the 'Public Relations Office'.

He describes the attempts of an elected body, the Zonal Political Committee (ZPC), to protect the young women, who had only recently arrived in exile.

Making an Offer You Can't Refuse

. . . I was part of a group which exposed Imbokodo's sexual harassment of young girls fresh from SA. It was tradition in the ANC, especially in Imbokodo, to sexually abuse young girls and those who were desperately in need of scholarships. When they refused sexual intercourse with Imbokodo they were immediately detained and labelled agents of the SA government.

In 1987, ten to fifteen young girls fresh from home approached the Zonal Political Committee chairman Nhlanhla Masina (his real name), and complained of sexual harassment by Imbokodo at Plot 18, the Ruth First so-called Orientation Centre. The ZPC immediately convened a meeting, and a decision was taken that the girls be clandestinely interviewed and requested to write on paper their complaints. An elderly ZPC member was delegated to Ruth First [Centre] and he successfully interviewed the girls and later brought with him each girl's statement.

The Zonal chief of Imbokodo – Socks – was informed about the developments. He met his colleagues and afterwards demanded the return

of the statements from the ZPC chairman. He got a negative response, and left and came back fuming, demanding the documents now. The ZPC refused with the documents, which were in safe hands.

This was a serious scandal on the part of Imbokodo. Theoretically, the ZPC had the right to report anything directly to the ANC headquarters in Lusaka through the Regional Political Committee, or RPC [a superior elected body, representing all the exiles in a region: in this case, Tanzania as a whole]. The ZPC was said to be the highest body in the zone [Dakawa], the RPC in the region. But when the RPC wanted to report something to headquarters, permission was to be sought from Imbokodo. Socks failed to pressurise the ZPC to hand over the papers and he reported the matter to the ANC chief representative in Tanzania at that time, Stanley Mabizela, and Robert Manci [a member of the National Executive Committee of the ANC, based in Tanzania]. He is believed to have been a member of the Politburo of the SACP.

Suddenly an emergency community meeting was announced [on instruction of the ANC leaders, Mabizela and Manci]. Everybody assembled at Plot 16, where the meeting was held. Before the meeting the ZPC was invited to a private meeting at the Vocational Training Centre in Dakawa by Manci, Mabizela and Tim Maseko, the then administrator of the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College [Somafco, based nearby at Mazimbu]. Four cars consisting of Dakawa, Dar es Salaam and Mazimbu Imbokodo plus Manci and Mabizela approached. The scene reflected a typical South African situation, where the masses are brutally suppressed.

'Provocateurs'

After the singing of Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika (the national anthem), Mabizela took the floor with a harsh and swearing address. He announced the expulsion from the ANC of three elderly ANC members. They were Cecil Nduli, Jimmy Moore and the late Professor. He accused them of being enemy provocateurs. Manci followed angrily and endorsed the expulsion, which was totally in violation of the ANC Code of Conduct. Manci bravely said: 'We've removed the upper body of enemy agents'. He pointed a finger at me and said: 'We are also coming back to you, Elty'. I never bothered about that threat. There was tension in Dakawa and every ANC member was shocked about the expulsion.

Cecil was an active member of the ZPC and Jimmy was his closest friend. Professor was an open critic and he also criticised members of the ANC-NEC without fear. The three joined the ANC in the 1960s. Jimmy was also an open critic who was hated by both Manci and Mabizela. I had observer status in the ZPC to report daily developments and problems in the logistics department. The ZPC handed the girls' statements to me with the hope that I was going to box the Imbokodo guys when trying to take the statements from me by force. [Mngqibisa was then in his early 30s, and is tall and powerfully built].

I helped Jimmy pack his clothes under the watchful eye of Sizwe Mkhonto, then the regional Imbokodo commander. The brutal action of Manci and Mabizela was to rub-off [ie, rub out] Imbokodo's sex scandal. Sidwell was one of the Imbokodo members accused by the girls. The three men who had been expelled were handed over to the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Dar es Salaam. Professor developed a mental disorder and got very sick. I and other ANC members tried to locate him in Dar, but all in vain. We later learned that he died pathetically somewhere in Dar es Salaam. Manci must account.

The girls' documents were forcefully taken from me by Tim Maseko and I was kept under more and stronger surveillance, which had prevailed since 1978.[3] I later resigned from being chief of logistics as relations between me, Jackie Morake [coordinator at Dakawa] and Manci continued deteriorating. Some sympathetic comrades always warned me to be careful with critical politics...

Further Evidence of Abuse

Editors: In his statement, Mngqibisa goes on to describe his work as a plumber in Dakawa, leading to his arrest and imprisonment in the prison at Ruth First Centre in January 1991. This and his escape the following February are described in *SSA* No 7. Mngqibisa read this passage from *SSA* No 7 into his evidence before the commission.

He states that the prison at Ruth First Centre at Dakawa was constructed out of the girls' dormitories, on the instruction of the Umkhonto commander, **Joe Modise**. From many years' acquaintance at first hand, he describes Modise as the 'architect' of the ANC prison system.

Mngqibisa made a serious allegation against another important official in exile: **Andrew Masondo**, former national commissar of the ANC, who was later director of the ANC school, Somafco, from 1985-89. As director of Somafco, Masondo was responsible for the education and the welfare of teenage refugees from South Africa during the latter period of the 1984-86 townships revolt, when education for black children came to a halt inside the country on the basis of the slogan: 'Liberation before education'. Hundreds of young people left the country to join the ANC, many hoping for scholarships to study. Donor agencies responsible to the governments of Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Germany and other countries funded Somafco, which was the subject of idyllic propaganda in the left and liberal press internationally. Unesco paid the salaries of its teachers. Yet Masondo and the ANC were totally unaccountable. Mngqibisa's statement in evidence continues:

> **Sexual abuse:** Andrew Masondo impregnated a young Somafco schoolgirl in 1989 and she had to abandon her studies. Masondo seriously abused human rights in the ANC. A majority of ANC girls who studied abroad used their bodies to get scholarships.

This statement confirms a remark in a history of the ANC in exile in *Searchlight South Africa* No 5 by Bandile Ketelo and four colleagues. In their account, they state that Masondo was 'involved in abuse of his position to

exploit young and ignorant women and girls'. (p 36) According to them, he was also a key figure in the running of the ANC prison, Quatro, in Angola. Masondo was cynically appointed director of Somafco by the ANC after being dropped from the NEC and the Central Committee of the SACP in 1985, having been made the scapegoat for the mutiny in Angola. He was then in his 50s. In Somafco he had the power of a Nicolae Ceaucescu. The ethics of appointing such a man to such a position over young people seems to have escaped the ANC and the SACP.

Masondo's conduct as director of Somafco urgently requires investigation by women's organisations, international donor organisations (including governments) and the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU). It involves one of the most sordid episodes in South African education. But it is unlikely that anything will be done.

In a letter from Tanzania (16 June 1991), Mngqibisa said that two other ANC members were sent to Angola in 1987 as punishment for their criticism of Imbokodo. One of them was the elderly man who arranged for the girls to write their statements at Ruth First Centre. The other was a white South African member of MK, known as **Johnson**.

The stand taken by Nduli, Moore, Professor (we do not have his real name), Mngqibisa, 'Johnson' and the elderly man who obtained the girls' statements took great personal courage. It was one of the most honourable acts of the exile. Professor, in particular, paid dearly. Imbokodo should be required to produce the young women's statements, which Maseko illegitimately seized from Mngqibisa in order to conceal the abuse by Imbokodo staff. We do not know what became of the young women, who protested at the abuse to which they were subjected, in the name of the ANC, thousands of miles from the protection of their families. We do not even know their names.

Some Personal Details

Cecil Nduli (known as 'Baba' or Father Nduli because of his age) and **Jimmy Moore** were repatriated to South Africa in 1991, after living in extreme poverty in Dar es Salaam. They were re-admitted to the ANC after Jimmy Moore approached Walter Sisulu during his visit to Tanzania in 1989.[4]

Robert Manci had been delegated to Tanzania by the NEC in Lusaka to keep an eye on dissatisfaction among ANC members. Mngqibisa has written to Mr Justice Richard Goldstone giving details of a murder by Imbokodo in Tanzania in 1987 which was covered up by Manci. Three officials of the security department – known as Lawrence, Vusi and Stalin – tortured to death an unknown ANC member in Mazimbu camp, Morogoro. They were arrested on the spot by a Lieutenant Chezi of the Tanzanian People's Defence Force, who was a government representative in Mazimbu, and were sentenced to four years' imprisonment by a Tanzanian court. Manci, as a senior member of the NEC, 'never, ever acknowledged to the ANC community who the deceased was. Under Manci's orders the deceased was

buried secretly by unknown people in an unknown place. Manci must tell the deceased's parents where their son is'.[5]

Sizwe Mkhonto (real name Gabriel Mthunzi Mthembu) was commander of Quatro at the time of the mutiny in Angola. Still in his teens, he called out the principal leader of the mutiny, Ephraim Nkondo, from his cell at Quatro on 26 May 1984. Nkondo was seen being pulled around the camp with a rope around his neck. The next day he was found dead in his cell, with the rope around his neck.[6] Oliver Tambo informed Nkondo's sister-in-law, Mrs Curtis Nkondo, that Ephraim had 'committed suicide in a cell'.[7] It was almost certainly murder, not suicide. Sizwe Mkhonto told the Commission that torture allegations were made by people who aimed to 'besmirch the image of the movement'.[9] He continues to be employed by Imbokodo at ANC headquarters in Johannesburg. No adequate investigation into Sizwe Mkhonto's role in the death of Ephraim Nkondo, and in many other atrocities, has taken place.

Sam Mngqibisa has written a poem about the education of an Imbokodo officer. It formed part of his evidence.

> Give a young boy – 16 years old – from the ghetto of Soweto, an opportunity to drive a car for the first time in his life.
> This boy is from a poor working class family.
> Give him money to buy any type of liquor and good, expensive clothes.
> This boy left South Africa during the Soweto schools uprising in 1976.
> He doesn't know what is an employer.
> He never tasted employer-exploitation.
> Give him the right to sleep with all these women.
> Give him the opportunity to study in Party Schools and well-off military academies in Eastern Europe.
> Teach him Marxism-Leninism and tell him to defend the revolution against counter-revolutionaries.
> Send him to the Stasi to train him to extract information by force from enemy agents. He turns to be a torturer and executioner by firing squad.
> All these are the luxuries and the dream-come-true he never thought of for his lifetime . . .
> This Security becomes the law unto itself.

References

1. Accounts of Mr Mngqibisa's experiences in exile were previously published in **Searchlight South Africa** Nos 7 and 8 (July 1991 and January 1992).
2. **Searchlight South Africa**, Nos 8 and 9.
3. The background to this is given in Mngqibisa's account in **SSA** No 8.
4. Sisulu had known him in South Africa, decades before.
5. Letter, 23 January 1993.
6. **SSA** No 10, p 23.
7. Testimony from Joe Nhlanhla, head of the ANC Department of Intelligence and Security – 'Imbokodo' – to the Motsuenyane Commission. **Sowetan**, 19 May 1993.
8. **Sowetan**, 9 June 1993.

MRS MANDELA, 'ENEMY AGENTS!' . . . AND THE ANC WOMEN'S LEAGUE

Paul Trewhela

The Drive to the Right

Mrs Winnie Mandela continues to provide the stuff of comment. She remains a formidable political force, despite her conviction for kidnapping the murdered Stompie Moeketsie Seipei and three other youths, and the scandal concerning her private life.

The Appeal Court judgement on her conviction for kidnapping and assault was a bad omen. No effort was made to bring to court a crucial witness still held without trial in prison in Zambia, Katiza Cebekhulu. He had expressed willingness to give evidence alleging her involvement in the murder of 14-year old Seipei, for which the trainer of her 'football club' has been found guilty. No country has been prepared to offer asylum to Cebekhulu, and he has refused normal repatriation to South Africa on the very likely grounds that he will be killed.

Political expediency reigned. While concurring that Mrs Mandela (the senior figure in the case) was guilty of kidnapping the four youths (including Seipei), Justice M Corbett, the Chief Justice, found that the trial judge had erred in finding her guilty on charges of being an accessory to assault. Her five-year sentence was replaced with a trivial fine, plus a smaller sum in compensation payable to each of the three surviving victims. (The 'Mother of the Nation' got spared from prison, the mother of Seipei . . . nothing).

Mrs Mandela's minion, Mrs Xoliswa Falati, then went to prison for two years (instead of five). From prison, Mrs Falati continues to insist that she lied in the original trial. She has repeated to a Democratic Party MP, Lester Fuchs, that she lied in providing Mrs Mandela with an alibi for the time of the assault, leading to Seipei's murder, 'because I was scared of her'.[1] Her disavowal played no part in the Appeal Court judgement. It was an oddly South African verdict, on a par with the finding of death by misadventure on Imam Haroun, who 'slipped downstairs' in the 1970s while under police interrogation.

Both before and after the Appeal Court decision on 3 June, Mrs Mandela ceaselessly toured the townships and squatter camps taking up issues of poverty, deprivation and oppression, and especially the carnage wreaked by supporters of Inkatha and the police. By default of the national leadership of the ANC and of the tiny handfuls of socialists, she has made herself once again the voice of the dispossessed. On one occasion, with her own hands, she physically freed people unjustly locked up in a police waggon. Time and again, she did and said what a socialist opposition should have done and said: but with a difference.

Long before Mrs Mandela, this journal argued that in pursuing political power through negotiations, the ANC leadership had abandoned the constituency that brought it to the gates of office – workers, the rural poor, the majority of township residents, squatters. The effects of the world recession, the terror in the townships and the absorbtion of ANC leaders with the white political and business elite presented Mrs Mandela with an obvious role. On the edges of the big cities, the people in the squatter camps, drawn from rural migrants, found in her their charismatic spokesperson. ANC leaders left the way clear for her to confront them again in this new role. Unable to provide jobs, decent housing or any means of defence for communities under assault, they permitted her to rise up before their eyes as an avenging Nemesis, as defender of the downtrodden, and the scourge of corruption and betrayal in high places.

Desperate, tormented, terrorised, effectively leaderless, the people of the squatter camps, with very little experience of urban civic conditions, have given her the means to resume her demagogic role as Evita Peron before *Los Descamisados* – the shirtless ones. The fact that Mrs Mandela was the recipient of unknown sums from dubious unknown figures while her husband was in jail, built a magnificent mansion for herself, gave support to dubious financial deals, received the accolade of *Hello!* magazine and gave warm-hearted encouragement to advocates of a capitalist future for South Africa: all this is beside the point, to these people on the margins.[2]

With the support of the squatter population at Phola Park on the East Rand and seconded by delegates from rural areas, she was elected chairperson of the southern Transvaal region of the South African National Civic Organisation (Sanco) in June this year, less than a week after the reduction of her sentence. Sanco has a potential constituency of millions of township and squatter camp residents as well as village people. The Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging (PWV) branch which elected her is the most powerful in the organisation. This was effectively a vote by the countryside, and by recent migrants from the countryside, against representatives of the more settled population of the town. In that sociological sense, its base was not greatly different from that of Inkatha.

The influence of the urban workers, which expressed itself in the semi-socialist, syndicalist 'workerism' of the 1970s, has been in continuous decline. Dotted throughout the townships, the barracks for migrant workers have become bloody fortresses guarding the stormtroops of Inkatha – outposts of single Zulu men aimed against the family-housing of the township population – while the scrapping of apartheid legislation has brought a mass of hungry country-dwellers into their backyards. To that extent, the workers who principally organised the trade unions in the 1970s and 1980s have been subject to a massive dual assault, by lumpen and brutalised conditions deriving from the countryside. It now becomes apparent how far the hated pass laws functioned under apartheid as a kind of 'trade union' for urban workers, by keeping out the migrants from the countryside. The urban workers now

are plagued both by the continuation of the apartheid labour system (through the migrant workers' barracks, seized by Inkatha) and its abolition. A principle element in the strategy of Mrs Mandela has been to oppose one of these terms (the squatter camps) against the other (the barracks), in such a way that the more settled urban workers undergo a further decline in social influence. She represents a process of general social reaction.

The Return of a Calumny

After her original conviction and the revelations about her private life, Mrs Mandela was forced out of her post last year as director of 'social welfare' in the ANC, made to resign from the ANC National Executive Committee and confronted with suspension of the entire executive committee of the PWV region of the ANC Women's League (ANCWL), which she headed. She now returns to public office as the representative of 'civic' South Africa. It is an indication of how far this country is from any genuine civic conditions. With support from the ANC Youth League, particularly its president, Peter Mokaba, her strength lay in the fact that she 'roamed almost every squatter community on the Reef' whenever there was a conflict and was 'the most vocal' in calling for a militant response to attacks on township residents by police and Inkatha.[3] It was a victory won by the incapacity and neglect of others.

In a major sense, her triumph over her enemies in the ANC – especially the secretary general, Cyril Ramaphosa – was a further outcome of the strategy of destabilisation of the ANC through massive terror pursued by Military Intelligence, Inkatha and the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging, and serves similar ends. By comparison, Nelson Mandela and other leaders appear increasingly remote from the most pressing daily needs. In the slaughter on the Rand they merely 'play Florence Nightingale'. Like President de Klerk, they visit the survivors in hospital but have 'no more power to stop the next slaughter (today? tomorrow?) than the nurses and doctors'.[4]

By contrast, her ally Peter Mokaba not only raised the chant 'Kill the farmer, kill the Boer' – the very Boers with whom Nelson Mandela is attempting to negotiate – but called on blacks to shoot the police in order to drive them out of the townships.[5] Mokaba's rhetoric relates to an already existing state of war in the Sharpeville-Sebokeng area, where the Azanian People's Liberation Army (Apla) – the military wing of the Pan-Africanist Congress – has led township youths in shooting ambushes of police, leading to several police deaths, as well as to murders of white farmers in outlying areas. More indirectly, the call to arms relates subliminally to the massacre of innocent white civilians at a golf club at King Williams Town and in a church at Kenilworth in the western Cape.[6]

Under conditions of accelerating social disintegration, Mrs Mandela articulates a nationalist populism hostile to the 'centre' of ANC leaders grouped together with the De Klerk government. Angry and disappointed at

their miserable conditions of life after their return from exile, a grouping of MK officers has demanded that she be reinstated in the NEC. They complain that the current leaders have 'become bourgeois'.[7] Jeremy Cronin, an SACP leader and NEC member, relates the story of a young black truck driver who told him that the real Nelson Mandela was killed in prison. Today's Mandela is a lookalike. 'He was trained for years by the Boers and finally presented to the public in 1990. The mission of this lookalike is to pretend to be against the system. But in reality he is working for it . . .'[8]

As a focus for this discontent, Mrs Mandela gives expression to conditions of serious social disorder, of a 'low-intensity civil war' in which considerations of justice and humanity count for very little. Bitter struggles within the ANC Women's League concerning her political fate provide further proof. One of her most prominent supporters has directed the charge 'enemy agents!' – a license to murder and brutality in the ANC camps in exile, and in the townships – against the national general secretary of the League, Ms Baleka Kgositsile. It is vital for democratic life that this kind of language and behaviour be understood and rejected.

The episode followed Mrs Mandela's victory in the civic elections. Immediately afterwards, the suspended executive committee of the PWV region of the ANCWL demanded to be reinstated, with her as chairperson.[9] In July the ANCWL national executive decided to lift its suspension, with the exception of Mrs Mandela and four close supporters. These were barred for a further year, with effect from July 18. That would exclude Mrs Mandela from leadership of the Women's League until after the national elections, scheduled for 27 April next year.

It was one of these four, Ms Nompumelelo Madlala, who raised the charge 'enemy agents!' against the national leadership of the Women's League and by implication, against the ANC leadership itself. Attacking Ms Kgositsile as one of 'those exiles', she said:

> We want her and her clique in the ANCWL to know that no-one will be allowed to prosecute the constitution of the ANC . . .
>
> We are not fooled by the timing of the announcement. It is typical of the agents of the State within the organisation. This is a clear sign of how infiltrated the organisation is.[10]

Irrespective of the manner in which the PWV executive was suspended, the resurrection by Ms Madlala of the charge 'enemy agent' against political rivals is an appalling degradation of political life. This was the means by which loyal ANC members were tortured, murdered and imprisoned in exile, and atrocities committed in the townships. The charge that was used by leaders in exile to silence their own members, and by Imbokodo officers to force schoolgirls into sexual relations, has now come full circle to plague the executive of the Women's League.

Women can of course play the demagogue as evilly as men. In order to create humane and sensible conditions for political activity in South Africa, the ANCWL is obliged – in its own interests – to investigate the conditions

in which the charge 'enemy agents!' was used to coerce defenceless young women in exile and to suppress those who, to their honour, tried to protect them. Women were the first to stand up against Mrs Mandela and the terror of her football club in Soweto. They were often the most humane of the ANC leaders in exile.[11] It may well be women who first call a halt to this semi-fascist method of political control.

There is no lack of 'politically correct' confusion on the issue. A striking example is a long, illustrated, two page article on Mrs Mandela in the *Weekly Journal*, a newspaper circulating mainly among black people in Britain, written by a South African journalist, Nokwanda Sithole.[12] Ms Sithole's interview is conducted and written entirely from Mrs Mandela's point of view. It was published under the title: 'Wiping the tears of a Nation. Is this the future leader of South Africa? Defiant, beautiful and unbroken, Winnie Mandela remains one of the most powerful activists in the world'.

The proven charge of kidnapping is dismissed by the writer as mere 'allegations'. Speaking of members of the 'Football Club', whom she boarded in her house, Mrs Mandela is approvingly quoted:

> If they [the boys in the Club] robbed and raped it was not because Winnie Mandela was on a campaign to harass the community; it was because of who they were before they came to my house.

Another ugly South African myth is being invented. Rape, murder and the kidnapping of young people are to become non-issues, if the politics of nationalist populism requires it. Instead of the interests of women, of workers, of township dwellers and the rural poor being taken up and articulated within an ethos of humanism and respect for basic cultural values, the murder of a teenager at the hands of the major domo of an international political celebrity becomes excusable. An MK commander calls for Mrs Mandela's return to the NEC on the grounds that 'there are people in the ANC, indeed in most parties, who have authorised killings...'[13] So that's all right then! While Mrs Mandela celebrates the reduction in her sentence with champagne, the mother of the murdered Stompie Seipei is banned from speaking to the press by the ANC deputy regional secretary in the little town where she lives. This was even though she had previously agreed to comment.[14] Some women are apparently more equal than others.

The Chameleon of Fascist Ideology

Mrs Mandela and her supporters are not fascists, as the brutes of the AWB certainly are. But 'liberation' nationalism, with its multiple variants in the post-war period, moves across a spectrum reaching at one extreme towards fascism of the populist type from the early days of Mussolini, when Italy was projected as the 'proletarian nation' exploited and deprived by the 'decadent plutocracies'. It operates within an ensemble of discourses that has been described by Ernesto Laclau, following the Italian stalinist leader Palmiro Togliatti, as the 'chameleon' of fascist ideology. The English sociologist Colin

Mercer has reworked Laclau's argument. He writes that fascism in Italy operated

> not at the level of *class* struggle but rather in the area of *popular-democratic* struggle. Thus by virtue of its active 'anti-nature' – anti-liberal, anti-democratic, anti-pacifist, anti-communist, anti-compromise, but above all *anti-power bloc* nature – fascism was able to articulate to its own discourses an ensemble of radical, jacobin and popular positions, and mobilise them against the 'power bloc' of an exhausted and over-compromised liberal regime.[15]

Anyone who imagines that Laclau's and Mercer's thoughts concerning fascism are utterly remote from the consensus being developed in South Africa around Mrs Mandela does not understand the radical, plebeian appeal of Mussolini in Italy, or Peronism in Argentina. The Italian historian Maria-Antonietta Macciocchi has noted, in particular, that there has been 'no State demagogy so successful as Fascism in getting women into the streets as a mobilised political force',[16] and that women played a very prominent role in attacks on socialist and communist organisations in the early days of fascism. With the memory of the 'Football Club' never far away, Mrs Mandela's endorsement of the occupation of ANC offices by women from the squatter camps and her supporter's use of the term 'enemy agent' suggest a sinister logic.

This makes clear that women's organisations in South Africa cannot avoid the issues of the ANC camps in exile. While a few young women have become 'political princesses' under the new dispensation (Mrs Mandela's daughter Zinzi among them), the great majority of women in South Africa are in the same hardship as before: more often, in worse. There can only be ominous results if women's organisations fudge the issues in the trial of Mrs Mandela and the sexual abuse of young women in exile. If they shut their eyes to these matters, they will fail to defend women's interests in other ways as well.

The issues of the exile – the history of that charge, 'enemy agent!' – must be placed before the Women's League.

References

1. **Independent**, 16 June 1993.
2. Mrs Mandela's purely bourgeois 'hope for a shattered nation' was examined in **Searchlight South Africa** No 2 in February 1989, pp 3-4.
3. **New Nation**, 18 June 1993.
4. John Carlin, **Independent**, 3 August 1993.
5. **Guardian**, 13 August 1993.
6. Whether these atrocities were carried out by Apla or the destablisation strategists of Military Intelligence seems almost beside the point.
7. **City Press**, 27 June 1993.
8. **Guardian Weekly**, 23 April 1993.

9. The suspension by the national leadership came about in May last year – for disloyalty, and disruptive behaviour – because of Mrs Mandela's sponsorship of a takeover of offices at ANC headquarters by a group of women from the squatter camps.
10. **Sowetan**, 19 July 1993.
11. It was Mrs Gertrude Shope, not Chris Hani, who relieved the suffering of prisoners at Pango camp in Angola, after the mutiny.
12. 1 July 1993.
13. **City Press**, 27 June 1993.
14. **Star**, 3 June 1993.
15. Mercer, p 214.
16. Quoted in Mercer, p 232.

Bibliography

Colin Mercer, 'Fascist Ideology' (1985), in James Donald and Stuart Hall (eds), **Politics and Ideology**, Open University Press, 1986.

Ernesto Laclau, **Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory**, New Left Books, 1977.

Paul Trewhela, 'The Mistrial of Winnie Mandela', **Searchlight South Africa** No 9 (August 1992).

Journals: City Press, Guardian Weekly, New Nation, Sowetan, Star, Weekly Mail (South Africa); **Independent, Weekly Journal** (Britain).

WOMEN AND SWAPO

INSTITUTIONALISED RAPE IN SWAPO'S PRISONS

Paul Trewhela

If unacceptable treatment of women was the norm in the ANC in exile, even more atrocious behaviour took place in the Namibian nationalist organisation Swapo, and was ignored by its international supporters. Literally hundreds of exiled Swapo members were imprisoned by its security department in pits in the ground at Lubango in southern Angola, sometimes for up to nine years. Scores of women shared this experience.

The story is told by two twin sisters, Panduleni and Ndamona Kali, in an interview in *Searchlight South Africa* No 4 (February 1990). What the editors did not fully realise at the time was that women members of Swapo imprisoned in the pits at Lubango were sexually at the mercy of their male guards. There was often no way to secure minimal needs without the guards having sex with their prisoners, and the women were subject to constant threats. The Swapo prison system, about which the churches and the United Nations kept silent, was an institutionalised form of rape. When they arrived back in Namibia, women prisoners were often too ashamed to speak of the degradation to which they had been subjected.

When some of these women became pregnant it was worse. They gave birth to the children of their guards at the bottom of the pits. And then the

babies were normally taken off them, and sent by Swapo to be reared in state orphanages in the former German Democratic Republic. This was the origin of a substantial proportion of the hundreds of children who were returned to Namibia from the GDR, beginning in August 1990.

Information about this has been in the public domain for several years now, without becoming an issue for women's organisations or trade unions internationally. As early as 1985, the Committee of Parents based in Windhoek wrote to the United Nations Secretary General (then Javier Perez de Quellar) that eyewitnesses had told them of 'sexual abuse of young girls' in Swapo in exile. They referred to girls of 14 and 15 being sexually abused, families being separated and children being kept hostage 'should any dissidents become too resistant.'[1] Copies were sent to the Namibian Council of Churches, the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, all Namibia support groups and the presidents of Cuba, Angola and Zambia. There was no reply.

A woman from Windhoek who spent nearly three years in the pits, Sary Eises, has stated in a sworn affidavit that about 150 women were held prisoner at Minya Base near Lubango during 1989.[2] Sam Nujoma, the Swapo president, and now president of Namibia, addressed a group of 98 women prisoners at one camp in southern Angola, on 17 April 1989, immediately before their release.[3]

A further large group of women prisoners was shown to the international press at the end of May 1989, not long before repatriation to Namibia. John Liebenberg, a journalist from Namibia, reported that one of the 'saddest and most moving moments' was when a young woman in her twenties pointed to the baby in her arms and told a German TV crew that the child was 'the product of rape by one of the camp guards.'[4] A woman who 'only gave her name as Magdalena' gave the same information when ex-detainees arrived in Namibia in July 1989.[5] This appears to be Magdalena Goagoses, who said she was beaten in prison in the months before her son, Hans, was born.[6]

Immediately on their return to Namibia, former Swapo prisoners recorded the issue in *A Report to the Namibian People* drawn up by the Political Consultative Committee of Ex-Swapo Detainees (PCC). This stated:

> A number of female victims were arrested pregnant and went as such through the torture process resulting in miscarriages and congenital disabilities of the babies. There were also cases of pregnancy in prison resulting from sexual abuses of the inmates by the prison authorities and guards who either intimidated or blackmailed the female inmates with threats of solitary confinement, punishment and trumped-up charges leading to physical assault in the name of the prison office.
>
> Some females gave birth in prisons unattended to by any knowledgeable person, midwife or medical officer, thus enduring untold labour pains and related difficulties resulting in infant deaths.(pp 13-14)

In an annex, one of the prisoners, Karina Mvula, describes how she was arrested and beaten - naked and suspended in the air - at the Karl Marx

Reception Centre at Lubango in June 1987, while three months pregnant. She states that she 'awaited delivery time in a dugout overcrowded by female prisoners. I was taken to a small dark room dirty and with no proper ventilation - where I gave birth to a baby girl'. The baby was born with an injured back and was unable to suck. When Ms Mvula begged the guards to take the baby to hospital, they threatened to beat her. The baby was taken away after Ms Mvula was given an injection that made her unconscious. 'I was called later and told that my baby died and that I should not tell anybody'.

The report of the PCC was widely distributed to the press in Windhoek in the hectic period leading up to the election to the Constituent Assembly in November 1989. Similar allegations were sent to Pope John Paul II and the then US president, George Bush, on 13 October 1989, in letters by the PCC signed by 54 ex-Swapo detainees. Among forms of 'neo-barbarism' systematically practised by Swapo is listed:

> Rape of women, either adults or adolescents, married or single, according to the arbitrary wishes of the camp commanders; sexual blackmail by which young women were forced to prostitute themselves as a means to obtain food, clothes or other essential needs ...[7]

At the very least, these claims need to be investigated by an independent commission of women drawn from different countries.

The most widely available account appeared around the same time in the British journal, *The Spectator*. It was written by a British woman, Elizabeth Endycott, who spent May and July 1989 in Namibia after having befriended Namibian refugees in Britain during the 1950s and 1960s. Her late husband had assisted the UN petitioner Clemens Kapuuo, and they had entertained Namibian exiles such as the Shipanga brothers, Fanuel Kozonguizi and Mishake Muyongo at their home. With good contacts and a long familiarity with Namibian conditions, she met many returnees, listened carefully to them and noted what they said. Some people, she wrote, had spent as long as nine years in Swapo's prisons. She continued:

> Women and girls were frequently taken out and raped; children were born in the pits (no medical attention was given). Miraculously, some even survived.
>
> Even girls who did not live in the pits were often raped by guards of Swapo officials. I met a women, now only 26 years old, who left Namibia when she was 16 looking for education and a better life, who has had six children in ten years. She has no idea where any of them is. Swapo policy has been to separate families of ordinary refugees, and I met many men who had not seen their wives and children for many years. Older children were sent to other African countries, or to East Germany or Cuba, 'for education,' while younger ones were sent to Tobias Hainyeko camp in Angola. Children born as a result of rape were taken from their mothers at a very young age and taken to the same camp, where their names were changed and they lived until they, too, were old enough to be sent away for 'education.'[8]

The conservative editorial policy of *The Spectator* does not at all mar the truthfulness of Mrs Endycott's article. She went on to note that despite all this, support for Swapo from the churches and from the British Labour Party was unwavering. Glenys Kinnock (wife of the then leader of the Labour Party) and Lady Tessa Blackstone had visited Namibia and been told about these matters. They had said they would take the matter up with Swapo, 'but they did not meet any of the victims'. Mrs Endycott's article was reprinted by the *Times of Namibia* on 26 September 1989. Accompanied by an illustration of inmates in one of Swapo's dungeons drawn by a former prisoner, it appeared under the headline: 'Swapo's hellholes. Why is the left silent?' The question is still unanswered. The drawing is reproduced below.

An Inheritance of Trauma

Swapo's prisoners have since received only minimal help. A grant from the charity Medico International of Germany enabled the PCC to set up a 'Child Trust' that planned, among other objects, to invest funds 'aimed at securing a future to those children born in prisons...'[9] Nineteen of the 53 ex-detainees present at the meeting in Windhoek to ratify the project were women. They are all named in the document, and are available to be interviewed.

Other documents from Windhoek refer to the 'physical and psychological scars' sustained by prisoners as a result of their ordeal.[10] (To this could be added: scars induced by lack of compassion from socialist, feminist and liberal bodies across the world).

EDSC states in another report that sympathetic doctors had found the ex-detainees would need extensive psychiatric treatment and rehabilitation

> The few who have found jobs have been found to suffer from retarded reactions and serious depression. Some experience illusionary physical ailments such as influenza and malaria with all the symptoms, but doctors found that these were psychological.[11]

All the survivors of Swapo's paranoid and largely tribalist spy-mania experienced trauma, but the suffering of its women prisoners - and their children - was particularly horrible. The spy-drama reached such crazed lengths that those arrested included even Nujoma's wife, Kowambo, her sister Hilma Mushimba (married to a Swapo Central Committee member, Aaron Mushimba, also detained) and a niece, Ilona Amakutua. According to Elizabeth Christoph, a prisoner who was with them at Minya Base, Mrs Nujoma was 'stripped naked and beaten like the others' [ie like all women prisoners undergoing interrogation].[12] On this, the available evidence is conflicting. But there can be no doubt that the patriarchal culture of the Kwanyama-based security department induced a special sadism towards women. This is the only explanation for the frequent charge that women detainees had poisoned razor blades concealed in their vaginas.[13] What this charge reveals about the unconscious relation to women among the Swapo

security men and the male leaders of Swapo's Politburo can only be imagined.

As with the ANC, Swapo's 'progressive' jargon was meaningless - an ideological form of words to numb the brain. It was characteristic of southern African politics that the second item in Swapo's constitution, adopted in 1976, was a commitment to 'combat all reactionary tendencies, such as racism, sexism, etc'. This was stressed by a prominent Swapo speaker in exile, Bience Gawanas, in a talk on 'The women's struggle within the national liberation struggle' in a colloquium on crisis and transformation in Africa, held in Ghana in August 1986. The colloquium, representing 'Marxist-Leninists' from several African countries, and organised by the *Journal of African Marxists*, concluded that the liberation of women was a 'fundamental problem' in Africa and recognised the need to 'improve the practices within existing movements and organisations with regard to the women question'. Two years after the conference, in August 1988, Ms Gawanas was abducted in Zambia by Swapo security, and imprisoned and tortured at Minya Base in Angola. Highly placed contacts in political, legal and academic life in Britain secured her release, after a public campaign - but not her less well known companions in misfortune. This was Swapo's contribution to the 'women question,' and to Ms Gawanas.

Women in the Unions

The sexual abuse of Swapo's women prisoners and the schoolgirl exiles in the ANC presents a particular challenge to the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) in South Africa. At its congresses in 1987 and 1988, the TGWU resolved to fight sexual harassment 'wherever it happens'. At the annual conference of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) in July 1989 - just as the Swapo detainees were arriving back in Windhoek - delegates from the TGWU called for 'tighter sexual discipline' within Cosatu and its affiliates, in opposition to 'unequal relationships' between the sexes at work. In the end, only the chemical workers union pledged full support. The TGWU now has a responsibility to make these brave words a reality, by coming to the assistance of the women victims of Swapo and the ANC in exile.

Comments by the TGWU general secretary, Jane Barrett, set the context in which these abuses can be judged. It is clear from her remarks that exile and the unbridled power of the ANC and Swapo security departments provided conditions in which general features of southern African society received intensified expression. What happened in the camps was the symptom of a general ill. Dangerous consequences for the society as a whole would follow from ignoring it.

Over the years, said Ms Barrett, there had been many complaints in the TGWU about

> sexual harassment and exploitation of women members by management and particularly middle management such as foremen. An example is women giving sexual favours for jobs. There have been extensive discussions [in the TGWU], many struggles and much publicity around this issue.
>
> What became clear to us was that it is all very well discussing the issue as it manifests itself with management, but sexual exploitation was taking place within our own union structures. This was particularly apparent in relation to young male organisers and newly recruited young female members...[14]

This appeared to be one of the reasons for young women members dropping out of the union. There was clearly, she said, a 'question of power relations'.

The interrelation of sex and power, well established in feminist discourse and in the writings of Michel Foucault, could not have been more vividly shown than in the ANC and Swapo camps. The civil war in former Yugoslavia has shown mass rape of women from the 'enemy' community as an instrument of war, by men. In Swapo and the ANC it was an instrument of power by brutalised men against 'their own' side. That, if anything, makes it the more repulsive.

It is a matter of women joining the nationalist organisations in exile being turned into sexual prisoners. On this issue, the women's organisations of southern Africa have still not even begun to take a stand.

References

1. Letter signed by 12 signatories, including Erica Beukes, 20 September 1985. Reprinted in Basson and Motinga, p 45.
2. Affidavit reprinted in Basson and Motinga, p 181.
3. Helga and Ludwig Helbig, p 11.
4. **Namibian**, Windhoek, 9 June 1989.
5. **Star**, Johannesburg, 5 July 1989.
6. **New York City Tribune**, 5 July 1989.
7. Reprinted in Basson and Motinga, pp 135-36.
8. 'Swapo Shopped,' 16 September 1989.
9. Resolution of PCC signed by Hans Peters, spokesman, 1 November 1990)
10. Statement by Erica Beukes, chairperson, Ex-Detainee Support Committee [EDSC], February 1990.
11. Report by Erica Beukes and Hans Peters, 4 January 1990.
12. **Windhoek Advertiser**, 14 August 1989.
13. See Panduleni Kali, **SSA** No4, pp 85-86
14. **Work in Progress** 61, September/October 1989.

Sources

Nico Basson and Ben Motinga (eds), **Call Them Spies**, African Communications Projects, Windhoek/Johannesburg, 1989. Documents available in photocopy from Windhoek are reprinted accurately and in full in this invaluable collection.

Helga and Ludwig Helbig, **Swapo's Violations of Human Rights: An Argument**, Germany, May 1990. The Helbigs were active in Namibia solidarity work for some thirty years, and were involved in numerous campaigns and publications hostile to its German and South African rulers.

Bience Gawanas, 'The women's struggle within the national liberation struggle,' **Journal of African Marxists** No 10, June 1987. After her release, Ms Gawanas failed to associate herself with other former detainees in drawing attention to Swapo's abuses. Her independence of spirit, and the tone of official relations within Swapo, may be measured by this statement from Ms Gawanas at the Ghana colloquium: 'A person like Sam Nujoma, who has become a leader through his experiences of working with the people, can never go back on his word, because it is through his experiences as a contract labourer that he is today leading the national liberation struggle.' (p 52)

Panduleni and Ndamona Kali, 'Swapo's Prisons in Angola,' **Searchlight South Africa** No4 (February 1990). The Kali sisters were arrested in Cuba, and flown to Angola where they were tortured, in November 1984 - nearly two years before Ms Gawanas asked a rhetorical question at the Ghana colloquium: 'The same effort that we put into fighting against racism, why can't we put the same effort into fighting sexism?'

GThe Swapo hellholes, drawn by Frederick 'Cheetah' Gowaseb, an ex-detainee of Swapo, and published in **The Times of Namibia** 26 September 1989.

OLIVE SCHREINER AND THE WOMEN'S VOTE[1]

Lou Haysom

I would like to contribute some thoughts which may help to shed light on the faithful following Olive Schreiner had in the Cape. In doing so I have drawn on research on the life of Mary Fitzgerald, a contemporary of Olive Schreiner. My interest is in the demand by women for the vote, and the breach over the terms that arose between the Cape suffrage society and the societies in the other colonies, prior to the Act of Union in May 1910.

The Cape enfranchisement society, of which Olive Schreiner was a member, refused to compromise its demand for a non-racial suffrage. For many years to come a few women (among them Ruth Schechter) were at pains to point out that the colonies outside the Cape were discriminating against all other women in their demand for the white women's vote.

On the surface the terms on which women demanded the vote appeared simple, but were in reality complex. They were determined by the class composition of the suffrage societies and the political views of the member's husbands. In the Cape, liberals had argued for a qualified non-racial suffrage: that is, the vote for African men, with requisite property and educational qualifications. Yet in doing this they argued that the franchise should be extended horizontally and not vertically. They would grant only the possibility of white women being enfranchised. In this they were explicit: 'We cannot at our peril lower the qualifications for the franchise below its present level . . .'

There was disagreement among the political parties and groupings at the time on the question of the women's vote, but few of them gave it any support.[2] To make themselves heard at all, the suffrage leagues had to find political support in societies where both they and the black population were disenfranchised. That is, outside the sphere of political decision making. This was to be reflected in the dispute inside the suffrage societies over the wording of their demands.

A Background to Women's Demands

Boer women had grouped together in 1891 in Natal to present their demand for the right to vote, and it was only in 1907 that Cape women formed the Women's Enfranchisement League (WEL). Shortly thereafter a similar League was formed in Johannesburg. The Cape group had forty members and Olive Schreiner was its vice-president. In the same year a bill was brought before the Cape parliament, seconded by Olive's hus-

band,Cronwright Schreiner. However, it failed to secure enough support to make it law.

One of the persons recruited in by the Johannesburg WEL was Mary Fitzgerald. Employed as secretary of the Transvaal Miner's Association, she was shaken by the death of miners who inhaled the white sand that filled the gold mines following the drilling and blasting of rocks. She became a prominent labour leader whose militant, if unorthodox, methods earned her the name 'Pickhandle Mary'. From 1907-12 she edited the *Voice of Labour*, a paper that leaned towards syndicalism, and she was in contact with the Cape Social Democratic Federation. The *Voice of Labour* reflected her interest in local and national meetings and functions.

Fitzgerald must have had some influence in the Johannesburg WEL's decision to enrol working class women. It was also decided to model the Johannesburg WEL on the model of the British suffrage societies. In line with this it decided that 'parliamentary suffrage should be demanded on the same terms as men'.

The Johannesburg group made attempts to expand membership by holding drawing-room meetings to which shop assistants were invited. Papers were written to educate women about their rights, or lack of them. Posters and pamphlets were printed and placed in trams. Libraries were asked to accept propaganda on women's suffrage. Thewy attempted to gain official recognition by inviting prominent women to become honorary members of the League. Most declined and even declared their opposition to the vote for women.

The Colour Question and the Vote

The membership card of the WEL in Johannesburg called for 'full politicai and constitutional rights for women in South Africa' but avoided mention of the colour issue in so doing. Indeed at a public meeting on 5 March 1909 the matter had been decided. A resolution passed by more than 200 who attended read: 'the time now had come for women to be granted full constitutional rights in a united South Africa . . . therefore the franchise provisions of the Draft Act [of Union] were unsatisfactory seeing that the franchise was secured to the Cape Natives and not to white women. Some protective clause should be embodied in the Draft Act ensuring no further extension of the Native franchise should be granted before [white] women were in a position to make their wishes felt at the polls.'

Three members of the League, Nina Boyle (the president), Margaret C Bruce, and Mary Fitzgerald published the first issue of a monthly journal, *Modern Women in South Africa*, in November 1909.[3] In the first issue they complained that the press treated their campaign 'in repeated instances of misrepresentation'. A successful meeting, it said, was described as having 'been a fiasco and a scene of ribald interruption'.

Mary Fitzgerald also used the pages of the *Voice of Labour* to advance the cause of the League's campaign. There she said that the demand that the vote be on the same terms as that of men was flawed. The small property qualification

> inflicts no appreciable hardship on the working man, but owing to the economic dependence of married working women, it is entirely inapplicable to the majority of them'.

Only the broadest measure possible to give working women, married and single, the vote was acceptable.[4] But all this was said with respect to white women alone. She cautioned that a demand for the vote for all women would lead to rejection by the segregationist Labour Party.

The gap between the Leagues of the Cape and elsewhere widened. In March 1909 the minutes of the Johannesburg WEL stated that the Cape League was unable to support the draft Bill, which claimed the vote for women on the same terms as men because this restricted the issue to whites outside the Cape. Two months later the Cape League wrote to the National Committee of Enfranchisement Leagues announcing its intention to secede, as their constitutions were incompatible.

It was at this stage that Olive Schreiner resigned from the Cape WEL, obviously unhappy with the position inside the South African suffragette movement. Across a leaflet setting out the aims of the Cape WEL she wrote that she was resigning because her demand was for all the women of the Cape, not just the whites.

The position in the three northern colonies was clear. They were not prepared to extend their demand for the vote to include Coloureds or Africans. The matter was not altered by the visit in 1911 of two women from abroad to assist the work of the Leagues. One of them, Carrie Chapman-Catt, had a record of relentless lobbying for the women's vote in the USA. In South Africa she advised the women to stay clear of any race issues which would delay their getting the vote. With her encouragement the Women's Enfranchisement Association of the Union of South Africa (WEAU) was launched. It worked only for the extension of the vote to white women. The Cape WEL refused to join the new federal body.[5]

In 1930 the vote was finally extended to the white women of South Africa, effectively diminishing the value of the restricted black vote. It was to the WEAU that Cronwright Schreiner wrote in 1930. The text was printed in the victory issue of the body's journal *Flashlight*.[6] In this he said that 'Olive Schreiner would not have looked upon that Act as victory but publicly and emphatically would have disassociated herself from any part in such "Victory celebrations". He continued:

> she would have condemned it, as she always condemned any legislation which tended to disenfranchisement on sex or race lines. This being the case I trust you will not in any way associate her name with the victory celebration.

References

1.. A response to the article on Ruth Schechter, friend to Olive Schreiner iby Baruch Hirson n **Searchlight South Africa** , No 9.
2. John X Merriman, liberal leader in the Cape, said that if 'in any country in the world it is a necessity that franchise be kept on a masculine basis that is South Africa'. General Botha, first prime minister of the Union of South Africa, told a delegation of women in 1913 that he was in favour of their enfranchisement and added, that 'the pressing problem of the day was the Native Question', and he felt that it was 'only with the help of the women that the solution of the problem could be found'. He said further that much water would have to flow under the bridge before the vote for women could enter the sphere of practical politics.
3. I have only found the first issue of this journal. With a membership of less than 300 by 1911, the journal had little prospect of survival.
4. In this Mary Fitzgerald was supporting the demand of the Women's Co-operative Guild in Britain, which had a membership comprising mainly working married women.
5. **Star**, 15 October 1911.
6.. July 1930.

Bibliography

The Minutes of the Johannesburg Women's Enfranchisement League, 1910-12, Johannesburg Municipal Library

Annual reports and correspondence of the Johannesburg Women's Enfranchisement League, Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand.

Irene M Ashby Macfadyen (President of the Women's Enfranchisement League, Cape), **The Cape Parliament and the Enfranchisement of Women, 1900-1909.**

Cheryl Walker, **Women's Suffrage Movement in South Africa**, University of Cape Town Honours thesis, 1979. Published as a monograph

---

Editor's note: Lou Haysom has written a biography of Mary Fitzgerals, which has not been published. The only other account of Fitzgerald's activities, published to date, is in R K Cope's **Comrade Bill** (c 1944). There will also be a brief discussion of Fitzgeraldin B Hirson and Gwyn Williams, **The Delegate for Africa, the Life and Times of David Ivon Jones**, forthcoming.

Mary Fitzgerald became interested in labour problems when she worked as a clerk in the South African Mine Workers Union in Johannesburg. She was appalled at the incidence of phthisis among the miners and their early deaths within eight years of comencing work. In taking up their cause she became increasingly involved in the labour movement. In 1907 she worked closely with Archie Crawford and was the editor of **Voice of Labour.** Both Fitzgerald and Crawford (whom she was to marry), could be described before the war as militant syndicalists. However, caught in the patriotic fervour of the First World War they ended as right-wing labourites.

Fitzgerald gained the name 'Pickhandle Mary' when she picked up the iron clad stave (or pickhandle) accidentally dropped by mounted police and used by themto break up meetings and demonstrations. Wielding her 'weapon' she turned on the police and routed them. Armed with pickhandles, Mary and her followers were subsequently to be seen at demonstrations and meetings defending the platform or routing their enemies.

THE DILEMMA OF ALBIE SACHS: ANC CONSTITUTIONALISM AND THE DEATH OF THAMI ZULU

Paul Trewhela

A Death in Exile

Three months before the unbanning of the ANC and the release of Nelson Mandela, a senior commander of Umkhonto we Sizwe died in exile at the headquarters base of the ANC in Lusaka, Zambia. He died of the effects of TB, Aids and very possibly poison. He died suddenly, five days after having been released from detention by the ANC security department, and was under close ANC guard when he collapsed.

Soon afterwards a top-level commission of inquiry of four commissioners – all leading ANC members – was set up by the National Working Committee of the National Executive Committee (NEC), following a great deal of hostile speculation in the ANC about the circumstances and cause of the man's death. The commissioners did not begin their investigation until three months later. This was at the beginning of February 1990 – the same time as the legalisation of the ANC (on 2 February) and the release of Nelson Mandela. The four commissioners signed their report on 16 March 1990. Presumably it was presented to the NEC immediately afterwards.[1]

Through a combination of circumstances, this report from the exile makes possible a more searching inquiry into the credibility of the ANC in its constitutional negotiations. It permits a close evaluation of the gap between words and deeds. Though withheld from the public until August 1993, when it was released with the report of the Motsuenyane Commission into executions and torture in the ANC in exile, this report was effectively a document of the legal ANC. The ANC was by this time a party to the negotiating process. The report could only have been written with the changed circumstances of the ANC strongly in mind.

Among the four commissioners were two senior political and legal advisers to the ANC in its constitutional discussions. Of these, one was among the best-known international personalities representing the ANC in the decades of the exile: Albie Sachs, former Professor of Law at Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique, Director of South African Constitution Studies at the Institute for Commonwealth Studies, London, a member of the ANC Constitutional Committee and author of a number of books. We have here an insight into ANC military and security operations during the exile, produced in the spirit of its open, public constitutional proposals.

The tension between these opposite dimensions provides a means of testing the ability of the ANC to confront its past, and of deciphering the phraseology of its constitutional proposals. The reader is engaged not so

much in uncovering a history, as deconstructing current discourse. An inquiry into the ANC's past, the report is still more an index to its semantic integrity at present, and its means of operating in the future. It permits a critical judgement on the texts, spoken and unspoken, of ANC negotiators in their conclaves at the head of state, as well as on its security practices in exile.

The dead man was Muziwakhe Ngwenya, who grew up in Soweto and was then in his mid-thirties. He is better known by his pseudonym or exile 'travelling name' of Thami Zulu, or TZ. Throughout the report he is referred to as TZ. I will refer to him as Zulu, or Thami Zulu. The commission's report will be referred to either as the Thami Zulu report or as the Sachs report, since Sachs chaired the inquiry.[2] Like certain other essential details, Zulu's date of birth and age at death are not recorded in the report. Nor are the precise date and and time of his death, a bizarre omission from an inquiry of this kind. Eighteen months after presentation of the commission report, an article in the Johannesburg *Weekly Mail* by Phillip van Niekerk gave his year of birth as 1954. An article on the same day in the London *Guardian* by its South African correspondent, David Beresford – clearly coordinated with the article in the *Weekly Mail*, and carrying similar but not identical material – gave his date of death as 16 November 1989.[3] No ordinary police inquiry would have omitted such details.

The death of Zulu resulted in so much dissatisfaction within the ANC that it could not be hushed up. This was a major, but not the sole, reason for the relatively extensive inquiry by the ANC that followed. The report leads into the labyrinthine world of secret military operations, counter-operations and counter-counter operations in the contest between the ANC and the South African state during the 1980s, a world familiar – in another continent – from the fiction of John le Carré.

Zulu came from 'a well-educated and relatively comfortable home in Soweto'. (p 8) His mother, Mrs Emily Ngwenya, was a primary school headteacher. (*Sunday Times*, London, 4 March 1990) His father was also a headteacher. They were sufficiently well-off to send him for most of his secondary level education to Waterford, a fee-paying boarding school in Swaziland modelled on the English public school system. He thus escaped the worst effects of Bantu Education in South Africa. In the words of the report, his life experience as a youth was 'different from that of most of the persons' in Umkhonto. His immediate family are members of the developing black middle class in South Africa, which has most to benefit from the current political changes. Following his death in Lusaka, these were not people to be kept quiet with sinister allegations or threats, or who had only limited access to the means of public discussiont.

Zulu was a person of stature in the exile. A witness to the inquiry stated that Zulu was 'always used to being in command and never to being commanded'. He gave himself 'the airs of a Napoleon'. After abandoning his studies at the University of Botswana to join Umkhonto in 1975, he was appointed leader of a batch of young exiles who left Swaziland for Tanzania for

military training. Two years later he led the 'first group of the Soweto generation to receive military training abroad' [in East Germany]. Further training followed in the Soviet Union. He then became chief of staff at Nova Katenga military training camp in Angola, where he was distinguished by his brutality, coldness and cruelty towards the troops. (personal communication) Torture of Umkhonto soldiers in Camalundi camp in Malanje province and the death under torture of Oupa Moloi, head of the political department, took place in 1981 under his authority as camp commander. Zulu brazenly threatend others in the camp with the same treatment.[4] This was followed by his appointment to the post of Regional Commander, covering the whole of Angola, the only country where the ANC was then engaged in any substantial combat. As such, he held senior responsibility for the deployment of ANC troops in the civil war alongside government MPLA forces against the rebel army of Unita, with its infrastructure provided by South Africa.

Zulu was finally appointed commander of what was known as the 'Natal Machinery'. This was a grouping, based in Swaziland, responsible for what the report describes as the secret 'irrigation' of armed combatants into Natal and their military activity inside that area. (p 7) He was a crucial frontline commander responsible for conducting guerrilla and sabotage operations within South Africa. After his death, Joe Modise and Chris Hani (commander and chief of staff of Umkhonto) wrote a tribute which stated: 'Under your command, Durban earned the title of the most bombed city in South Africa . . . You performed your task with distinction and remarkable courage'. They recalled his 'efficiency and competence'.[5] Saluting this 'giant and gallant fighter'.

Fear and Loathing in Lusaka

Zulu held this post from 1983 until 1988, when he and virtually the whole of the Natal Machinery were withdrawn to Lusaka for investigation by the security department, following severe losses to the South African state. Shortly before his arrest, nine ANC guerrillas under his command, including three women, were murdered in cold blood, at point-blank range, by a South African hit squad in two separate ambushes as they crossed from Swaziland into South Africa. One of Zulu's deputy commanders – known as Comrade Cyril, or Fear (real name Ralph Mgcina) – had been detained earlier by the ANC security department in Lusaka and interrogated. A summary of a confession by Mgcina, allegedly made at the end of May 1988, a month before the slaughter on the Swaziland border and Zulu's subsequent arrest, is attached to the Sachs report.

According to this document, Mgcina stated that he had worked for the South African Special Branch since 1973, had joined Umkhonto and been deployed as a 'leading cadre in one of our military machineries' in Swaziland. From this position, he had set up the assassination by a South African hit-squad of Zulu's predecessor as commander, Zwelakhe Nyanda, in 1983. The

summary by ANC security of his alleged confession, dated 3 August 1988, states that the strategic goal of SA intelligence was to allow infiltrated structures in Swaziland to grow

> and then cut them down, but leave an embryo for the ANC to build on and within that embryo leave its own forces so that the new structure is also controlled. This would go on indefinitely.

Mgcina subsequently died mysteriously in the custody of his ANC captors. Beresford states he had 'refused to sign a confession that he was a South African agent'. His wife, 'Jessica', was also detained and questioned. The Sachs report states that during the investigation in Lusaka, 'two leading members of the Machinery admitted to having worked with the enemy'. The question was whether Zulu was a 'third person' also working for South African security. (p 8)

In their account of the ANC in exile, Ellis and Sechaba state that Zulu was a member of the South African Communist Party (SACP), and was present at the extended meeting of the central committee in East Berlin in 1979 which elected Moses Mabhida to the post of general secretary.[6] He came close to joining the Umkhonto High Command, with 'strong backing' from Chris Hani, then Umkhonto commissar. (p 170) At the ANC consultative conference at Kabwe in Zambia in 1985 – its first for 16 years – he chaired 'some crucial sessions' of the Internal Reconstruction Committee. Zulu was clearly an important figure in the ANC, destined for high office, until his recall to Zambia. He was then held prisoner in Lusaka by the ANC security department for 17 months, from June 1988 until his release on 11 November 1989. Curiously, the Sachs Commission, which had access to his interrogators, state he was in detention for 14, not 17, months.

The commissioners are listed in the report as follows:

> ZN JOBODWANA. Convenor and presently member of the Dept of Legal and Constitutional Affairs; formerly an attorney in South Africa.
>
> ISAAC MAKOPO. First Chief Representative of the ANC to Botswana, 1978-83; formerly chairperson to the Regional Political Committee, Lusaka; presently Head of the National Logistics Committee in the Treasury Department of the ANC.
>
> TIM MASEKO. Worked as a Research Chemist in Swaziland; formerly principal and Chief Administrator of Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College, Morogoro, Tanzania.
>
> ALBIE SACHS. Formerly an advocate and Law Professor in South Africa; currently Director of the South African Constitution Study Centre at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in London.

The commission has special interest because of the legal background of Jobodwana and Sachs. In addition to them, the ANC in its negotiating strategy now has the benefit of a whole corps of constitutionalists. These include Kader Asmal, professor of Human Rights Law at the University of the Western Cape, and like Sachs a stalwart of the exile. Asmal spent most

of the period of exile as a lecturer in law and as a senior administrator at Trinity College, Dublin, and was a central figure in the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Ireland. Among his recent publications is an article entitled 'Democracy and Human Rights: Developing a South African Human Rights Culture', to which is appended the first draft of the ANC's Bill of Rights of November 1990.[7] At a conference on Ethnicity, Identity and Nationalism in South Africa held at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, in April this year, Asmal presented a paper on the current constitutional negotiations, reprinted in a long extract in the *Southern African Review of Books*.[8] The stress on human rights in the ANC constitutional proposals is obviously very important. The manner in which the ANC has actually approached the matter of human rights, in practice as well as theory, may be seen from the case of Thami Zulu.

Human Rights, for Some

The ANC produced its Constitutional Guidelines in 1988 while numerous members remained imprisoned, without trial, in its prisons and detention camps in several African countries. Its Bill of Rights of November 1990 was drafted and published while a smaller but still substantial number – including some later described as 'genuine comrades' by Nelson Mandela – remained prisoners in an ANC prison at Mbarara in southern Uganda, prior to their release in August 1991.

In his paper at Grahamstown, Asmal quoted the declaration by the ANC that its Bill of Rights would guarantee a society upholding

> fundamental rights and freedoms for all on an equal basis, where our people live in an open and tolerant society, where the organs of government are representative, competent and fair in their functioning, and where opportunities are progressively and rapidly expanded to ensure that all may live under conditions of dignity and equality.

What is at issue is his comment, reprinted in the *SARB*, that there are 'no hidden agendas' in such claims. This is the importance of the position of Albie Sachs in the Thami Zulu Commission. From comparison with his published writings, a major part of the report, if not all, appears to have been written by Sachs. He currently holds senior political office in the ANC, after election to the NEC at the ANC's national conference in Durban in July 1991.

On 9 May 1990, days after returning from exile after leaving the country 24 years previously, and after a near-fatal attempt on his life by South African Military Intelligence in 1988, Sachs admitted to a mass meeting of students at the University of Cape Town that the ANC was still holding prisoners. He said he had been moved to tears by a recent visit to a detention camp, and admitted that the ANC had 'mistreated' prisoners in the past.

> If people come back and say they have been mistreated by the ANC, it is not necessarily lies. But if people come back and say that is the ANC [policy], that is lies. (*Times*, London, 11 May 1990)

The previous month, five former ANC guerrillas (Bandile Ketelo and his colleagues) told the world press about torture, murder and imprisonment for dissent in its prison camps in exile. A week later Nelson Mandela conceded that torture had indeed taken place in exile (but erroneously claimed that those responsible had immediately been punished). From the Thami Zulu report, it now becomes possible to evaluate the relation of Sachs, as a leading constitutionalist in the ANC, to the issue of its human rights abuses.

Several months after his return from exile and his speech at UCT, Sachs published a book in Cape Town entitled *Protecting Human Rights in a New South Africa*.[9] The preface is dated 'London and Cape Town, August 1990' (ie four months after the revelations by the former ANC detainees, and three months after Sachs' speech at UCT). It contains not a word about the ANC's prison camps or its human rights abuses. Nor is there any reference to this in Sachs' autobiographical account, *The Soft Vengeance of a Freedom Fighter*, published in Britain, also in 1990.[10]

The book on human rights presents important, though unofficial, guidelines on ANC perspectives for human rights in South Africa. It appears to be an expanded version of an address presented earlier by Sachs at the London School of Economics, at an occasion named in honour of the British stalinist lawyer, the late D N Pritt.

During the heyday of the ANC prison camps, from 1978 to 1988, a chasm opened up between the declared aims and beliefs of the ANC and its actual practices, a history of semantic distortion bearing on the crisis of violence within South Africa over the past few years. Put simply, the ANC's manner of dealing with internal dissent during the exile does not breed confidence among its political rivals and opponents – among blacks as well as whites – when they look to their future.

The story of a single individual makes the point. In their history of repressions within the ANC published in *Searchlight South Africa* No 5 (July 1990), Ketelo and his colleagues recalled the experiences of three ANC colleagues whom they describe as the 'very first occupants of Quatro prison'.[11] The 'travelling names' of these three exiled members of Umkhonto we Sizwe were given as Ernest Khumalo, Solly Ngungunyana and Drake. After increasing dissatisfaction among troops in Fazenda training camp in Angola in 1978, these three are said to have left the camp in 1979 to go to the capital, Luanda, to demand their resignation from the ANC. In Luanda they were beaten in the street by ANC and Angolan security officers, bundled into a truck and taken straight to Quatro.

According to Ketelo, Ngungunyana was released after two years, Khumalo in 1984 while the fate of Drake was described as still unknown. These men endured the worst period in Quatro. Khumalo had the appalling experience of being released from the prison in 1983, only to be re-arrested

and returned to Quatro the same day. He served about five years. There was no trial, no charge, and no means by which the prisoners could defend themselves. They were subject to constant brutality. The sharpest edge to this history of arbitrary practice, however, is this: 'Ernest Khumalo' was the exile pseudonym of a half-brother of the king of the Zulus, King Goodwill Zwelithini, the titular head of the KwaZulu Bantustan and patron of the Zulu nationalist party, Inkatha. Khumalo's real name is Immanuel Zulu. He completed a course of study in Liverpool in Britain over a year ago and has resisted efforts by his close relative, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, the head of Inkatha, to return to South Africa to deploy his experience in exile to discredit the ANC. (personal communication)[12]

Perceptions in KwaZulu

Through the unbridled arrogance of its security department, the ANC sent a message to Inkatha leaders over ten years ago in this single episode that may well have helped inflame near-civil war within the country, at the cost of thousands of deaths. The KwaZulu Bantustan, like all such regions within South Africa's borders, was and is a one-party state run under a blatant ideology of ethnic chauvinism, with shameless patronage to the advantage of the ruling political elite. Nothing could have been better calculated to breed distrust among Buthelezi and Zwelithini in the constitutional character of the ANC than its treatment of their relative, Immanuel Zulu. For these men, the liberal phrases of the ANC as pronounced by Asmal, Sachs and others ring hollow. The horrors of the past six years involving countless murders by members and supporters of Inkatha may well have happened anyway. There are deep social and political causes. But no amount of killings by Inkatha members and the KwaZulu police, sanctioned and endorsed by Buthelezi and Zwelithini, should be permitted to obscure the crucial point. If this was how the ANC treated their relative, a loyal member of the ANC who rejected the Bantustan philosophy, what hope could there be for KwaZulu leaders in a centralised state ruled by the ANC?

Their response was to develop and trust in their own armed might, rather than the possibility of an effective civil polity in which the ANC would form the majority party. In the light of ingrained suspicion of ANC motives deriving from its treatment of its own members in exile, the adequacy of its attempt to address the death of Thami Zulu (Muziwakhe Ngwenya) has more than an emblematic significance.

Sachs who was among the best-known ANC legal figures during the exile, is unusual for the manner in which he has attempted to relate to the issue of 'the camps'. It is unlikely that any of the ANC constitutionalists knows more than he does about the operations of the security department. To some extent, Sachs was the liberal and juridical 'conscience' of the ANC in exile. The manner in which he used his knowledge is therefore a crucial measure of the organisation as a whole.

The Sachs report quotes an ANC doctor in exile, Dr Pren Naicker, 'the main person in charge' of Thami Zulu's medical needs while in ANC custody from the time he manifested symptoms of ill-health until his death. According to Naicker, conditions for ANC detainees in Zambia were in a'truly parlous state' before the appointment of the new head of ANC security, Joe Nhlanhla, in 1987. No details are given. Conditons, 'poor as they were, had improved immeasurably' compared with the previous period (under Mzwandile Piliso). Some months earlier Naicker had had to raise with Nhlanhla the 'appearance of bruises on the arms and wrists of certain of the detainees'. (pp 12,15) That is all that appears in the 22-page report referring to actual instances of human rights abuses in ANC custody – a matter now richly documented in the report of the ANC commission headed by Advocate Thembile Louis Skweyiya SC (August 1992), the report by Amnesty Intenational (December 1992), the report of Advocate Robert Douglas SC (January 1993), the article by Ketelo and his colleagues (July 1990) and in the report of the second ANC commission of inquiry into its human rights abuses, headed by Mr Sam Motsuenyane, which reported in August.

The Sachs Commission presents a convincing account that Zulu was not tortured during his detention. But the context in which it investigated the possibility of torture was deficient. As a former advocate in the South African Supreme Court, it should have been obvious to Sachs and his fellow commissioners that the question of whether or not Zulu had been tortured could not adequately be investigated unless they were able to establish whether or not torture had previously been widely practised in the ANC.[13]

This they did not do. Instead of carefully establishing a general context, against which the specific experience of Zulu might be more precisely located, the commissioners filled pages of the report with abstract principles. These are worth quoting, because of the problematic relation of words to deeds in the ANC.

Section 3 of the Thami Zulu report quotes from the ANC Code of Conduct, with a summary and commentary by the commissioners. There is no indication here that 'mistreatment' – Sachs' phrase at UCT – was in fact widely practised by the security department, as this journal has recorded.14 The character and limits of 'intensive' interrogation are also not defined, either in passages quoted from the Code of Conduct or elsewhere in the Sachs report.

The Sachs Commission and the Kabwe Conference

The report goes on to state that the Code of Conduct was adopted at the Kabwe conference in 1985, 'precisely to deal with the question of human rights within the organisation'. It states:

> The delegates at the Conference firmly rejected any notion that any means whatsoever, however cruel, could be used in defending the physical integrity of the organisation, or that members surrendered

The Thami Zulu Report on the ANC Code of Conduct

The legal framework within which we conducted our investigation was provided by the ANC Code of Conduct . . .

The preambular part of the Code of Conduct states in conclusion that 'we do not take our standards from the enemy; we do not simply turn the glove inside out, but rather we create our own standards within our traditions of struggle and in the light of our goals for the future'.

The bulk of the Code of Conduct deals with the definition of different kinds of offences and with the procedures for investigating and submitting cases to judgement. The portions relevant for our enquiry read as follows:

Grave Crimes Against the Struggle -

1. A grave crime shall be committed by any person who, inter alia . . .

b)Infiltrates the organisation acting on behalf of or in collaboration with:

i) the racist regime;

ii) the intelligence services of other organisations or groups of other countries; in other words, infiltration into organisation even on behalf of a friendly country would be a grave offence.

c)Being already a member of the organisation, establishes or maintains contact with any of the above bodies.

. . . the basic investigation of Thami Zulu fell under this heading. Simply put, the issue was whether or not TZ was an enemy agent.

The methods of investigation contemplated by the Code of Conduct appear in Section C:

1. Investigation of grave crimes shall primarily be the responsibility of Security.

2. It is the duty of all members to assist security in every way, both by giving relevant information when enquiries are being made and by respecting all the general rules of security.

3. All normal and reasonable methods of investigation may be used in the course of investigation.

4. Intensive methods of interrogation shall be permissible only in extraordinary circumstances and under proper authorisation and strict supervision by the highest political authority in the area. [In Lusaka this meant the NEC and Oliver Tambo himself as president. – PT]

5. Torture or any form of cruel, degrading or inhuman treatment of a detainee or a person on trial is forbidden'.

In the present case there was no question of intensive methods of interrogation being permissible or authorised.

Paragraph 4 refers to battle situations or other conditions of extreme emergency, and even here, it should be noted, torture or any form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment is forbidden.

Thus, the ANC Code of Conduct does not sanction any form of cruelty, whether physical or psychological, in the treatment of detainees. It makes no difference whether the detainees are being held for theft or violence or acting for the enemy. Nor from this point of view is it relevant whether they are suspects or proved agents of South African security. The degree of incrimination might have a bearing on steps taken to prevent escape, but would not affect the detainee's rights to at least minimum conditions of health and personal dignity. At no stage does the ANC Code permit torture or any form of illtreatment of any detainee. (pp 2-4)

> their basic human rights once they joined the ANC. Similarly, delegate after delegate stressed that the viciousness of apartheid in no way justified viciousness on our part. (p 4)

The problem of ANC constitutionalism is wrapped up, a riddle inside an enigma, in this passage. Whatever was said at the Kabwe conference – and it is the responsibility of the ANC to produce full and complete minutes – this event marked the lowest point in the history of its deliberative proceedings. This magazine has published an account of the packing of the Kabwe conference by the security department, the suppression of meaningful debate and the silencing of critical opinion that took place there.[15] By the time it was convened in June 1985, those ANC members who had most insistently called for a conference over the previous five years had been silenced by the firing squad or were subject to constant brutality in prison. They remained prisoners at Quatro for a further three years after it concluded.

The conference was the direct result of the ANC mutiny the previous year, which demanded an end to human rights abuses in the organisation. In all probability drawn up with major assistance from Sachs himself, the Code of Conduct was mainly a fig-leaf covering a brutal practice of suppression of dissent. The report of the Stuart Commission into causes and nature of the mutiny was not tabled at Kabwe. Up to the time of writing, it has still not been made public. The Skweyiya Commission found that it had apparently *not even been placed before the NEC* by August 1992, when it reported its own findings.[16] This was 18 months after the unbanning of the ANC, and a full year after the national consultative conference in Durban in July 1991.[17] Vital knowledge about the history of the ANC remained restricted knowledge, excluded from elected members of its highest constitutional body. The presentation of the Kabwe conference as a forum for defending human rights by the Sachs Commission is not credible.

A Personal Statement

Sachs is a humane man, who genuinely desires an impartial and non-vengeful system of justice. That is why he wishes for 'soft' vengeance for the bomb that maimed him. In his account of the bombing and its aftermath, he describes his feelings after hearing that Mozambican and ANC security had arrested a man who had allegedly confessed to planting the bomb in his car. The man was described as a black Angolan working for South African Special Forces (a sub-department of Military Intelligence). In a radio interview, Sachs said that his most fervent wish was that the alleged assassin should be

> tried by due process of law in the ordinary civil courts, and if the evidence was not strong enough for a conviction, he be acquitted. The risk of an acquittal was fundamental, since the creation of a strong system of justice in Mozambique, one in which the people had con-

fidence, which operated according to internationally accepted principles, would validate all our years of effort ... (p 199)

This was an honourable standpoint, offering guidance for the future of judicial conditions in southern Africa, all the more stirring because in rejecting the norm of an eye for an eye ('hard' vengeance), Sachs as political exile, as jurist and as victim was making a statement of his deepest convictions. Due process, he said, would be a 'personal triumph over the bomber ... the ultimate in my soft, sweet vengeance'.

The problem lies in Sachs' blurred perception of what he calls 'our values'. It would be mean-spirited, insulting and wrong to doubt his sincerity over the need for due process for the man believed to have maimed him. There is no doubting also his desire to eliminate torture, imprisonment without trial and executions by his colleagues in the security department and the military. He genuinely feels anguish at the malpractices of his own side, 'all our years of effort', to which he gave half a lifetime in exile, and an arm and an eye. But the constraints upon him – political constraints, both external and personal – are too heavy, and they wear away judicial principle.

This appears in the Sachs report when it refers to the creation of the post of Officer of Justice under Section B of the ANC Code of Conduct, acting under overall supervision of the NEC and in collaboration with the President's Office.[18] The function of Officer of Justice was to:

(a) maintain the principles of legality within the organisation;
(b) supervise investigations when they reach the stage that charges are being contemplated against members; ...
(i) ensure that no person in the custody of or under investigation of officers of the organisation is treated in a cruel, inhuman or degrading way;
(j) make regular inspections of the way persons deprived of their liberty are treated, with a view to ensuring that the purposes of re-education rather than vengeance are fulfilled; ...
(k) see to it that no undue delay takes place between completion of investigations and the date of trial; ...
(m) take all steps to minimise the period of waiting ... (p5)

Excerpts from the Code of Conduct were published last year by the Skweyiya Commission in its report, including several of the clauses set out here. (pp 16-24) A matter nowhere taken up in the Sachs report, or referred to anywhere in Sachs' books, but published in the Skweyiya report, is the clause in the Code of Conduct dealing with 'exceptionally serious cases'. This states that that 'where no other penalty would be appropriate, maximum punishment may be imposed'. The Skweyiya Commission concludes: 'By maximum punishment, is envisaged the sentence of death'. (p 18)

This crucial passage is omitted in the Sachs report, despite its relevance. It is the legal formulation of death penalty by the ANC: no small matter for a country regarded as the hanging capital of the world, where violent death is everyday. The Sachs report quotes instead a passage from the Code of

Conduct stipulating that the 'rights and privileges' of prisoners should be based on the 'humanist traditions of the ANC'. (p 5) Once again liberal legal phraseology obscures a thorny truth.

The Code of Conduct and creation of the post of Officer of Justice were clearly the result of strenuous efforts by individuals such as Sachs. There is no cause to doubt their sincerity in wishing to establish legality in the ANC, so as to rein in the abuses that had provoked the mutiny, with its further cycle of executions, torture and large-scale imprisonment of loyal members. In its lengthy citation of legal norms, however, the Sachs report conceals the fact that the post of Officer of Justice was an almost total dead letter. Two years after the Sachs report, the Officer of Justice, Zola Skweyiya, told the inquiry chaired by his brother Thembile Skweyiya that his efforts to visit Angola in 1986 and 1987 had been 'blocked at every turn' by the then head of the security department, Piliso, and that he himself had been in danger of being arrested. He had been allowed to visit Angola late in 1988, but was denied access to Quatro. Efforts to visit Uganda were also blocked. (pp 63-64) Severe abuses continued unchecked, well on into 1991.[14]

From the Sachs report it is clear that Zola Skweyiya did not at any stage visit the detention centres where Thami Zulu was held. The commission is critical that the Code had 'not been fully implemented'. It was most unsatisfactory, the report goes on, that no clear time-limit had been placed on detention without trial. (p 6) The period over which which Zulu was held as a suspect was far too long. It finds no evidence to suggest that Zulu had otherwise been improperly treated, and no information has emerged to suggest otherwise. The investigation had been carried out in a 'serious and professional manner'. (p 19) The commissioners conclude that there was sufficient evidence to justify Zulu's detention; that there was no proof that he had in fact been a state agent; but that he had been guilty of 'gross negligence' and possibly also personal misbehaviour. (p 18) I am not aware of any cause to doubt these conclusions. The commission appears to have operated on these matters in a judicial fashion.

The Final Days

Zulu had entered detention, in the words of the report, as a 'large, well-built slightly overweight person, and come out gaunt, frail and almost unrecognisable'. (p 10) On his release on 11 November, he was taken to stay at the house of a friend, Dr Ralph Ngijima. He told Ngijima that his condition had deteriorated drastically while he was in an isolation cell, lying all day on a mattress on the floor. In previous years Zulu had suffered from TB. Having developed diarrhoea, mouth sores (thrush) and a spiking fever towards the end of his time in detention, he was taken in charge of Dr Naicker to University Training Hospital (UTH) in Lusaka for X-rays on 1 November. Nothing was detected on the X-rays, but a blood test taken at the same time showed he was HIV positive. The Presidential Committee (Tambo's

office) then ordered his release. Ngijima considered Zulu's condition on arrival at his house to be shocking, but not suggestive of imminent death. The following day Ngijima fell seriously ill himself and had to be taken to hospital for an emergency operation.

Zulu died of heart and lung failure four days later on 16 November, while Ngijima was still in hospital. The histopathological analysis after his death showed advanced TB in various organs, including the sac around the heart. Medical opinion in Lusaka, London (where specimens of blood and stomach contents were taken for analysis) and South Africa enabled the commission to decide that he was a victim of Aids, which had destroyed the immune system, permitting rapid advance of TB.

The problem for the commissioners was that samples of Zulu's blood and stomach contents sent for analysis at UTH in Lusaka showed traces of diazinon, an organic phosphorus pesticide, in both specimens.[19] The blood also contained 84 milligrammes percent alcohol, the equivalent of about three pints of beer. A forensic scientist in London who was given the same specimens for analysis three months later said that diazinon has a strong and unpleasant taste. It does not dissolve in water or tea, but is soluble in alcohol. 'Three pints of beer taken within a twenty-four hour period and each containing a teaspoonful of diazinon could have been fatal'. (p13) Diazinon is not however accumulated in the body; it is excreted out. 'Thus if it had been given to TZ it would necessarily have been given within a day or at most two days prior to his death'. The commissioners state that while they cannot express any certainty as to whether Zulu had been poisoned, they felt 'the likelihood is that he indeed was'. (p 14)

At this point the investigation breaks down. There could not be a greater contrast between the scrupulous manner in which medical forensic detail has been accumulated and assessed, and the absence of forensic investigatgion subsequent to these findings. If diazinon could only have been administered to Zulu within one or at most two days before his death, then the identity of his murderers had to be established through a careful trawl of all people who had access to him over that time, and who might have provided him with poisoned beer. There is no indication in the report that any such inquiry was made. No information is provided about who visited Ngijima's house during that time. The investigation disappears into a hole. The commissioners state: 'If TZ was poisoned, then we cannot see that anyone other than South African security could have been responsible'. (p14) The obvious point is avoided: if poison was administered to Zulu in three bottles of beer, those who supplied it were almost certainly members of the ANC, and perhaps very senior members.

This point is simply not canvassed. There no attempt to compile a list of people who had seen Zulu in the two days before his death. The commission further suppressed information which appeared later in the South African and British press. The identity of one individual who did see Zulu during those two days is known. It is Chris Hani, then Umkhonto chief of staff.

After his return to South Africa, Hani seems to have given details of his own account of the lead-up to Zulu's death to Van Niekerk of the *Weekly Mail* and (in the same briefing) to Beresford of the *Guardian*. This appears to have been the immediate stimulus for their coordinated stories in Britain and South Africa on 6 September 1991. Following Hani's murder in April 1993, there is an onus on Van Niekerk and Beresford to make plain exactly what their relation to Hani was in compiling their accounts.

The countdown to Zulu's death appears to be as follows:

Sat. 11 November:

Zulu released from detention and brought, very ill, by the security department to Ngijima's house.

Sun. 12 November:

Ngijima taken ill and rushed to hospital for emergency operation.

Mon. 13 November:

Ngijima phones Hani from hospital and tells him to check up on Zulu. Hani and Modise, the two senior commanders in Umkhonto, go to to the house, find the gate locked and 'vault over a high fence to get to TZ', whom they find in a very sick state. 'After that two MK men were sent to look after him'. (Van Niekerk) These were men loyal to Hani. (personal communication) They are so far unidentified, and there is no way of knowing whether or not they were interviewed by the Sachs Commission. This is obviously crucial for any serious inquiry into possible murder by poisoning. Failure to establish the precise role of these two men vitiates any judicial inquiry.

Tues. 14 November:

Hani returns to the house and finds Zulu still in a bad state. Zulu does not want medical help but 'appeared to be worried that the Security Department is going to "finish me off" if he got into their hands'. (Beresford) This is clearly Hani's own account, and points a finger directly at the security department, then headed by Joe Nhlanhla (director), Jacob Zuma (head of counter-intelligence) and Sizakele Sigxashe. (Skweyiya report, p63, and Beresford) Both Van Niekerk's and Beresford's accounts suggest Hani pointing an accusatory finger at Zuma, now assistant general-secretary of the ANC and one of the five-man team originally charged with conducting negotiations with the government.

Wed. 15 November:

Hani calls in a doctor to attend to Zulu in the night 'and left two MK members to keep watch at his bedside'. (Beresford) Zulu suffers attacks of vomitting and diarrhoea.

Thurs. 16 November:

Zulu starts gasping and is rushed to UTH, where he dies.

The Sachs Commission refers to 'lack of cooperation between Military HQ [ie, Modise, Hani] and security [ie, Nhlanhla, Zuma, Sigxashe]' on the

issue of Zulu's detention and death. (p 19) This is a bland understatement. Beresford writes that under the ANC's command structure, the security department was responsible for detentions, was completely separate from the military command and had overriding investigatory powers.

> Thami's detention, which came as a shock to the military, was without the sanction of either Modise or Hani. The two commanders made furious demands inside the ANC National Executive to know the basis of Thami's detention and to have access to him. Both were refused.

Beresford writes that unless Zulu committed suicide, 'the finger of suspicion points to those in attendance on him in the final hours of his life . . . which includes members of Umkhonto we Sizwe itself'. He speaks of 'bitter, if unspoken antagonism' on the part of the military towards the security department. If South African intelligence had infiltrated an agent into the upper echelons of the ANC who was responsible for Zulu's murder, 'the potential for manipulation is obvious'.

Van Niekerk quotes an unnamed commander (probably Hani):

> TZ's detention was not discussed with us . . . Our response was one of bitterness and led to a straining of relations between the army and security.
>
> Security was very powerful – it had the powers of life and death.
>
> The death of TZ is an indictment of the methods we used against suspects, ignoring his track record and the views of those who worked with him closely.

The central issue for this article, however, is not the matter of determining the exact details in the last years and days of Thami Zulu, or even inadequacies in the investigation by the Sachs Commission. Many of these difficulties are probably irreducible, given the nature of a secret war.

What is at issue is Sachs' publication of a major book on perspectives for human rights in South Africa that makes no reference to human rights abuses in the ANC in exile – problems which he was very aware of at the time, at first hand. Even if he wished to explain the context in which these abuses took place in terms of his own understanding of the issue, this is not a matter that is irrelevant to the subject of his book. It is its most difficult and complex dimension. For a legal figure of his stature not to have mentioned the matter is to deceive his readers. He creates further difficulties for the already dreadfully burdened issue of human rights in South Africa. Kader Asmal's ringing declaration about 'no hidden agendas' is untrustworthy, and this book shows it. Sachs' sophistication, his legal training (both academic and practical), his fluent writing style and his familiarity with the legal system, the universities and the media in major western countries, together with his appealing personality, serve to mask the most sensitive problems for human rights investigation in South Africa, rather than clarify them.[20] The distinction between Sachs' role in protecting human rights inside the ANC and in concealing its abuses is difficult to make. His work is part of the problem, not its solution.

The Pursuit of Justice

There is no need to give extensive extracts from Sachs' book, *Protecting Human Rights in a New South Africa*. A great deal of it is sound and needs no further comment. Other parts give proposals for adaptation of the ANC programme to the hard realities of South Africa's capitalist structure. These are not matters that I am concerned with here. What is at issue is a rosy liberal prose that obscures what it should illuminate. A few references will be sufficient.

Sachs claims, for instance, that the

> frequent and massive human rights violations in our country, together with a vigorous movement of contestation and considerable international attention, have produced on our part [ie the ANC] unusual sensitivity to and a passionate interest in the safeguarding of human rights. (p 40)

Would it were true!

> For those of us who have suffered arbitary detention, torture and solitary confinement . . . the theme of human rights is central to our existence. The last thing any of us desires to see is a new form of arbitrary and dictatorial rule replacing the old. (ibid)

And yet . . .

In a chapter on 'The future of South African law', he writes of the 'legal freedom fighters in our past' – Gandhi, Schreiner, Krause, Seme, Mathews, Fischer, Nokwe, Berrange, Kahn, Muller, Mandela, Tambo, Slovo and Kies – people who saw their legal careers as being 'inextricably linked up with the pursuit of justice'. (p 98) No reference to the problematic relation of at least three of these to the ANC's system of prison camps in exile. No reference either to the fact that a number of these jurists for decades justified the tyranny of the Soviet Union, the model for Quatro and its clones. He writes of the qualities of professional legal integrity, including that of 'never consciously misleading the court'. (p 99) But to mislead a whole population . . .

One could go on, but this is enough. If the ANC gets its way in its constitutional embrace with the National Party, or even part of its way, Sachs is likely to have an important place in the judicial system of the 'new' South Africa, perhaps even a place in the cabinet. In relating to Sachs, one is relating to the ANC at its most spell-binding. The matter of this article is the future of the legal system in South Africa, perhaps for decades to come

Like those notables in the west who sang the praises of the Stalin Constitution of 1936, Sachs is victim of a romantic fallacy: of asserting a desired ideal, clothed here as a legal norm, as if were a factual truth.[21] His inspiring prose soars overhead and discredits the human rights objectives to which he earnestly and genuinely aspires. The ANC publicist is internally at war with the jurist, and the publicist frequently wins out. One sees the personal moral anguish of the activist reared in the old-style certainties of the SACP (he first

visited the Soviet Union in 1954, the year after Stalin died), in conflict with the yearnings of a decent man. Thus the tears to which he gave acknowledgement at UCT. Between the 'comrade' and the activist for human rights, an internal conflict sparkles like static electricity.

Several things need obviously be done. Sach should write an honest, straightforward account of his own efforts (and those of others) within the ANC to secure better observation of human rights. As a member of the NEC, he should insist that theminutes of the Kabwe conference be published. As he writes in his book on human rights, 'it ill behoves us to set ourselves up as the new censors . . . ' (p 183) He should act on these words.

Finally, it is a scandal that the ANC should have refused to carry out the recommendations of the Motsuenyane Commission – above all, that torturers and killers should be removed from office in the ANC, and that compensation should be paid to victims – until such time as the National Party takes action against the state's own killers and torturers. The decision by the NEC to defer action on its own abuses until the convening of yet another commission, a so-called 'Commission of Truth', is an act of hypocrisy at the highest level of the ANC.[22]By this decision the ANC shakes hands with the NP in a pact of blood. As a member of the ANC, Sachs must take responsibility for this deeply cynical measure.

The 'conscience of the ANC' is looking worn.

References

1. 'Report of a Commission of Inquiry set up in November 1989 by the National Working Committee of the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress to Investigate the Circumstances leading to the Death of Mzwakhe Ngwenya (also known as Thami Zulu or TZ)', Lusaka, March 1990.
2. Reported by Phillip van Niekerk, 'Who killed Thami Zulu?', **Weekly Mail**, 6 September 1991. Van Niekerk refers to the commission's findings as the 'Sachs report'.
3. David Beresford, 'Poison in the ANC's ranks', **Guardian**, London, 6 September 1991. I take the spelling of Muziwakhe ('his house', or family, in Zulu) from the articles by Van Niekerk and Beresford, who had access to Ngwenya's parents. Both journalists are highly respected. Van Niekerk was visited in hospital by Nelson Mandela after being shot in the head by gangsters following the massacre at Boipatong.
4. Bandile Ketelo et al, 'A Miscarriage of Democracy. The ANC Security Department in the 1984 Mutiny in Umkhonto we Sizwe', **Searchlight South Africa** No 5, July 1990. pp40-41.
5. Text and attribution from **Sunday Times, Weekly Mail** and **Guardian**.
6. Stephen Ellis and Tsepo Sechaba, **Comrades Against Apartheid. The ANC and the South African Communist Party in Exile**, James Currey/Indiana University Press, 1992.
7. Kader Asmal, 'Democracy and Human Rights: Developing a South African Human Rights Culture', **New England Law Review**, 27 (1992), pp287-304.
8. Kader Asmal, 'Making the Constitution', **Southern African Review of Books**, Vol 5 No 3, May/June 1993.
9. Albie Sachs, **Protecting Human Rights in a New South Africa**, Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1990.
10. Albie Sachs, **The Soft Vengeance of a Freedom Fighter**, Grafton, London, 1990. This is a remarkable and moving book, one of the best of a large number of autobiographical accounts by leading individuals in the 'liberation struggle'. It strength derives from Sachs' emotionally honest description of the experience of being very nearly murdered by a car bomb in

Maputo in April 1988, placed by South African state agents, and of his efforts to recover personal and public poise after loss of an arm and the use of an eye. The danger of indulgent self-dramatization, common in a certain type of South African exile literature, is mainly set aside here by the nature of the subject, which is his own trauma. It marks a moment of transition from the tendentious public prose of previous writing by South African political figures, towards the truth of inner feelings, and a vivid acknowledgement of the sensuous pleasures of life.

11. Ketelo et al, op cit, p38.
12. Only one of the leaders of the mutiny in the ANC in Angola in 1984, Mwezi Twala, appears to have gone the distance of joining Inkatha. Twala has become an organiser for Inkatha in the Vaal region. Another detainee who has been amply described in the South African press as a real agent of South African security before he was arrested and tortured in exile by the ANC, Patrick Hlongwane, has delighted in making a nuisance of himself. Released from the ANC prison in Uganda in August 1991, Hlongwane formed a grouping on his return – almost certainly with state funds – called the Returned Exiles Committee (REC) which operated out of Inkatha premises north of Durban. At a recent meeting of the National Party Youth Congress, he embarrassed President FW de Klerk by claiming to be the NP information officer in Soweto. He claimed afterwards to be also a military member of the fascist Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB). (**New Nation**, 16 July 1993) If a character like Hlongwane had not existed – half criminal, half clown – he would have had to be invented.
13. Sachs' book, **The Jail Diary of Albie Sachs** (1966, since reissued) was adapted for the stage by the British dramatist David Edgar. Edgar's dramatised version was performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company and appeared subsequently on television and radio in Britain.
14. See **Searchlight South Africa**, numbers 5, 7, 8, 9. See also Amnesty International, **South Africa. Torture, ill-treatment and executions in African National Congress camps**, London, December 1992 (AI Index AFR 53/27/92). The Skweyiya report (see note 16) noted 'gratuitous and random violence perpetrated on the detainees by camp guards' at the ANC prison in Uganda, well on into 1991. (p 47)
15. Mkatashingo, 'The ANC Conference: From Kabwe to Johannesburg', **Searchlight South Africa** No 6 (January 1991), pp 91-94.
16. **Report of the Commission of Enquiry into Complaints by Former African National Congress Prisoners and Detainees** (the 'Skweyiya report'), Johannesburg, August 1992. p56.
17. The date was mistakenly given as July 1992 in Paul Trewhela, 'The ANC Prison Camps. An Audit of Three Years, 1990-1993', **Searchlight South Africa** No 10 (April 1993), p19. In the same article the name 'David Moshoeu', MK regional commander in Angola at the time of the mutiny, should have read David Mashigo. His real name is Graham Morodi. The Stuart Report acknowledged that the mutiny was caused very largely by 'excesses of the security department'. (ibid, p16) Thus its suppression.
18. As executive president, Tambo was responsible for the army, the security department and information and publicity. For a discussion of Tambo's responsibility, see Paul Trewhela, 'The ANC Prison Camps', op cit, pp 24-26. Tambo was buried in South Africa in May this year in an atmosphere worthy of a Christian saint. Standing beside Nelson Mandela during the ceremony, in combat fatigues and giving the Umkhonto salute, were two of the leaders from the exile most heavily implicated in abuses: Joe Modise, commander, and Andrew Masondo, former national commissar and founder of one of the most brutal security organs, the People's Defence Organisation.

    The Skweyiya report quotes a statement made by Tambo on behalf of Umkhonto we Sizwe at the headquarters of the International Commission of the Red Cross on 28 November 1980. Tambo said, solemnly undertook to respect the conventions and undertook in particular to apply the Geneva Convention on the treatment of prisoners of war, by which he meant 'regular armed forces of the South African regime captured by the cadres of Umkhonto we Sizwe'. This excluded spies.

    The Skweyiya Commission found there had been 'shocking and persistent violation of the Code of Conduct by certain members of the security department of the ANC' (p 24) – violation also, by implication, of Tambo's undertaking in Geneva. Tambo made this undertaking during one of the most terrible periods of oppression of ANC members in Angola, when – among others – Immanuel Zulu was in Quatro. It was made for international

political consumption, and perhaps in the hope of providing a modicum of safety for captured guerrillas in South Africa. But it had no relevance in the camps.

19. I mistakenly spelt this 'Diazonin' in my article in SSA No 10. (p 30, n 6)
20. Having obtained his PhD at the University of Sussex after arriving in Britain, Sachs became senior lecturer in law at the University of Southampton. He received an honorary award of LLD from the university. Following his work as professor of law at Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo, Mozambique (1977-83), he became director of research in the Mozambique Ministry of Justice. After the car bomb attempt on his life, he taught at Columbia University in New York as well as directing the South Africa Constitution Studies Centre at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in the University of London. Since returning to South Africa, he has been attached to the University of the Western Cape and the University of Cape Town.
21. For a typology of the species, see David Caute, **The Fellow-Travellers**, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973.
22. 'ANC torturers are granted a reprieve by Mandela', **Daily Telegraph**, 31 August 1993.

LIES IN THE LIFE OF 'COMRADE BILL'[1]

Baruch Hirson

Frank Glass and W H (Bill) Andrews were close friends, both socially and politically. It is not certain when they first became intimate, but they certainly met at the founding conference of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) in 1921, where Glass was the youngest delegate. They occupied leading positions in the party and were in constant contact with one another. In 1923/4 Andrews was party secretary, Glass the treasurer and full-time organizer. Both worked in the white trade unions and were the protagonists inside the CPSA for affiliation to the South African Labour Party (SALP). In 1923 the CPSA, reduced in size after the suppression of the general strike of 1922, decided at its annual conference to apply for affiliation to the SALP, only to have its overture rejected.

The isolation of the CPSA worsened and, seeking a new initiative, members of the party's Youth League favoured a radical change in policy. Grouped around Eddie Roux and Willie Kalk, they urged party members to seek recruits among black youth and black workers. Some members opposed this policy, others accepted it enthusiastically.

In mid-1924 conditions changed in South Africa. General Smuts was defeated in a general election by an alliance of the National and the Labour Parties. This had CPSA support, but the party condemned the entry of Labour into the government.

Nonetheless, Glass and Andrews moved that the party apply for affiliation to the SALP, for the second time. Their approach arose, at least partly, from a letter written from a sanatorium in Yalta by David Ivon Jones, in mid-1924. Jones was one of the acknowledged founders of the CPSA, and this was the last letter he sent before his untimely death. The letter was sent to Andrews but was obviously meant for the leading members of the CPSA. Glass had a clear memory in 1986 of Andrews having read the letter to him soon after it was received.[1]

Jones had said that the CPSA had been reduced to a sect and should be dissolved temporarily. Communists should regain their position among workers through the trade unions and their one hope organizationally was to seek affiliation with the SALP. Yet, despite the segregatory policy of the SALP, it would be wrong to read into this a racist approach on the part of Jones. Jones had worked through the problems of ethnicity and class and, like many others, had made mistakes in his evaluation of the white workers as a revolutionary force. However, when he was tried for publishing and distributing a leaflet entitled 'The Bolsheviks are Coming' in Pietwrmaritzburg in 1919, he had maintained in court that the future Lenin of South Africa would be an African. Later, in 1921, when he spoke at the congress of the

Communist International (or Comintern), he had been the first to call for the convening of a Congress of Negro Toilers. Furthermore, in the above mentioned letter in which he urged the CPSA to seek affiliation with the SALP, he already perceived in Roux the kind of young party member who could best represent the interests of communism in South Africa.

Andrews did not intervene actively in the debate at the party conference in 1924 and it was left to Glass to lead the debate. He spoke about winning white workers but noted that the party had to find its way to the black and the white masses. He said that through the SALP there would be access to Coloured and African voters (in the Cape) – and there is no indication that he cast any aspersions at the black worker as stated subsequently by communist historians. In fact, an unknown informer at the conference, who reported to the Department of Justice, ascribed remarks with a possible racist slant to W H Andrews![2]

This time the resolution on affiliation was opposed by S P Bunting, Roux and Kalk, and was narrowly defeated. Andrews and Glass resigned from the executive committee of the party and withdrew from the Central Executive in February 1925. However, according to Roux, Glass left the party immediately after the conference, and then made a statement during an interview to the *Star* that Africans could not appreciate the noble ideas of communism. I searched through the files of the *Star* but could find no such interview. However, there was a letter signed by Roux, as General Secretary of the CPSA, on 4 March 1925, written in response to press reports. He said that neither Andrews nor Glass had left the party, but Glass had resigned as treasurer because of pressure of trade union work.

In fact, after the December conference many members of the CPSA drifted away and were not heard of again. On 9 May Frank Glass wrote to the secretary of the CPSA. He claimed that membership of the party had dwindled and that 'the antagonism of the white worker has increased'. He continued:

> Today the Communist Party in South Africa is a sect – nothing more, and is regarded by the average European worker as an anti-white party with some justification. For the tactics (or antics) of the more prominent Party members display a distinct bias against the whites in favour of the blacks, and all the propaganda of the Party appears to be directed towards 'getting the backs up' of the former.

This, he said, was harmful to the general progress of the Labour Movement in South Africa'. He resigned from the CPSA and joined the SALP.

Nonetheless, it was a mistake to have adopted a policy of entryism in the SALP in South Africa. Jones, Bunting, Andrews and others in the CPSA had been members of the executive of the SALP before the First World War but resigned in 1915 because they opposed the party's pro-war stance. They were fully aware of the vigorous segregation policy of the SALP and had been among the first to reject colour or ethnicity as a criterion for member-

ship of any movement. Now that the SALP was part of government, there could be no place for communists in its ranks.

Andrews stayed in the CPSA after the 1924 conferencebut, despite having been a member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) in 1923, editor of the party paper, the *International*, and a leading party figure in the strike of 1922,[3] played no further active role in the CPSA until the late 1930s.

Glass was secretary of the Witwatersrand Tailors' Association and together with Andrews was prominent in the founding conference of the South African Association of Employees' Organizations (SAAEO), the newly launched trade union federation. Andrews was elected secretary and Glass treasurer, amidst claims by the press that the communists had captured control of the trade union movement. Present at the founding conference of the in 1925 was Fanny Klenerman, organizer with the assistance of Eva Green, of the women sweet workers and waitresses. Fanny was militant and, if she had not met Glass before, would have been noticed by him now. Green was a teacher and under the terms of her employment could not work openly in a political party, or in a trade union.

Glass and Klenerman, together with Andrews and Green, were socially inseparable. In this they crossed party affiliation lines, and the CPSA took no action against Andrews. The narrow sectarianism of the Comintern, which helped to ruin so many promising political cadres in Europe, had not yet crippled the South African CP. Andrews and Glass were brought even closer by their work in the trade unions. It was probably in this capacity that they both attended meetings of the black general workers union, the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa (ICU), and spoke from its platform in 1925 and 1927. They did this as trade unionists, and yet their appearance at ICU meetings after 1926 flew in the face of ICU stated policy.

Addressing the ICU

The ICU, which seemed to be growing into a mighty movement by 1925 was actually in poor shape. After its initial involvement in a dock strike in 1919 the movement was not very successful as a trade union. Its main branches were in small towns where there was little manufacture and its leaders stayed away from industrial action. Many of its officers were corrupt and the money collected from workers went into private pockets. Alcoholism was rife, and at least one top official became a police informer.[4]

Although the ICU claimed to be a general worker's union, it was a community organization. Men were organized in the townships and the 'union' could do little more than represent its members legally when they encountered problems. This was a useful but costly service that could not be sustained. The decline of the ICU was probably inevitable but was speeded up in 1926 when members of the ICU, who were also members of the Com-

munist Party of South Africa (CPSA), were confronted by an ultimatum to resign from the CPSA or leave the ICU.

It seems that the ultimatum was precipitated by the report prepared in 1925 by the assistant general-secretary of the ICU and member of the CPSA, James La Guma. In this he accused the top leadership of corruption. The response from that leadership was ill-considered but inevitable. All communists had to go.

It therefore came as a surprise when Andrews and Glass spoke from ICU platforms. Andrews was still in the party and Glass's views were even more radical than that of his friend. Glass was first asked by Clemens Kadalie, the ICU leader, to be the movement's book-keeper and produce accounts in accordance with new government regulations. Kadalie also stated that he wanted Glass to be appointed treasurer of the ICU but this was blocked by the ICU council.

Both Glass and Andrews addressed ICU meetings including one in 1925 on the subject of the British seamen's strike,[5] and one on 28 March 1927 in Johannesburg, when a meeting was called to protest against the passing of the first reading of the Native Administration Bill. This legislation was designed to move control of African affairs to the Native Affairs Department, and contained measures that could cripple all black organization at the behest of the Minister of Native Affairs.

About 2,000 Africans and a small group of whites, Indians, and Chinese attended. Both Andrews and Glass spoke and both speeches were reported in the morning and evening press. It was the address given by Glass that received the main headlines and the main strictures, although both speakers were condemned in the press and in Parliament.

Andrews spoke in his personal capacity, and his words were those of a radical trade unionist. He advised African workers to organize, taking no account of colour, religion or the politics of members. He continued:

> I say to you, and all the workers of South Africa, whether European, Native or any other nationality, that they have got to organize along the lines of industry, irrespective of creed, colour or politics, and if you do that and the European workers as well – you will not only be able to stop this bill, but you will be able to raise yourselves indefinitely higher than you have ever been before. Build up your organisation, irrespective of prejudices, so as to take possession of this country – I am now speaking to all workers, white, black and coloured – as the Russians have of their country and as the Chinese are endeavouring to do – and for the first time in history you will be able to enjoy the fruits of your labour.

Andrews' talk drew applause, but it was Glass who got the audience to their feet with his call for revolutionary action.

> If you will do what the Russian workers have done and what the Chinese workers are doing now you – all the workers of this country,

> black and white – will be able to secure freedom. We don't know at the moment how far the Government is going in its attempt to restrict the freedom of the Native workers; but this we do know, that all capitalist governments in their dealings with the workers act precisely alike. Therefore we have got to be prepared, not merely with demonstrations, but also – if it proves to be necessary – with far more drastic action.[6]

Glass was stopped at this point by the police who took his name and claimed that his address was potentially illegal. There was a stormy response when the matter was raised the next day in the South African parliament with demands that Glass be prosecuted and that his activities be curtailed. The matter was not acted upon and there was no prosecution. Andrews was coupled with Glass and also condemned by General Hertzog, the Prime Minister. The speech was a turning point for Glass, but there was one more incident before he quitted the white trade union movement and the South African Labour Party.[7]

In 1926 Glass acted with Andrews when he sued Matthews of the Amalgamated Engineers Union for defamation after it had been asserted that he had manipulated the balance sheet of the SAAEO to ensure the payment of Andrew's salary. The court found for Glass, and Matthews issuing a retraction, paid half Glass's costs. It was a minor event but must have taxed Frank's slender resources. In 1927 Glass resigned from his trade union and from the SAAEO – and his retirement was noted with regret by the executive of that body.[8]

In view of what was to happen later it must be stressed again that Glass and Andrews were then, and later, close friends. That is until 1928 when Glass responded to the journal, the *Militant*, published by former members of the Communist Party of America who had resigned and joined the Left Opposition (or followers of Leon Trotsky). The letter was written to provide a background to the situation in South Africa and stated his position against the Black Republic slogan. He also sent his copy of the journal to Manuel Lopes in Cape Town, the one person who had encouraged Glass to write for the left press (at that time the *Bolshevik*) in Cape Town in the early 1920s.[9]

This was the end of Glass's collaboration with Andrews and henceforth everything he did politically in Johannesburg was in opposition to the CPSA. But this was not the end of Glass's association with the leaders of the ICU. It seems most likely that the remarkable introduction to the ICU Economic and Political Program for 1928 was written by Glass. The opening passage was not only militant, but also asserted the centrality of the black workers in the struggle in South Africa:

> Opponents of the ICU have frequently asserted that the Organization is not a trade union in the sense that the term is generally understood in South Africa, but that it is a kind of pseudo-political body . . . The new constitution . . . definitely establishes the ICU as a trade union, albeit one of native workers . . . at the same time it must be clearly

> understood that we have no intention of copying the stupid and futile 'non-political' attitude of our white contemporaries. As Karl Marx said, every economic question is, in the last analysis, a political question also, and we must recognise that in neglecting to concern ourselves with current politics, in leaving the political machine to the unchallenged control of our class enemies, we are rendering a disservice to those tens of thousands of our members who are groaning under oppressive laws . . . At the present stage of our development it is inevitable that our activities should be almost of an agitational character, for we are not recognised as citizens in our own country, being almost entirely disfranchised and debarred from exercising a say in state affairs closely affecting our lives and welfare.

Despite the sentiments expressed, the ICU was not organized as a trade union and its days were already numbered when the constitution was drafted. The corruption that La Guma had uncovered by 1926 had already destroyed any possibility of effective functioning and Glass was to play no further role in its activities. But its importance for this essay is the position Glass had taken on the role of the black worker.

There the matter would have rested if it had not been for the discussion of this period by R K Cope in his biography of Bill Andrews.[10]

On Rewriting History

When Cope's book appeared in 1944 it was a landmark in working class publication in South Africa. This was the first book that purported to tell the story of the communists of South Africa. It concentrated on the life of one man but, in the absence of any other published history, it provided new material about events that were otherwise unknown to most readers. This was the first published account of the early years of the Labour Party and then, in successive steps, an account of the events leading to the formation of the Communist Party. Those of us outside the CPSA who read the book in 1944, rejected the slavish adulation of the USSR and the Comintern, but were pleased to have some history of the left in South Africa. We also wanted to know more about Andrews, who had been expelled from the CPSA in 1931, and who had been reinstated and was chairman of the party – a party that had achieved respectability by virtue of its support for the war effort.

We were not altogether convinced. There were strange jumps in the book for which wethere were no explanations. It was stated that Andrews was the secretary of the CPSA in 1924. Then, without mention of the party conference, Cope stated on page 296 that Andrews went back to his trade as a fitter in Johannesburg in 1925. There were other problems that were fudged by Cope, but we ignored them. This was the kind of history published by members or sympathisers of the CPSA and we expected no better of Cope.

It was only when I started a study of Frank Glass in 1989 that I noticed, for the first time, a strange omission in Cope's book. In the short section

dealing with the period 1924-30 Glass, Fanny Klenerman and Eva Green are never mentioned. The campaign to affiliate to the SALP, the joint work in the trade unions, and so on are expunged. Even in referring to the expulsions from the CPSA of 1931, which included Andrews, S P Bunting, and others, Cope does not mention Fanny (Klenerman) Glass. Andrews' speech at the ICU meeting in 1927 is quoted but Glass's address is not mentioned, and the suing of Matthews is also missing.

It was only in 1992 that I found a statement, written by Andrews that seemed to provide explanations of the inconsistencies. This old stalwart of the party, one time member of the ECCI, was accused in 1931 of breaching party discipline by attending a May Day rally organized by the Johannesburg United May Day Committee. In his defence, Andrews stated that he had always maintained his 'revolutionary' position and, to this end, he reproduced the text of the speech he had delivered in 1927 at the ICU meeting. Glass's speech was excluded. Cope obviously quoted extensively from the document, not stating his source, and providing only the evidence that Andrews chose to relate.[11] Andrews also stated that he had sued Matthews, a statement that I have not been able to confirm, but again, there is no mention of Glass's role.

None of this helped Andrews at the time. He was ignominiously expelled from the party he had helped to form. He was not an oppositionist and could be expected to accept every new party line. He could also be expected to turn his back on his closest friends if the party demanded it of him. What is important for an understanding of the way members of the CPSA acted is Andrews' selective recording of events to exclude all reference to Glass, his former close comrade and friend, and to even adopt his friend's actions as his own. Glass as a Trotskyist could be obliterated from the record, Fanny Klenerman, Glass's wife and Eva Green, Andrews' one-time lover, could be junked.

In Cope's partial defence it must be said that he interviewed Andrews extensively and received many of the documents he needed for the writing of the book from Andrews. He should have checked against other sources but did not do so. But there is little to be said for Andrews. He used the methods he learnt in the Communist International, lying when necessary in an attempt to save his own position. Compared to the record of the men arraigned in the Moscow Trials of 1937, this was a small lie. In Moscow there was a systematic use of falsehood, leading to the condemnation of those who stood accused in the dock and their inevitable execution.

In terms of South African history the lies used by 'Comrade Bill' introduced a procedure that has marked much of communist writing. Lies, small and large, are apparently permissable to boost the record of that party. If in the process others are maligned or written out of history texts that does not concern such scribes.

In early 1931 Glass sailed for China. The reasons for his going will be discussed in my study of his life – but he was not in the country and had

Andrews' statement been disclosed he was too far away to intervene, or even care about what was said. Glass knew only too well how men had been corrupted by their work for the Comintern.

A history that deliberately excludes people and events is no better than a history that lies. It should have no place in the annals of the socialist movement. Now it must be said: *it is time to set the record straight.*

References

1. Letter from Suzy Weissman to the author. Suzy spoke to Glass, at a Los Angeles sanatorium in 1986, and asked him questions on my behalf, about his South African years. Unfortunately Glass died shortly after this conversation.
2. Department of Justice files, on microfilm at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London.
3. See the article on the 1922 strike in this issue of Searchlight South Africa.
4. Tom Mbeki, originally a member of the Young Communist League, and then a leading member of the ICU, was mentioned in police files as an informer. It is not certain when he assumed this role, but it seems most likely that his craving for alcohol led to his accepting money from the police.
5. See B Hirson and L Vivian, **Strike Across the Empire: The Seamen's Strike of 1925 in Britain, South Africa and Australasia**, Clio Publications, 1992.
6. Report in the **Rand Daily Mail**, 28 March 1927. This incident and the text of the speech was first noted by Peter Wickens, who mentioned it in his history of the ICU, p 131. Wickens did not seem to have known of Cope's book (see above), which was probably banned and unavailable in South Africa when he wrote his book.
7. A fuller account of the activities of Cecil Frank Glass will be found in my book, tentatively entitled Revolutionary in Three Continents, forthcoming.
8. The court documents are available in the State archives, Pretoria
9. See the letter from Lopes to Andrews (below) when he was invited to assist in the formation of the Friends of the Soviet Union.
10. See bibliography for details of publisher, etc
11. Roux does offer some account of the 1924 conference in his biography of S P Bunting, but the account is skimpy and provides no details of the position taken by Glass.

Bibliography

R K Cope (c1944) **Comrade Bill: The Life and Times of W H Andrews, Worker's Leader**, Stewart Printers, Cape Town.

B Hirson, **Revolutionary in Three Continents**, forthcoming.

E Roux (1944), **S P Bunting; A Political Biography**, African Bookman, Cape Town.

P Wickens (1978), **The Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of Africa**, OUP, Cape Town, 1978.

THE 'FRIENDS OF THE SOVIET UNION'

A Letter from M Lopes to Bill Andrews, 1931.[1]

Manuel Lopes was a pioneer members of the Industrial Socialist League in Cape Town, formed in 1916. Manuel became editor of *The Bolshevik*, and one of the first to recognize the talent of Frank Glass.

Lopes was a member of the CPSA from its inception, secretary of the Cape Town section and a keen supporter of the revolutionary agenda of the new Russian state. However, Lopes was also one of the first in South Africa to recognize that socialism could not be built in an isolated backward state.

Although disillusioned by what he perceived to have gone wrong in Russia, Manuel stayed in the CPSA until expelled for opposing the 'Black Republic' slogan.. But when he found no alternative organization, and could find no place in which to build a socialist movement, he veered to the right and joined the Afrikaner based National Party.

There is no excuse for people, steeped in the ideas of the left, who move over to the far right. But so deep was their disillusionment in what they saw coming out of Russia, and those falsehoods repeated by men like Andrews that they abandoned all hope of a socialist agenda. In this they were not unlike intellectuals like Koestler and Silone who rejected communism and contributed essays in the volume, *The God that Failed*. The tragedy is that the process is being repeated today by men and women who watch in despair as the countries they once believed to be socialist, are shown to have been primitive and backwards, unable to compete economically with, never mind outstrip, the west.

In seeing through the fraud represented by those who led organizations like Friends of the Soviet Union in 1931, Lopes still argued in the language of his time. This was borrowed partly from the writings of Leon Trotsky whose criticism of the Stalin regime was still bounded by the belief that the achievements of the revolution of 1917 could be rescued, if only there was a working class movement to rally support for the regime. Lopes might have been correct, but we will never know: the working class movement he called for was never established.

Andrews wrote to Lopes shortly before his own expulsion, suggesting that a branch of the Friends of the Soviet Union be opened in Cape Town in a demonstration of his loyalty to the CPSA and the Comintern. The original has not been found, but Lopes' reply, printed here, was found in the files of the Trades and Labour Council.

Dear Com Andrews,

Many thanks for the reply received from you re Diamond's case which I regret to see is moving towards an unhappy climax. If I can be of any further use, please let me know. Whilst writing, may I state that my brother [also a former member of the CPSA] and I are always keen to be of service to any section of the worker's movement and that at any time we can be of service to you or to the organizations you represent, please let us know. I have read with interest the manifesto of the proposed 'Friends of Soviet Russia' and have considered your invitation to establish a branch here.

A branch [of the FSU] has been established here already, and we are invited to participate but probably could not give it our active support. For the life of me, I cannot see the necessity of militants giving their time and energies to such an organization whilst the political field is left open to opportunists masquerading in the name of Labour and Socialism. You cannot hope to advance the case of militant Labour in South Africa by such a procedure. The defence of the achievements of the Russian workers and peasants can be, and *must* be, in the programme of a real worker's party. of which it forms an important part but yet, *only a part*.

First things first: a real worker's party needs all our time and attention and such a party would undoubtedly support the defence of the USSR, but a separate organization based on such an isolated appeal is unnecessary and at present unjustified.

I may state that the above point of view is that held by a large section of the Left, more especially by the followers of Leon Trotsky.

As I am writing to you personally, may I add that the manifesto reiterates many of the exaggerations broadcast by the ruling regime in Russia. 'Socialism by leaps and bounds' is simply *non est* in Russia today and the slogan 'overtaking and outstripping' capitalist countries is all bunkum and as misleading as the principle of Socialism in one country. Socialism cannot exist in one country any more than capitalism can exist in one country, and the question of Socialism in Russia is one that will find an answer only in the arena of the world revolution. From this view again we see the relative weakness of such bodies as 'Friends of the USSR' with their boasting of Stalinist propaganda and the prime necessity of developing the class consciousness of the workers to the end of the creation of a real worker's revolutionary party which today in South Africa does not exist.

I am sending under separate cover a journal which I am distributing locally and which is devoted to the propagation of the above point of view.

With best wishes,

I remain,

Yours faithfully,

Manuel Lopes.

References

1. This letter, found in the files of the Trades and Labour Council was sent to us by Kevin French.

2. Diamond, a member of the CPSA appeared in court on a charge of 'inciting to violence' after leading a procession of white and black workers on the May Day in 1931 for which Andrews was expelled from the party. Several party members received prison sentences and Diamond received a twelve months prison sentence.

THE GENERAL STRIKE OF 1922

Baruch Hirson

I. Turmoil in South Africa, 1918-1922

The Arrogance of General Smuts

In the years following the First World War the dominant political figure in South Africa was General Smuts. He had returned from Great Britain, where he had been a member of the War Cabinet with a formidable reputation as a soldier, a pacifier, and an arbiter in international affairs. The ruling class in Britain saw this former Boer General as a man with whom they could work and had offered him a permanent position in the British political structure – as a cabinet minister or in the House of Lords.

The stories of his activities in Britain during the war were legion if not always glorious. He had been the only member of the War Cabinet who supported the Generals when they proposed the offensive at Passchendaele in 1917 – a disaster that cost the Allies 400,000 men and the Germans 270,000. As a member of the War Cabinet Smuts persuaded the police in London, munition workers in Coventry, and coal miners in Wales to return to work after they had come out on strike. He helped plan the Middle East strategy, which brought Palestine under British control, and was sent to Hungary to help oust the Communist regime of Bela Kun.[1]

He also tried to change the map of Southern Africa when he proposed to the War Cabinet that South Africa be given Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique) – but had to be content with the mandate of German South West Africa (SWA), the future Namibia. Most important for events that were to follow in South Africa, Smuts took the leading role in setting up an air ministry in Britain in 1917. He unified the various branches of the air service, and was effectively the creator of the Royal Air Force. He was aware then of the importance of aeroplanes as a means of control and submission, and was prepared in 1918 to use this formidable weapon against Africans who were campaigning against the passes on the Rand. The aeroplane was not needed at the time but was used to deadly effect in March 1922 against the white workers, and against the Bondelswarts in South West Africa when they rose against the imposition of new taxes in 1923.

Smuts assumed the premiership of South Africa after the death of General Botha at the end of August 1919, and stamped his authority on the political, economic and social development of the country. This was no easy task. The country's economy was depressed, and inflation was rampant. Rural areas had been devastated by a cycle of droughts and heavy rainfalls, and disease had destroyed livestock and people alike.

There was widespread unrest in African communities throughout South Africa and SWA, and Smuts faced opposition in the Legislative Assembly

from the Afrikaner based National Party (NP) and the South African Labour Party (SALP). Outside the chamber he was challenged by the (white) trade unions and by the South African Native National Congress (SANNC), forerunner of the African National Congress. Old social problems, brushed aside by the war, reappeared and demanded solution – and all that Smuts could provide was exhortation or repression.

The opposition to Smuts in the early 1920s, propelled by different agendas, was fragmented and divided. The black communities, lacking effective national leadership, and divided regionally and ethnically, could not mount an effective campaign against the government for trhe most elementaery of social and political rights. Furthermore, the black urban work force was small in number, mainly unskilled or employed in domestic service, largely migrant, and only concentratedin large numbers in the mines where they were housed and controlled in single-sex compounds.There was as yet only the beginning of an organization torepresent the workers, the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa (the ICU) and it had no presence until 1924 in the industrial and mining heartland of the countrty, the Witwatersrand.

The NP was interested only in protecting the interests of its Afrikaner constituents and had little influence in the tradse unions, while the SALP, pusillanimous and blinkered by its belief in segregation, confined itself largely to parliamentary politicking. The white working class, intent on maintaining its privileges, used its organizational base in the trade unions to fight for its own sectional interests. The struggles they engaged in, against mineowners, industrialists and public services, were bitter, but were circumscribed by remaining inside the arena of white settler society.

Smuts had no hesitation in mobilising the police against industrial or community action – whether black or white. His police suppressed the incipient trade union organised by Masabalala in Port Elizabeth in October 1920, and shot down the religious sect, known as the 'Israelites', at Bulhoek in 1921.[2] At the same time the police in rural areas kept a close watch on dissidents and were prepared to remove those it deemed subversive. In the case of white trade union action, Smuts stood waited for an opportunity to intervene. It was only at a particular historical juncture in 1922, when the white opposition, both nationalist and labour, found common enemies in the Chamber of Mines and Smuts that they campaigned together – although their co-operation was always limited in scope.

The Labour Party, consistent with its segregationist policy ignored,or was opposed to, the struggles of the black population and the white trade unionists were openly hostile to African campaigns. Only the tiny International Socialist League (ISL), and later under its new name as the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), participated in the strikes of Africans on the Rand alongside the SANNC. In particular, the *International*, organ of the ISL and then of the CPSA, gave the strikes of both black and white workers its full, if critical, support. This extended through 1922, until its press

was dismantled by the government during the General Strike. In these events little is known of those who were active in the strikes and were said to be members of the ISL or CPSA. It has never been shown conclusively that persons called communists were indeed members of the party. Yet W H (Bill) Andrews, a leading member of the CPSA, was on one of the smaller (if unofficial) strike committees in 1922 and it is claimed that two of the leaders killed during the revolt of March 1922 were also communists.

David Ivon Jones, the secretary of the ISL, who had been instrumental in forming the first black trade union – the Industrial Workers of Africa (IWA) – and had been behind some of the party's support for the African strikers in 1918, was in Moscow when the miners came out in January 1922 and he took up their cause. He wrote about the strike and subsequent revolt and aimed to raise support in Britain.[3] It is also said that he advised his comrades in South Africa on the course of events, although the slowness of the post would have made it extremely difficult for his letters or articles to reach South Africa in time for them to be considered.

Smuts bombed the white workers into submission but the ultimate effect of that action led directly to the eclipse of Smuts and the replacement of his government by a coalition of the National and Labour Parties. The National Party went on to introduce legislation that made Afrikaans the national language alongside English, changed the South African flag and, more important, allowed Hertzog to introduce his Native Bills (only passed in 1936 with the assistance of Smuts). Hertzog also introduced a 'civilised labour' policy which led to the replacement of some black labour by 'poor whites'.

Nonetheless, the white working class of South Africa suffered a major defeat in 1922, even though the action had been confined mainly to miners, and mostly on the Rand. This boded ill for the Labour Party, which emerged from the strike with little glory, for the miners who were crushed, and for the Communist Party which was reduced to a small sect.

Discontent and Strikes, 1918-21

The existence of centres of disaffection in South Africa after 1918 owed much to the state of depression in the economy, the prolonged droughts in the countryside and the despair felt in many communities. But there was also a continuity in anti-governmental agitation that extended through the war years. There had been confrontations between the peasants of the eastern Cape and the administration over the dipping of cattle at the beginning of the war. The groundswell of discontent was never extinguished and was exacerbated in the countryside by disease, afflicting both livestock and people alike which, together with drought, left the population impoverished. Opposition to government agents emerged openly in 1917 when the report of a commission on land holdings (by Africans) was published, leading to the publication of a new Native Land Act and, even more ominously, a Native Affairs Ad-

ministration Bill which aimed at forcing all Africans, except those under contract, out of the towns.[4]

Writing to Lord Bryce on 23 March 1917, John X Merriman, a contender for the Prime Ministership of the Union of South Africa in 1910, spoke of the tensions in the country.

> We are struggling with our session. The bitterness of the anti-English faction is incredible, quite equal to the Irish sample . . . Just at this moment, as if the division between the European sections was not enough, we are called upon to consider a most ill-judged measure of Native administration, the object of which professes to be the segregation of the European and non-European, and the relegation of the latter to special areas. The effect of this, if it could be carried out – which is impossible – would be to reduce the Native to the condition of serfs – at least that is the opinion of the Native leaders and their friends . . .

Predicting that if persisted upon, the new Act could lead to a cycle of unrest, he said that 'No legislative barriers can stop the Native tide from rising'. He concluded

> The experiment of a white race settling in Africa is by no means assured, and unless we mend our ways we may go the same way in the South that the Romans and the Greek, the Carthaginian and the Vandal, did in the North; or at best we may become an African Mexico.[5]

This was a most prescient observation by one of South Africa's leading statesmen.

Merriman was not alone in his foreboding. Official dispatches from the Governor-General, Lord Buxton, to the Colonial Office and reports in the Department of Justice (DoJ) files in the post-war period were filled with reports from police and informers, some serious, others trivial, of populist leaders who were said to be rallying supporters with a series of demands. The reports also showed that communists (or 'bolsheviks' as they were called) were kept under close surveillance and that Ministers were considering the introduction of anti-communist legislation.[6]

The same DoJ files also mentioned groups of whites who had been opposed to South Africa's participation in the war and were organizing a revolt which would lead to the declaration of a Republic. It is not certain how far the police saw conspiracies behind every bush. In their reports the detectives and informers undoubtedly exaggerated and provided alarmist accounts of 'menacing' events, but there can be no doubt about the discontent in the country. The government took the threat seriously. On 1 July 1918, the Prime Minister, General Smuts, issued a manifesto calling on all loyal citizens to stand by the government.[7]

The DoJ files included accounts from across the country of individuals who were said to be agitators. Some were men returned from the war who complained of their treatment in France and predicted the imminent arrival

of Germans or Americans to liberate the African people. Some urged their communities to kill local farmers or demand their land back, claim the right to better conditions or refuse to quit the land when farmers gave them notice. There were other demands: for higher wages and for campaigns against, the pass laws, bachelor and house taxes, railway and tramway regulations, and against the inadequacies of schooling. There were many reports of speeches by 'agitators', many of them inflammatory. Preacher Ngobeza from the Standerton district (in the eastern Transvaal), in a speech in March 1921, was reported to have said

> the white people had no right to be here. and the white man who says that he has got a farm here must roll it up, put it in a train and spread it in the land where he comes from.
>
> He also urges a general strike by all members of the Congress, if the whites got cross and used force they would make war.

There were also reports on the formation of the ICU and its activities in the Cape Town docks and accounts of the protests in Port Elizabeth (the Masabalala 'affair'), in which a large crowd of Africans gathered to protest against the imprisonment of their leader. When a petition for his release was arbitrarily rejected there were scuffles followed by a shooting spree in which the police and armed civilians killed 23 and wounded 126. But the most urgent communications came from the Witwatersrand.[7]

There were strikes of African workers on the Witwatersrand between 1918 and 1920 and although there was an embryonic general workers union, known as the Industrial Workers of Africa (IWA), organized by the International Socialist League, it collapsed in 1918. The involvement of its members in subsequent strikes is unclear, but most industrial action appeared to be spontaneous, was disciplined and was well led.

Industrial action by black workers commenced in February 1918, with the boycott of the stores on mines in Benoni. This action spread rapidly across the Witwatersrand and at one stage 15 mines were affected. The workers, who found that money had depreciated during the war by 50 per cent or more, complained that prices were too high and rejected statements of white officials that the increases were due to the war and that whites were also affected. Reporting from Benoni, one detective said:

> At first it was thought that only east coast Natives were involved, but all tribes were involved, *and each tribe had its own system of picketing.* (my stress)

Indeed, on the mines, although there were few signs of discord between ethnic groups, there is evidence of ethnic leaders organizing and leading their compatriots. Thus a copy of a 'Notice to Natives', found in the Department of Justice files, reads:

> I beg of you people of Gaza [east coasters] that a person seen going to the Jew stores [that is, the mine concession stores] on Tuesday must be thrashed and the articles that they bought taken away from them and if a purse it must be thrown away and if a blanket it must be torn.

If one of a tribe goes and buys the whole tribe will be included
I finish here.[8]

The nature of the boycott varied from mine to mine. Africans confined to the compounds tried, in some cases, to break out and attack the stores. They were driven back by police. In Springs a large number of women marched on the store and threatened to break it up. Once again the police intervened to stop the destruction. And in Brakpan 600 Shangane workers marched to the Charge Office to demand their release [from their contracts]. They were driven back by mounted police.

The boycott was not a success, even if a few prices were lowered. Within a few weeks it was all over, some men were jailed, and conditions on the mines remained as before.[9]

There were innumerable small strikes in 1918, often involving a small number of workers. Then, in the middle of the year, following a successful strike by white municipal workers, the 'bucket boys' or night soil workers (and also municipal workers) came out on strike. They were arrested and given two month's prison sentences with hard labour. The magistrate warned them that they would be required to resume their normal work, under armed guards and without pay. If they refused to work they would be flogged, if they tried to escape they would be shot. This was too much. The clamour for their release forced the hand of the Prime Minister and they were freed.

The agitation over the bucket workers led to a demand by the SANNC for an overall increase of wages by 1s per day, to be enforced, if necessary, by a general strike from 1 July. The response was overwhelming. Selope Thema, a Congress leader, writing about the event a decade later, said that at the time all the Transvaal African population was seething with dissatisfaction and a general uprising was feared. Saul Msane, Secretary-General of the SANNC who condemned the call for a strike, was stigmatised as *Isita wa Bantu* (enemy of the people).[10]

An American missionary, Rev Ray Phillips, who claimed that he assisted in defusing the militancy, said subsequently that:

> We attended some of their meetings; heard the disappointment and despair clothed in lurid language by the leaders.
>
> 'We'll never get anything out of the white man', they cried, 'except by violence . . .'
>
> A strike was organized at the Village Main Reef Mine. Five thousand native workers refused to work on a certain morning. A lightning strike! It was only on the third day that they were forced back to their work at the point of a bayonet. The strike failed of its purpose – but it was a glorious success in the minds of the leaders. Why? Why, because it demonstrated that *they could do it*! . . .
>
> A new strike was being talked about, but on a larger scale. Now all the 200,000 mine workers were to be organized. Not only that, but every shop worker, every house-boy, every kitchen servant – the whole

> 300,000 and more [urban residents] were to be enlisted and instructed as to their part.
> Then one dark night, as the white folks slept, the compound gates were all to be opened, the mines captured; looted; every shop to be raided; banks broken open; and in every home the white people were to be disposed of quietly in their beds! That day – THE DAY! – Johannesburg with all its mines, buildings, homes, *everything*, would be in black hands.

Claiming that he and his friends had heard things that were not heard by others, he set about winning the confidence of the leaders.[11] By the time the 'revolt' was due to begin the firebrands of Congress had second thoughts and were tamed. This had as much to do with the arrest of two leading members of Congress as with the intervention of Rev Phillips. Yet Phillips and others who formed discussion clubs and a Joint Council of Europeans and Natives, to placate the 'hotheads', undoubtedly made a profound impression on the new educated elite. Nonetheless, despite Phillips' diversions and the consequent dampening of militancy, the SANNC, and particularly the Transvaal section, still faced a constituency that demanded militant action.

The first months of 1919 were marked by widespread strikes, pass burnings, and riots by African workers. In Bloemfontein a strike for a minimum daily wage of 4s 6d, centred in the black township, failed, but it led to the formation of the first ot two bodies known as the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa (ICU). Then, in March 1919 the Transvaal Native Congress resolved to campaign against the pass laws and renewed the demand for higher wages. Action followed almost immediately. On Sunday, 30th March, after addressing a meeting at Vrededorp, Johannesburg, Congress leaders collected passes from those present. On Monday several hundred men gathered at the pass office, where once again passes were collected and destroyed. Those who would not comply had their passes taken, were instructed not to carry passes again, and told to demand more pay. Groups of 20-30 men, and some women, then scoured the town, collecting passes from men they saw. Once again the men were told to demand higher wages. The police tried to round up the groups and succeeded in some cases, in retrieving hundreds of passes. All those arrested gave their names as 'Congress'. Concurrently, a Civil Guard was organised to assist the police.

The campaign escalated on Tuesday when a meeting in Vrededorp resolved to pull working men out of the workshops, and to pay special attention to the Municipal Compounds and the mines. Delegates at the meeting came from several Transvaal towns and they too were instructed to collect passes in their own towns and get the men to leave work. As a measure of intimidation the South African Mounted Riflemen (SAMR) were brought to Johannesburg from Pretoria, and were used outside the courts on Thursday 3 April when the crowd tried to release those who had been arrested.

The campaign could not succeed and Congress leaders stayed away from rallies after the arrests. Nonetheless the defiant spirit remained and was to fuel further struggles, particularly on the mines. There are too few available accounts of the responses to the campaign among the people involved. The one account left in police reports was resonant with the women portrayed in Aristophanes' play *Lysistrata*. A Miss Kekane, speaking on 29 April, after having been released from jail because of her participation in the anti-pass campaign, urged her listeners to carry on the fight, saying that the women would help the men. She ended by declaring

> If any man comes to me and says he loves me and I find that he has a pass I shall kill him stone dead as I don't want this pass.

The response of men who might have 'loved her' is not recorded.

It was suggested at the time that the SANNC was using the strike of white tramway men and power station engineers for higher wages in Johannesburg to further their own aims. The strikers, who had set up a Board of Control (the body that was dubbed a 'soviet') stopped the lights and trams in the town for two days before the town council capitulated. Yet the decision to launch the anti-pass campaign preceded the strike and there was little sympathy for the black workers from either the Board of Control, or the white strikers. Many black passers-by in Johannesburg were assaulted by the whites who met to cheer their 'soviet' in the Town Hall. The central strike committee further showed its contempt by offering assistance to the authorities 'to prevent outrages on white women and children'.[12]

The struggle was far from over. The clamour in the countryside rose in intensity as drought gripped South Africa and Mozambique. The country had experienced a cycle of droughts and heavy rainfall (which washed away the crops) since 1912, and the situation had been worsened by cattle disease and finally by the post war influenza epidemic. Men on the mines and in the towns received even more urgent requests for money from their families. Yet, despite the inflation, there had been no increase in wages. Mineworkers, house servants, shop workers, dockers and clerks, all clamoured for increased wages, and many linked their disabilities to the notorious pass laws.

There were strikes in several towns but the storm centre remained the Witwatersrand. In rapid succession black miners, sanitary workers, house servants and others came out on strike, and in almost every case faced opposition from the white workers, leading at times to open conflict in the streets.

The black miners, whose strike was by far the most important, witnessed a pay increase of 8s a day for white workers after they threatened to strike. Africans were given an increase of 3d per shift. This was beneath contempt and the workers were incensed. Then, starting on 10 February, after the price of cigarettes increased by 3d to 8d per packet, African miners boycotted the concession stores. This continued for several days and in some cases was accompanied by rioting. On the 11th the first strike took place.[13] On 20 February the *Rand Daily Mail* noted that there was a marked degree of

cohesion among the workers who had a 'system of picketing which has been sufficiently complete to prevent numerous peaceably inclined and satisfied Natives from going to work'. By Saturday the 21st eleven mines were out involving 42,000 men. On Sunday the SANNC called a meeting at which 2,500 were present, with a few representatives from the mines. The meeting expressed its solidarity with the miners' demand for higher wages and urged the workers to avoid violence. This was one of the few occasions in which Congress leaders called for solidarity: otherwise they had little effect on the course of events.

The miners, confined to the compounds, faced constant provocation from the police who searched the men for weapons and arrested strike leaders. Generally the workers kept the peace although, at the Village Deep mine, there was a scuffle which led to shooting and a bayonet charge: three Africans were killed, and forty-seven injured, twelve of them whites. But as the strike continued, bringing out a total of about 80,000 (with a maximum of about 40,000 on any one day), men were forced down the shafts with rifle butts and sometimes with fixed bayonets.

The white miners did not strike, and did not stay neutral. Their union recommended to their members that they

> carry on operations on the mines as usual . . . provided it is the wish of the management' [and furthermore] that . . . they uphold the maintenance of the colour bar as at present constituted, and deprecate any attempt made to imperil it; and recommend the strongest possible measure to combat any such attempt.

As it was *the wish*, the white miners went underground and, when necessary, did the unskilled work to get the gold ore out with the rock. The tension between white and black workers grew as the strike crumbled. A the beginning of March black workers at the Spring Mines *offered to work for a week without the help of the whites, and guaranteed to double production*. It is not certain whether this offer was repeated elsewhere, but it marked a turning point in the claim by African workers to a more responsible and permanent position in the productive process. If the challenge had been accepted by the mine managers the status of Africans in the mines would have been altered irrevocably and a permanent work force would have taken over from migrant (and recruited) labour. Yet the offer was spurned despite the repeated efforts by the mine owners to reduce the number of white workers. It was either felt inexpedient to antagonise the white workers at the time, or the management felt that any response to the black workers during a period of industrial action, would be used asc a lever to win further concessions for the migrant workers. The white workers responded angrily and as a consequence it was reported that there was an increase of violence and assaults underground. [14]

Only the ISL issued leaflets calling on white workers not to scab, but to no avail. The appeal was ignored and without support, and without centralised organization, the great strike crumbled.

The government had anticipated some of the reactions to post-war discontent and took steps to contain any disturbances. In the immediate aftermath of the peace settlement in Europe, Lord Milner at the Colonial Office received continued reports from the Governor-General, Lord Buxton, who kept him informed of strikes and disturbances, and sent newspaper cuttings and reports of speeches. In March and April 1919 Buxton sent details of widespread strikes by whites in the building trade on the Rand and Pretoria and of the tramway men and power workers in Johannesburg – leading to the establishment of the 'Soviet' by the strike committee. There was also mention of strikes, or threats of strikes, on some mines, among hairdressers, bank clerks and others. The dispatches were routine, but there was a note of urgency after Buxton received a request from the Minister of Native Affairs, F S Malan, on 3 April for aeroplanes, bombs, explosives and flares for use against Africans if the situation got out of hand.

A telegram from Buxton, received in London on 5 April, was more explicit. He said that the government wanted Lt Gearing and his aeroplane (then on show in South Africa) to be made available for demonstration and moral purpose on Africans if they got out of hand. This was because the South African Defence Force had no planes and no pilots. Buxton had agreed, if the Minister asked for it,

> on the clear understanding that it will not be used except in connection with serious disturbances among natives, and that its use is not required or requested in connection with any European disturbances, that its main object of utilising its services is the moral effect on the natives . . .

He also added that Lt Gearing could only use bombs or guns under stringent conditions, and in 'extreme necessity' . . . Lord Milner gave his approval two days later.[15] The South African government did not require the aeroplanes on this occasion and made no request for the services of Lt Gearing or his plane. In March 1922, just three years later, Smuts used the South African Air Force's aeroplanes to bomb white strikers into submission.

Apart from the SANNC, the only group, that gave its support to the strikes, or was sympathetic to African demands was the ISL. Its full involvement was concealed to avoid legal action. Consequently, statements in the *International* denied involvement in the events of 1918-20. This was not corrected in subsequent publications although Jones, in his report on *Communism in South Africa*, written in March 1921, said that

> In 1918 the propaganda of the IWA [the communist-formed general worker's union] and the pressure of the rising cost of living, produced a considerable strike movement among the native municipal workers, and a general movement for the tearing up of passports. Hundreds of natives who had burned up their passes were jailed every day, and the prisons were full to bursting. Gatherings of native men and women were clubbed down by the mounted police.

... But the most portentous event so far in the awakening of the native workers was the great strike of mine workers on the Rand in March, 1920 ... For the time being all the old tribal feuds were forgotten, and Zulu and Shangaan came out on strike together irrespective of tribal distinction to the number of 80,000. Without leaders, without organisation, hemmed in their compounds by the armed police, the flame of revolt died down, not without one or two bloody incidents in which the armed thugs of the law distinguished themselves for their savagery.

The mining industry has been wobbling in its attitude towards the educational and civil advancement of the natives. Hindered by political organizations, and the Frankenstein of race prejudice which it has itself conjured up, the Chamber of Mines hesitated in its desire to reduce working costs by opening the higher industrial employments to native and coloured men. In the last few years the *Star*, the Chamber of Mines' daily, has incessantly declared in favour of the civil advancement of the natives, vigorously attacking the white unions for the denial of opportunity to the native worker. These appeals, made in the interest of lower working costs, are nevertheless unanswerable in logic from the Labour point of view. The native does not care what the motive may be. He sees in his economic exploiters the champions of his civil rights. Now that the capitalist parties are safely seated in the government saddle we may look forward to steps being taken to realise the programme.

II. Strike and Revolt on the Rand

The General Strike of 1922

The General strike of 1922 was one of the most traumatic events in the struggles of the mainly white working class against their employers and the South African state.

Although it started as a dispute against wage cuts on the mines, the strike developed into a revolt and ended with the aerial bombardment of portions of Johannesburg and the Witwatersrand. The workers were pounded into defeat, leaders of the strike were killed (or ostensibly committed suicide) and three men died on the scaffold.

It was a pitiless struggle, leaving the organizations that had been actively engaged in the strike severely weakened. The trade union movement went through a period of dormancy and the white miner's organization, almost destroyed as a result of the strike, was effectively incorporated into the state machinery. The Communist Party suffered a decline that left it ineffective over many years. The strike also had a profound effect on the political future of South Africa. The incumbent government of General Smuts was defeated

at the polls by a coalition government of the National and the Labour Parties in 1924 – leaving the way open for National Party hegemony, until it merged with the South African Party (led by Smuts) in 1934.

Despite or perhaps because of the centrality of this event in labour history, interpretations of the nature of the strike and the response of the labour movement towards it have undergone a sea-change. Through the 1920s and 1930s, at least, most members of the Communist Party averred that this was an outstanding example of the struggle between the ruling class and the workers, even though there were racist aspects that were deplorable. The Trotskyists did not dissent. The *Spark*, organ of the Workers Party of South Africa, carried an article on the strike, in November 1935, in which it described the struggle as one between classes, and commemorated the strike as one of the great events in working class history. Edward Roux, in his biography of S P Bunting, and one of the pioneer young communists who demanded that the party organize Africans in the early 1920s, was more critical of the communist position in 1922. Yet he also took the position that, wrong as some of the party had been, they had been correct in supporting the strike.

This interpretation was altered after the Second World War. when the Communist Party dropped talk of class struggle and made the 'national' struggle its priority. The strike was then found to be only racist and therefore reactionary. Smuts's onslaught, the bombing of working class positions, the arrests and trials of thousands of strikers and the crippling of the trade union movement was removed from historical memory. The event was far more complex than a black or white account would suggest and merits a reinvestigation, returning to the views of those who were involved at the time.

The Origin of the Strike of 1922[16]

Employers in South Africa, caught in the post-war depression, had called for the replacement of white workers by blacks. In July 1921, E J Way, president of the Institute of Engineers, spoke for many when he called for the removal of half the white workers and the employment of skilled black labour. He said the ending of the 'sentimental colour bar' would save over £1m per year: £419,000 in wages, and £600,000 for the recruitment of black labour. If labour costs were lowered, low grade gold mines could be reworked and other areas, idle for want of capital, would also be opened.

Jones in his report on *Communism in South Africa*, offered a different perspective on the urgent need of the employers to replace the white workers. He said that

> During the war, the capitalists, urged by the necessity of keeping up gold production, discovered that it paid them to regard the white workers as an unofficial garrison over the far larger mass of black labour, and that it was not bad business to keep the two sections politically apart by paying liberally the white out of the miserably underpaid

> labour of the black . . . The premium on the mint price of gold enabled the Chamber of Mines to keep up this policy of economic bribery till the end of last year. Now it seems as if it had come to an end. The bribe fund has petered out. The premium on the mint price of gold is being reduced and under the threat of closing down the non-paying mines the white miners are compelled to accept lower pay. During the last few months there have been unofficial strikes [at the Simmer Deep last year] . . . The mines have withdrawn the 'stop-order' system . . . [This deduction by the employers of trade union fees had made] the Union an adjunct of the Chamber of Mines. Now this 'privilege' has been withdrawn as a measure to weaken the none too pliant membership.

In December 1921 the mines, the electrical power stations (the Victoria Falls and Transvaal Power Company or VFP) and the engineering companies announced wage cuts and an end to piecework and underground contracts for white workers, from January. It was also widely held that the colour bar, which guaranteed white workers their jobs on the mines, would be scrapped. All attempts by the Mine Workers Union and the South African Industrial Federation (SAIF) to secure arbitration was rejected by the Chamber of Mines, saying that no outside arbiter could judge the financial position of the mines. The workers responded by calling for a strike. On 31 December they set up an Augmented [strike] Executive, consisting of the executive of the SAIF and representatives from forty affiliated unions, under the chairmanship of Joe Thompson, The white coal miners came out on 2 January and, in one of their most myopic of moves, told black workers to stay out of the struggle. There was no call for solidarity action. Supervised by officials, the black workers supplied the country's coal without any difficulty. The offer that had been made by Africans on the Springs mine in 1920, to work without the white miners was now put into effect. Yet even this was of short duration and the *status quo ante* was soon restored.

On 3 January the Chamber announced plans to axe 2,000 white miners and it was rumoured that larger numbers would be made redundant. On the 9th over 20,000 men answered the strike call, closing mines, some private engineering firms and all VFP stations, except Rosherville – which supplied power only for pumping and lighting in the mines. Despite some regional defections, most stayed out throughout the strike. Negotiations to end the strike, which extended from 15-27 January, failed to reach any agreement.

Old themes resurfaced during the strike. Bunting reported that at many meetings there was talk of the killer disease phthisis, over which they had struck work in 1913. Men said, 'We have but a few years to live in any case; we may as well stop a bullet as linger in mortal disease'. The memory of 1913/14 was ever-present: a banner carried at a funeral procession in Boksburg for two men shot dead stated 'Remember 1913'; and a SAIF banner read 'Remember our Comrades murdered in 1913'.[17]

The strikers of 1922 were bitter. From the beginning they declared this to be no 'ordinary strike'. It was a strike 'for the future of South Africa, a strike

in which all selfishness has been cast aside', said Thompson. Frederick Creswell, the leader of the Labour Party, declared in mid-February that the strikers were fighting so 'that the industries of South Africa should be conducted on lines contributing to the mass of the people . . . they should from all classes receive the fullest support and financial help'.[18]

Jack Cowan, Mayor of Springs and a former trade unionist, addressing a meeting of strikers on 5 February, was even more emphatic.

> Rather than go down in the struggle we are prepared as a last weapon to have a revolution . . . There have been two wars in my lifetime, and I have fought in both . . . If it comes to fighting, and God forgive that it should, I am going to do a bit of fighting for myself this time. I have done enough for the other side. I have always recognised and supported governments, but when governments want to down you and your children, and when Smuts, the Prime Minister, is backing the Chamber of Mines to put the white standard of South Africa in the background and the Black standard in the foreground, it is time for every man to put his thinking cap on . . . if we have to fight . . . some of us will go down, but . . . in a year or two, half the people in this hall will go down with phthisis. What is the difference between having to go down a hole to die or having to die fighting for a chance for your kiddies.[19]

The trade union movement was in financial difficulties when the strike began. The SAIF and the South African Mine Workers Union were penniless and although some unions, including the Boilermakers, Reduction workers, Woodworkers and Engine drivers Unions were better placed, most were unable to provide strike pay. Consequently a central fund was set up for the alleviation of distress among miners who were in need of food. Street collections, plays, dances and horse races were organized to raise funds. Contribution came from sections of the white middle class and, more importantly, from farmers who sent provisions over several weeks, alleviating the conditions under which the miners lived.[20]

The Augmented Executive was large and unwieldy and there was little consensus on the strike or its progress. Only a few of the affiliated unions came out on strike and only a small number agreed to come out if called upon. The National Union of Railways and Harbour Servants did not join the strike and the trains carried troops from coastal towns to the Witwatersrand without hindrance. Despite sympathy for the miners and resentment over pay and working hours, strikes on the railways were illegal and those that came out would lose their privileges as civil servants.[21] The Typographers also continued work, printing anti-strike commentaries in the newspapers. There was no popular paper providing strike news and support for the strike until the *Transvaal Post* appeared on 13 February. The paper claimed to be 'The Champion of an economically free South Afria' and declared that it was fighting for 'the supremacy of the White Race'.[22]

In protest against the use of scabs, public amenities were cut off: power workers walked out in Johannesburg plunging the city into darkness until volunteers got the machines working again.[23] By the end of February trams had stopped running in Johannesburg and squads of commandos marched around the town, watched by police who kept them moving. Seven hundred special police, paid and armed, were used to protect mine property and there were reports of attempted train wrecking, of train derailments and of power pylons being dynamited.

Headlines in the press proclaimed: 'An Organized Revolution', 'Red Regime Atrocities', 'Unadulterated Bolshevism', 'Lenin's Last Desperate Attempt'. A journalist writing on the strike said:

> Today Johannesburg is only dimly beginning to know that it has escaped from the foul conspiracy which seized on the strike as a means of Bolshevism . . . As an individual who witnessed the growth of violence, who has seen the attitude of Bolshevists, who has seen the mob defiance of the police, who has witnessed the attacks on Natives . . . and who has day by day wondered at this plague of unredeemed brutality of men and women, I say there was a calculated design to repeat on the Rand the unnatural outbreak of crime in Russia that horrified the entire world.[24]

Support from the white middle class for the strikers did not last. The average Johannesburg citizen, inconvenienced by the stoppages, joined the special constable force to protect persons and property, and to reduce the effectiveness of scab hunters. The farmers' patience also wore thin, particularly as their donations of food drained their resources. They sent less and less to the strikers and some warned that they would (and subsequently did) answer Smuts' call to join with the armed forces to end the strike.[25]

On 13 February Smuts, representing the government, met a deputation but refused their moderate requests to end the strike. He insisted that the miners go back and accept the best terms available to them, pending a parliamentary settlement.[26]

The Commandos

While the trade union leadership was obviously failing to advance the worker's cause, groups of strikers, formed in mid-January and known as commandos, were growing in strength and in influence. Organised on semi-military lines (but lacking arms in most cases), they had elected commandants, generals and captains. They were present in districts and sub-districts and in every town on the Witwatersrand. Although they kept in touch with the local strike committees, and some were formed by trade unions, they acted autonomously. Some were peaceable, others wanted to settle matters by force. Initially they were straggly bands of men, but former officers with war-time experience instilled discipline.

> As soon as commandos had learnt to march in columns, they eagerly showed their smartness to the public, and to other commandos. Soon they were marching through public streets to mass demonstrations, each commando headed by buglers, a mounted section on horses, and then the 'infantry' on column of route. After the infantry came the cycle and motor cycle section, which formed the dispatch riding, scouting, and later, in some cases the dynamite laying section of the commandos.[27]

The first commando, composed of smallholders at Putfontein on the East Rand, were all republicans. On the night of 18 January they disarmed and imprisoned two policemen guarding a pump house near Modder East mine, and after merging with another armed commando resolved to attack police camps on the East Rand. This was vetoed by union leaders who ordered the guns restored. Yet, at the end of January, 500 men paraded in military formation at Fordsburg (Johannesburg). The commandos said that they proposed preserving the peace and good order, stop scabbing, protect property, and added that they would defend white society against black marauders. The men were trained to unseat horsemen and taught how to make bombs but, for the first three to four weeks, they remained friendly with the police. Their fight, they said, was against the magnates, not the authority of the state. This attitude changed after 4 February when there were reports of widespread scabbing in several coal fields. The SAIF called meetings across the Rand to get workers to stand fast, but this was countered by General Smuts' assurance that adequate protection would be afforded scabs to restart the mines. He brought in the police and, in response to this, the commandos were mobilised.

The state took steps to stop the commandos. A proclamation signed by Colonel Theo G Truter, the Commissioner of Police, on 7 February, stated:

> The use of bodies of men such as commandos to pull out officials working on essential services constitutes a crime of public violence, and every person who forms a unit of such body or commando, or who counsels, instigates or incites to the commission of such act is guilty of the crime of public violence, and would, if convicted by the courts, be subject to heavy punishment. The police have been instructed to take action in all such cases.[28]

The leader writer of the *International*, writing before the proclamation was issued, but published on 10 February, had no doubt about the importance of the commandos, even if they did make some mistakes.

> The Red Flag commandos of the Rand are a real contribution to working class weapons and one for which . . . there is no precedent in the industrial history of the English-speaking working class at any rate. . . . We salute you Red Guards of the Rand! You are better men on 'commandos' then you ever were in the stopes and shops. It is fit and proper that you should appropriate the military formation and discipline hitherto monopolised in your master's cause, for your own.

> You are learning to discard what masters and pastors had taught you, the lies that soldiering must mean soldiering for the bosses and their pirate flags. You are teaching yourselves and your fellow-workers of the world that there is only one army worth joining, the Red Army, and only one cause worth living and dying for, the cause of the Red Flag, which alone can ennoble war and bloodshed.

Truter's proclamation did not stop the formation or the mobilization of the commandos, but it did have an effect on some of the strikers. From 8 February it was reported that men on several gold mines approached the managers with an aim to ending the strike. Also, the police were ready and pickets (who worked with the commandos) were arrested. By the middle of February picketing had almost stopped although, on a few occasions, there were clashes with police. In Boksburg, where the police fired on the crowd, a number of strikers were killed.

Jones viewed the issues involved in terms similar to that of editorials in the *International* – presumably written by W H Andrews. He said that the commandos were 'in open preparation for an armed conflict ... they intimidated and arrested scabs and had them tried at the Trades Hall, and they set up Red Cross sections in preparation for battle. Women's commandos were formed and one of them tried to get the operators out of the central telephone exchange.[29] After skirmishes with government troops, he said, commandos took possession of some white working class suburbs, but the strike committee was split: some wished to limit the action, others prepared for the expected bloody conflict.

The government was determined to smash the strike and had been preparing for a show-down even before the strike began. The Defence Committee of Trade Unions, composed of trade unionists reporting on the events of 1922, said in their findings that the 1914 Martial Law proclamation was carefully revised and printed as early as the 30th January 1922. The Minister of Defence, not to be outdone, boasted on 8 April that he 'had been prepared for this affair from the1st of January not only (*sic*) from the 30th'. He did not indicate what these preparations involved, nor did he say when the air force was put on the alert.

Smuts also defended his approach in Parliament. When NP leaders said on 17 February that the strikers' aim was to prevent a curtailment of their sphere of work, he claimed that most workers opposed the strike and that the mines were being worked out and increased costs required cuts. To maintain a white South Africa (on which he said he agreed with the opposition), a lower scale of living was needed. That is:

> White South Africa would be immediately more helped by the maintenance of the low-grade mines in full force, and the whole of the gold mining industry at work, rather than by the retention of the *status quo* agreement [namely, the ratio of whites to blacks employed underground].[30]

Revolt . . . 'For a 'hite South Africa'

The revolt on the Rand was confined exclusively to whites. Despite the presence of Africans at some of the rallies they were not involved in the strikes or in the revolt that followed. Nor was there any appeal to black workers to join the strike, although some white miners condemned African workers for scabbing.. Consequently it can come as no surprise that there was no support from any black organization, or that the leaders of the SANNC, except for one letter from the Transvaal sectionappealing for an increase of wages for the workers, stood aloof from the struggle. Only some African chiefs and headmen, summoned by the Native Recruiting Corporation, who toured the compounds to quite the movement down[31] There is no statement on the strike in documents of the organization available to me Other movements were more forthcoming.

Dr Abdurhaman, the leader of the African Peoples Organisation (APO), condemned the strike and the crimes of white labour. The white workers, he claimed, were only interested in preserving their privileged position in industry and had been content before their own wages had been cut. They had done nothing to improve the wage packet of black workers on the mines. [32] The ICU, which was not yet organized in the Transvaal, could only speak from afar. At a meeting in Cape Town (no date given), Kadalie 'condemned the attacks on non-Europeans' and called on the government to protect the people. He also 'blamed the colour bar for the trouble on the Rand, and demanded its abolition'. When there were calls from the strikers for an armed revolt,

> the ICU called on non-whites to be loyal to the government, King, and country. On its side the government assurd the country that the Africans had done nothing to cause trouble.[33]

This accolade from the government would not prevent Smuts from proceeding with discriminatory legislation after the white workers had been dealt with. But for the duration of the strike he was assured of black support and the white workers, contemptuous of the blacks, seemed oblivious of the consequences of their policies and actions.

The slogan 'For a White Africa' appeared everywhere during the strike and, in retrospect, this stamped the events of 1922 as racist. For many of the strikers the slogan was undoubtedly racist but the issue, as seen in 1922, was more complex. The interpretation given to this slogan by many trade unionists, and by the CPSA, was related to the prevailing standard of living of whites, and the contrasting conditions under which blacks lived. With white miners earning seven to ten times more than blacks, their replacement would increase the mines' profitability considerably. It would also lower wage levels and reduce all standards of living. The position of the CPSA was spelt out in an editorial in the *International* of Friday 27 January 1922

> Natives at starvation wages, that is the thing to attack: that is what ruins the white standard. Well, then, if you want 'White South Africa', your

campaign . . . must be rather in the direction of encouraging native labour to become 'unpayably expensive'. . .
The white workers are under a very real and proper fear of competition from this cheap labour: in fact, except for a few skilled trades and the protection of the colour bar, they cannot compete with it under capitalism, and in fighting for the colour bar, they are at best fighting only a rearguard action . . .
Fellow workers, ask yourself, am I really for the whites as whites – landlords, magnates, profiteers, exploiters and all – or am I rather for the workers as workers, white, brown, yellow, black and all – and against the capitalists as capitalists – THE ONLY REAL BLACK MAN?
It is not in the spirit of the Voortrekkers who conquered Dingaan . . . that you will achieve a White South Africa. It is in the spirit of the humble but very determined industrial proletariat of Russia, who overthrew the master class and made work, for the common good, the one condition of 'status'. There is no . . . future for the white workers under capitalism. Communism alone can make South Africa a white man's country, in the sense that Communism alone can secure to every worker – whatever his colour – the full product of his labour. Only when that is secured will a White man be safe: only then can you begin to talk of a 'White Souh Africa'.[34]

By using the slogan of the day, the writer of the editorial came close to endorsing the worst aspects of white supremacy. All the attempts to swing the argument against the capitalists ('the only real black man'!) used the same race prejudices that afflicted white society. Despite appeals to revolutionary events in Russia, and rational arguments against trying to hold onto an unreal status quo, the party's definition of a 'white South Africa' was fatally flawed.

Jones started on a different premise. In his article on the 1922 strike he condemned the British press, either for its silence, or for its reports justifying the massacre of workers. 'International finance', he said, 'looks after its own'. The strike, which continued for eight weeks, presented 'lessons of great importance' for the international working class, because

(1) It presents us with the problem of colour prejudice within the ranks of the workers in its acutest form, there, where the conditions for its solution are already maturing.
(2) It is the first great armed revolt of the workers on any scale in the British Empire.
(3) It presents one of the most striking examples of the use of the aeroplane as the supreme capitalist weapon against the workers, and suggests serious problems for the military mechanics of revolution.
(4) It is a victory for imperialist capital, on the one hand extending its tenure of life by expansion, on the other performing a revolutionary role by drawing in still wider masses of the backward peoples into the world movement.

Yet Jones's analysis proceeded on the premise, stated in earlier debates, that the white workers stood at the forefront of the South African revolution, an argument that was generally accepted and dominated policy in 1922. These white workers, and in particular the miners, had now 'revolted' against the Chamber of Mines, the embodiment of capital in South Africa. Jones explained:

> The Johannesburg gold mines produce more than half the gold of the world. They are concentrated in a single management, with the ultimate control in London ...
>
> The gold mining industry of the Rand has been described as the fulcrum of world capital. Twenty years ago the old Boer republics became an obstacle to the Chamber of Mines, and the whole British army was requisitioned to blow them out of existence ... After the job was done the Rand magnates got leave to import fifty thousand Chinese workers under indenture.

These were repatriated, said Jones, because the mine magnates had discovered that 'the Chinaman was too much of a revolutionary to be profitable'. Their departure had raised anew the question of recruiting black workers for the mines. There were 200,000 black, and 25,000 whites on the mines. 'Herein lies the root of the conflict. The white miners are a block to native progress'. This repeated what he had said in his report on 'Communism in South Africa'. That is, that the class consciousness of the white worker was 'so far, fitful and easily lost. He is used to lord it over the unskilled native as his social inferior'. Moreover, black labour was little more than the assistant to white labour:

> As workers whose functions are wholly different in the industrial world, there is hardly any competition involved; indeed, the white miner is as much interested as the Chamber of Mines in a plentiful supply of native labour, without which he cannot start work. They are therefore annoyed at any strikes of natives, and are prone to assist the masters in their repressive methods, although in the case of white strikes they are not behindhand in appealing to the natives not to go down the shafts ...

If Jones had stopped at that point his understanding of events in 1922 might have been very different. But, he continued, '... natives as a rule are unwilling to go without the white miners', and contrary to what he would say a year later spoke of the African's use of the word 'boss' in addressing white workers as a convention like 'sir', and animated by 'respect for the white worker as his industrial educator'.

One of the white miner's nightmares, he said, was the loss of his monopoly over blasting underground. This he took up again in his article on the strike, where he said

> Their legal privileges are an anachronism. *Yet no Communist can withhold support of their resistance to the capitalist offensive.* (my stress)

> Since the repatriation of the Chinese repeated attempts have been made to open up the skilled positions to the natives, and to break down the legal monopoly [on such jobs] of the white miners... The question became acute at the end of 1921. The low exchange value of the pound sterling had for two or three years enabled the mining industry to sell gold at a premium. With the improved position of the pound sterling as against the dollar, the premium is disappearing, and the mining industry is compelled to work on the bare mint price of four pounds five shillings.

The employers, needing capital to open up the undeveloped portions of the Reef, wanted more than 'a mere drop of wages'; they required a drastic reduction in the number of white skilled workers and a more extensive exploitation of black labour.

Industrial black labour, continued Jones, consisted of men in the engineering and other industries who were becoming proletarianized, and those on the mines who greatly outnumbered the whites. Yet the black mine labourers could not take decisive action. Describing them in terms that lacked his usual sensitivity, he said they were

> the lowest possible form of cheap, unskilled labour drawn from one of the most primitive peoples in the world, politically passive and industrially unorganized, recruited on indenture from the tribal reserves, and housed round the mines in closed compounds under strict police supervision, with hardly a vestige of civil rights.

The situation was explosive, but problems created by the division of workers on grounds of race seemed insoluble. Jones explained:

> The white workers... yield a power quite out of proportion to their numbers. They can stop industry. But this passive native mass is a constant menace (*sic*) to them, and is used against them by the capitalists, whereas the white workers fail to take the surest means of securing their position by common organization with the natives, as advocated by the Communist Party.
>
> The condition of affairs accounts for the state of armed conflict into which the general strike eveloped. At the last it was a conflict for the control of the industry, for the abolition of the Chamber of Mines, and for ousting Smuts from power.

Side by side with this analysis Jones descended to crude populism. Gold mining capital, he declared,

> rules directly by the bayonet and the policeman's baton. It brutalises whole masses of the backward peoples. Their noble naivete (*sic*) can only be preserved for humanity if the working class movement is able to snatch them from the grip of capital without too great a loss of time.

Discussing the social forces in South Africa, Jones said the Afrikaner nationalists had nothing to do with the rising. Initially they supported the strike [and at that stage farmers gave strikers cattle as gifts or on deferred

terms and shopkeepers gave generous credit terms]. They then repudiated the strike and contingents of white farmers joined with Britishers in suppressing the strikers. Yet Jones declared that this was not a colour issue:

> It was not a conflict of whites against blacks, but a pure class struggle between the politically conscious workers, who happened to be white, and the capitalist class . . . The international offensive of capitalism spreads to the colonies . . . In South Africa it takes the form of a demand on the part of the Chamber of Mines that the mining regulations be altered to allow cheap native labour into more skilled positions. This means larger gangs of natives working under fewer skilled whites . . . a demand for the general reduction of wages [and] a reduction of one fifth in the number of white workers . . . Hence it was for the white workers a question of very existence.

For the communists it was also a question of 'very existence'. Believeing the white miners to be 'politically conscious workers' they backed them, underestimating the impact of racial antagonisms opened up by the strike.

The Defence Committee started from a different position but employed similar arguments. It said wages were never mentioned and the struggle focused 'on the question of the Colour Bar, including the Status Quo Agreement'.

> [The] dominant principle for which these men fought was the old principle vital to the welfare, if not indeed to the existence, of every civilised community, for which men have always fought and will always fight as long as they are men and not emasculated parasites, and that is that free men will not tamely submit to be ousted from work and they and their descendants degraded into pauperism by the substitution of slave labour.[35]

The Committee described African labourers in terms similar to that of Jones. Their conditions, they said, were akin to chattel slavery; they lived in closely policed compounds, and were paid starvation wages. This would not be tolerated by a white 'unless he were a convict'.

> With such a system of labour the European cannot compete, and would not if he could since it must in the end degrade all labour to that level, unless a clear line of demarcation can be drawn and maintained.
>
> [The ending of the Status Quo Agreement would] extend that form of Negro slave labour to all the occupations which had hitherto been free labour occupations and . . . oust the dearer Europeans from them.

They said the mine owners and their political supporters deceived the world in claiming that the colour bar 'was an irrational and immoral attempt to keep black labour in subjection for the benefit of white workers'. And here, they too descended to the ubiquitous racism of the society.

> We do not deny that there is some, although very little, truth in that. The aversion of all white races to living and working on a basis of equality with the Negro no doubt enters into the matter; but a part of

> even that aversion is due to a sound instinct to preserve the purity of the race and part is due to an instinctive perception of the fact that the European worker who accepts equality with the Negro tends to become in the end . . . a Negro ceasing to live up to the standards, traditions and inspirations of the great White race, which can be the heritage of them alone. The mere fact that the Negro submits (*sic*) to be compounded is, in itself, sufficient to make it impossible for him ever to be an associate on equal terms of White men, whose ancestors have fought their way to freedom . . .
>
> [The dominant reason for supporting the colour bar was] a deep seated and righteous objection to the extension of th4 slave labour system which is known as compounded Native labour.[36]

The Defence Committee said that workers held two points of view. One claimed that low grade mines could only be worked at a profit by unskilled black labour, which they could accept because gold mining was a temporary phase and not a permanent part of national life. The other view was that these mines could be worked profitably by whites who were paid adequate wages.

> But all of us are agreed that the slave labour system, existing as it does only by virtue of special legislation, must be kept by legislation within the narrowest possible limits.[37]

Their position was absurd, but Jones was also totally wrong in failing to see what was clear to some members of the CPSA. Frank Glass, secretary of the Cape Town branch, where the strike had little support, stated in the *International* on 17 February that the white workers were too backward, their trade unions too weak, and the party's forces too insignificant to make a revolution – and part of the reason lay in the racism of the white workers which disqualified them from becoming leaders of a united working class.[38]

Call for a Republic

Early in February the General Strike Committee instructed workers to 'see that all scabs from Roodepoort to Geldenhuis Deep [mines] are withdrawn immediately . . .' Anger was rising and calls by a local strike committee in Germiston to meet with Smuts and an arbitration court were rejected. On the eve of a conference of Nationalist and Labour Members of the Legislative Assembly called by Tielman Roos, the leader of the Transvaal National Party, Bob Waterston, now leader of the Brakpan commando, moved at a Johannesburg meeting that

> This mass meeting of citizens is of the opinion that the time has arrived when the domination of the Chamber of Mines and other financiers in South Africa should cease, and to that end we ask the members of Parliament assembled in Pretoria tomorrow to proclaim a South African republic, and immediately to form a provisional government for this country.

Waterston elaborated:

> We realised that this was the last step and not the first. But . . . when the provisional government is formed in Pretoria, as tomorrow we hope it will be, it will be a constitutional step, and it will lie with the other side to attack this provisional government and put it out by force.[39]

Nationalist and Labour MPs were horrified. Tielman Roos denounced the idea of revolution and one Nationalist said that Labourites in the South African army had helped suppress the Boer rebellion in 1914 – let them wait till the next election before talking about a republic. Labour MLAs were also opposed to the proposal and spoke of treason. They said people would be shot on the streets of Johannesburg. There was no support for Waterston despite his claim that 90 per cent of workers were prepared for any step rather than go down without a fight. Within days he withdrew his proposals and blamed others for having suggested the plan to him. There was also no support for Percy Fisher (who spoke for the strike committee) when he proposed that a provisional government would be formed that afternoon to take over the mines. Finally a conference committee advised constitutional methods to secure a change of government.

Racist Attacks?

There was never any picketing of blacks working on the mines. Jones, in trying to explain, had to repeat the racists' arguments.

> No violence had been made against them on the part of the white workers – only against the skilled workers who blacklegged. Natives were not regarded as scabs, their whole outlook and mode of life being too primitive (*sic*) for the conscious workers to attribute any responsibility to them.

He also commented on a photograph, which he said, appeared in a 'capitalist journal' of a crowd of strikers bearing a banner – the banner that haunted socialists in South Africa ever since:

WORKERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE AND FIGHT FOR A WHITE SOUTH AFRICA.

'In the crowd', he said, 'several black workers were to be seen. Till the fifth week of the strike this slogan did not betoken any race enmity. That dastardly evil was left for Smuts to do'.[40]

The commandos responded to rumours of black rebellion and over the course of a few days there were ugly clashes between whites and Africans in Brixton, Vrededorp, Ferrairastown, Sophiatown [all working class suburbs or black townships of Johannesburg], and the new Primrose mine near Germiston where African workers attacked a procession of strikers with assegais, revolvers and pickhandles. According to Herd, blacks were attacked by the crowd and many had to be rescued by the police: several were killed,

and more than 20 injured. The police claimed that this fighting was a ploy to embarrass the authorities and intimidate citizens, strike leaders claimed that the region was inflamed and that blacks were arming and anxious to attack whites, but it was mainly non-striking hooligans who attacked blacks.[41] Again, Jones explained, using material he had received from South Africa:

> The cry of native rebellion, with its mythical horrors of rape and massacre, always conjured up to confuse the class issue, was again set going; and it diverted many of the strikers for two or three days from the real issue.

The Communist Party maintained that the blacks were armed by mine officials and used as mine guards. The fact that fighting started simultaneously all along the Reef pointed to a concerted and organized plan and news of the clashes surprised at least some of the strike leaders. Fisher and others of the Committee of Action threw themselves between excited whites and blacks to stop the fighting. The CPSA intervened by printing thousands of leaflets that read:[42]

> LEAVE THE KAFFIR ALONE!
>
> WORKERS, HANDS OFF THE BLACK WORKERS!
>
> It is not they who are your enemies, but the Chamber of Mines which exploits both them and you.
>
> Keep your attention fixed on defeating the Chamber: that is your only job in this strike.
>
> The Chamber's agents and CID [police] provocateurs have repeatedly tried to foment trouble between whites and blacks in order to divert your attention from your only job in this strike. Remember that they tried on the same game when the Municipal Board of Control was established in 1919, and they succeeded then.
>
> DON'T FALL INTO THIS TRAP AGAIN
>
> The natives will not fight unless someone goads or incites them to do so. See that you do not play that part, and treat whoever does as the worst of scabs. Beware of police frame-ups.
>
> LEAVE THE KAFFIR ALONE!

The Defence Committee claimed that whites only attacked Africans on three occasions. Firstly, on 7 March, when blacks stoned a procession of strikers outside New Primrose mine. The strikers, together with whites who came to their assistance, retaliated by attacking mine officials and Africans. In the fighting two whites and two blacks were killed and twenty blacks wounded. The other cases involved whites who were not strikers. They attacked the Municipal Compounds in Marshallstown and in Ferrairastown: five Africans were killed and eighteen (including three whites) were wounded. They also claimed that Africans killed four whites in Sophiatown and rioted and threw stones at whites in the vicinity of Fordsburg and Apex railway stations. The trouble, said the Committee, 'was confined to an area

of not more than two square miles out of the 150 square miles affected by the strike . . . where Negroes and Europeans live cheek by jowl in slums and in extreme poverty . . .' In these fights between poor whites and blacks, a white man and an Indian woman were killed and an African wounded in Brixton. The Committee added that the blacks on the Rand were afraid, and justifiably armed themselves with knives, etc, but the feared Native uprising never took place and the blacks were well behaved (*sic*).[43] The evidence suggests that the confrontations were exaggerated. Hessian, despite his bias against the strike and the strikers, said in his dissertation that:

> There were a few occasions in which commandos attacked Africans, but these were ascribed by strikers, by the Transvaal Native Congress and the government to older workers (sometimes described as 'hooligans') who came from the poorer areas.[44]

The Move to Martial Law

In late February the level of violence rose. Strikers assaulted white scabs and 'police spies' and placed them on 'trial', paraded provocatively, and so on, while the police arrested strikers and commando members. Finally the police fired at strikers who gathered at the Boksburg jail to serenade their imprisoned comrades with the *Red Flag*. Three were killed and several wounded. It was said later that the shooting was pre-planned, ostensibly to establish police authority.

An approach by the Augmented Executive to meet with the Chamber of Mines on the 3 March, when the strike was crumbling, was rejected and, in a provocative letter the mineowners informed the SAIF that the federation would not be recognized in future.[45]

A move by the Augmented Executive to end the strike was rejected by the strikers, and a Committee of Action backed by the commandos was set up, consisting of W H Andrews, H Spendiff, George Mason, Percy Fisher, J Wordingham and E Shaw. On Sunday 5 March the Committee met with delegates of strike committees from across the Reef and called a general strike. At this point the 'more temperate strike leaders faded out of the picture'. The response was confined to the Rand. Some unions called their workers out, some did not, and others, like the railwaymen, only came out after their families were threatened by strikers.

Smuts watched and waited. On 31 March he said that as early as the 17th of February he and his colleagues,

> feared that for a couple of days they might lose control of the Rand, but they had decided to give the country an object lesson with reference to the subterranean, menacing dangers even at the risk of a couple of days revolution in Johannesburg.[45]

Answering a call from the Committee of Action, thousand of men from the commandos came into Johannesburg. They patrolled the streets,

recruited workers and pulled shop assistants out of stores; they commandeered rifles and revolvers; wielded bicycle chains attached to sticks, old swords and bayonets, spears, assegais and bludgeons, poles barbed with spikes or hooks.[47] The police were reinforced by the South African Mounted Rifles and the Civic Guard, bringing their strength up to 8,000 men. There was shooting between strikers and scabs and clashes between strikers and blacks. The government, refusing to negotiate with the strike leaders, responded with force and used aircraft to disperse gatherings. On Thursday 9 March the Active Citizen Force and 26 Burger Commandos were called up by the government and martial law was declared on Friday. This heralded the end of the general strike, but at the same time brought a crowd estimated at 90,000 onto the streets of Johannesburg. On the morning of 10 March armed revolt broke out.[48]

It transpired from court cases and the official Martial Law Enquiry of 1925 that Commandant General A A Sandham, a miner, had ordered commandos to gather at selected spots, armed with rifles and revolvers, bombs, sticks and stones. But no one body was in control of events and several commandos, who were not contacted played no part in what followed. Many prominent strike leaders knew nothing about the mobilization, and few of those who did parade knew what the assemblage was about. When questioned during the subsequent court cases or the Enquiry, members of the commandos gave diverse reasons for their involvement. Some had been told there was a 'Native rising' and they were to rescue the women and children, others heard that there was to be a drive against scabs. There were those who had been told that they would overthrow the government and the capitalist class, and if only they could take the police stations and hold out for 24 hours, thousands of men in the OFS would swarm across the border with arms to help them. There were even stories about Americans who would be coming to assist.[49]

Early on the morning of the 10th the commandos attacked railway property and police posts. For several days they controlled part of Johannesburg and adjoining towns. Banks, shops and offices closed by order of the local strike committees; restaurants, cafes and hotels got permits to open at meal times; food was commandeered and butcher shops emptied of all meat; newspaper vendors were chased off the streets. Some telegraphic communications south of the Rand were disrupted and some train lines blown up, but the post offices opened under police guard.[50] Householders foraged for food and with menfolk away women set up elaborate warning systems for self-protection. Snipers were active in the southern suburbs of Johannesburg, and typographers who refused to strike at the *Star* were armed to protect themselves and their premises.

Jones provided a graphic account of events in his article:

> The outlying mining towns of Benoni and Brakpan were already dominated by the armed strikers. In a few hours aeroplanes were hovering over the scenes where commandos were mobilizing. Boer

> commandos were soon on their way to fight for the government . . . An aeroplane dropped a bomb on the Benoni Workers' Hall, and blew the whole building full of executives and strikers to atoms.
>
> [In] Johannesburg, the workers' commandos took possession of the working class suburbs of Fordsburg and Jeppe . . . They also entrenched on the neighbouring low hills overlooking the military camping ground. Here half a dozen aeroplanes operated on these positions with deadly effect . . . Artillery bombardment proceeded at the same time, but the position was stubbornly defended, and only given up after terrible losses. Here where no bourgeois property was endangered, the aeroplanes could operate with impunity.

Fordsburg was different, said Jones. From there the centre of Johannesburg could be controlled and air attacks would have led to destruction of valuable property. Then, after all other resistance had fallen, Smuts threatened a general ground bombardment and the Boer commandos and the regular troops massed for the final assault:

> Here, in those few tragic hours, the brave victims of capitalist ferocity atoned many times over in blood and tears, and deeds of heroism that move the proletarian heart, for the anti-native outrages committed in their name a week before. Here the red forces were directed by Fisher and Spendiff, two miners' leaders followers of the Communists, and while ardent strike militants, most fervent partisans of the negro workers at the same time.
>
> The bombardment was expected to last ten minutes. It went on for seventy minutes . . . It was only a question of time, and the issue was never in doubt, for Smuts only directs final assaults for political reclaim when the issue is absolutely safe.

Fisher and Spendiff were killed, said Jones: 'On Spendiff was found his membership card of the Communist Party. Thousands of prisoners were taken, and the militants weeded out for the court martials'. Jones could not know that a month after the article appeared four men would go to the gallows, and that another fourteen had death sentences commuted.[51]

He concluded with the claim that the revolt on the Rand had inspired workers in Australia – and that 'the deed of indictment against capitalism [was] filling up from every land and every clime; and the roll of honour of proletarian heroism [was] growing from Africa, Australia and India . . . '

In its response the Comintern condemned the imprisonments and killings, and said the mine magnates' aim was to reduce the living standards of white workers to that of blacks. However, its analysis of the struggle could only lead to further confusion among its adherents. It said that the strikers were mainly Afrikaners, while the capitalist side was almost exclusively represented by British subjects. Eventually, Afrikaner nationalism and the class struggle of Afrikaner workers would be linked. The task was to break down the race prejudice of the South African white workers and link them to the

Negro and other coloured proletarians in a common fight which would be both national and social.[52]

But the tide had turned in South Africa and the white labour movement surrendered its class aims for a minority stake in the government. The SALP joined with the Nationalist Party to defeat Smuts in the general election in 1924. The CPSA gave its support to the electoral pact and then, drawing back, urged Labour not to join a coalition government. The hope of uniting black and white workers receded and the CPSA went into a decline. Members deserted the CPSA and the trade unions distanced themselves from party members. Acutely aware of the difficulties, Jones stated in his letter of April 1924, just before his death, that:

> As a matter of fact, there is no room for a CP in white South Africa *except* as the watchdog of the native, as the promoters of rapprochement, watching *within* the broader organizations, for every opportunity to switch the white movement on right lines on this question and scotching every conspiracy to rouse race hatred and strike breaking of race against race.

The pain that Jones must have felt when the revolt failed is revealed in the letter. His work in South Africa (1910-1921) had been devoted to building a socialist movement in the country. However the 'white movement' was not switched 'on the right lines' and there was no 'rapprochement' inside the labour movement. With few exceptions white and black workers were not brought together in struggle because the social forces holding them apart were greater than any conceived common interests. That was a problem with which the left in South Africawould have to grapple in the decades to come.It must remain a moot question whether it ever did.

References

[Titles, publishers, and dates of publication appear in the bibliography below].

1. See eg Smuts, chs 4-5; Armstrong.
2. For the Masabalala affair see Wickins, Roux (1947) and Simons and for the Bulhoek massacre, see Roux (1947), Simons and also the reprint in **Searchlight South Africa**, No 6, January 1991 of an article by Frank Glass, written in 1921.
3 'The Workers Revolt in South Africa', October 1922. See Hirson and Gwyn Williams, forthcoming.
4. 'The Native Problem', **Round Table**, No 34, March 1919.
5.. Lewsen, pp 293-4. The Land Bill proposed in 1917, and opposed by Merriman, was redrafted and finally enacted in 1936. The Native Administration Bill, which met with fierce condemnation from the SANNC and brought its leaders into close accord with the ISL, was also withdrawn, only to be enacted in 1927.
6. A copy of the Department of Justice files, on microfilm, is at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London.
7. See also 'Unrest in South Africa', **Round Table**, No 33, December 1918. Ibid.
8. The document has no date but from its number seems most likely to have been written in February 1918.

9. The **International**, while sympathising with the miners, did not support the boycott, saying that the problem was one of wages, not of consumption.
10. **Umteteli wa Bantu**, 21 September 1929. See also Bonner (1982) for a more detailed account of the leadership of the SANNC and a discussion of the events of 1918-20.
11. Phillips, pp 117-19. Phillips, together with members of the Stokes-Phelps Commission, then visiting South Africa, played a significant role in dampening the mood of the time. However, this account is probably exaggerated, the likelihood of a revolt in 1918 being far fetched. The role of the Stokes-Phelps Commission and of Phillips is discussed in Hirson (1979).
12. Such, said the **International** on 5 July 1919, 'is the corrupting influence of false labour organization, of labour-fakirdom, of miseducation, of capitalist flattery and bribery, of sectional and colour pride and prejudice'.
13. Information on the strike is taken from the Department of Justice files (which include cuttings from the daily press), and from Diamond, Simons, Bonner, and the notebooks of Cope. Because the accounts are very different, I have relied heavily on the DoJ files.
14. Bonner (1979), p 282.
15. CO20863 551/112, Public Records Office.
16. For discussions of the strike see Bunting, Cope, Diamond, Defence Committee of Trade Unions., Herd, Hessian, Johnstone, Simons.
17. For a full discussion of the high mortality rate on the mines due to phthisis (the 'white death'), and the strike called in 1913 to reduce the number of hours at the pit face, see Hirson and Williams, forthcoming.
18. Hessian, pp 71-72. Although his work was antagonistic to the strikers, Hessian scoured the local press and provides material that is not easily available.
19. Reported in the **Sunday Times**, 5 February 1922, quoted in ibid, p 132.
20.. Hessian, p 64.
21. Ibid, pp 68-69.
22.. **Workers Dreadnought**, viii, 52, 11 March 1922. This British publication carried reports from, and was sold in South Africa by, syndicalists.
23. Herd, pp 40-3.
24. Glanville.
25. Hessian, pp 77-79.
26. Ibid, p 80. The deputation consisted only of National Party representatives. Labour delegates, who were to have attended, arrived too late to participate.
27. Hessian, pp 144-49.
28. Reprinted in **Workers Dreadnought**, viii, 52.
29. This commando, commended by Jones, was led by Eva Green, a member of the CPSA.
30. Defence Committee, p 26.
31. Sheridan Johns III, notes in Karis and Carter, Vol 1, p 146.; Bonner (1979), provides information on the tour of the compounds, but provides no details on the number of chiefs involved, or on their tribes they represented, pp 276-7.
32. Report of meeting of the CPSA in Cape Town to hear a report from a miner's representative, **Cape Times** , 2 February 1922. See also Simons, p 297.
33. Sheridan Johns III, notes in Karis and Carter, Vol 1, p 146.
34. **International**, 27 January 1922.
35. Defence Committee, pp 5-6.
36. Ibid, p 7.
37. Ibid, p 7.
38. Glass changed his mind at some point and later praised the miners for their action.
39. Quoted in Defence Committee, p 12. Waterston, a Labour Party MLA, was Jones's predecessor as secretary of the SALP in 1914 before Smuts deported him illegally to Britain.
40. Concerning the presence of black people in the crowd where strikers held the banner aloft, he was correct. It is also obvious that their presence wasnot questioned by the white workers. Although there is no obvious explanation for their presence, it does seem that many Africans had no disagreement with the strikers. However, other photographs show women parading with identical placards,, their intention obviously racist.

41. Herd, p 48.
42. **International**, 10 February 1923, following a trial of one of those accused of involvement in the riots of March 1922. The leaflet was reproduced in the article.
43. Defence Committee, pp 15-18.
44. Hessian, pp 69, 83.
45. Ibid, p 82.
46. Herd, pp 45-6.
47. Ibid, p 49.
48. Hessian, p 137.
49. Ibid, p 171.
50. Herd, pp 57-8.
51. H K Hull, D Lewis, S A (Taffy) Long and C C Stassen were executed after being found guilty of 'murder'. The first three for killings in the course of the strike and revolt. Stassen for killing two Africans. Kadalie is said to have expressed his satisfaction with the government for carrying out the executions. See Simons, pp 296-7
52. Quoted from the **International**, 18 August 1922, by Simons p 298.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Department of Justice Files, South Africa. [Microfilm at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London].

Dispatches from the Governor-General, South Africa, to the Colonial Office, London. [Public Records Office, Kew, London]

Secondary Sources.

H C Armstrong (1937), **Grey Steel: J C Smuts, A Study in Arrogance**, Arthur Barker.

Phil Bonner (1979), 'The 1920 Black Mineworkers' Strike: A Preliminary Account', in Bozzoli.

----- (1982), 'The Transvaal Native Congress, 1917-1920: The Radicalisation of the black petty bourgeoisie on the Rand', in Marks and Rathbone.

Belinda Bozzoli (ed) (1979), **Labour, Townships and Protest: Studies in the Social History of the Witwatersrand**, Ravan, Johannesburg.

Brian Bunting (ed) (1981), **South African Communists Speak, 1915-80**, Inkululeko Publications, London.

S P Bunting (1922), **Red Revolt: The Rand Strike, January-March 1922**, CPSA, Johannesburg.

R K Cope (c1944), **Comrade Bill: The Life and Times of W H Andrews, Workers' Leader**, Stewart Printing, Cape Town.

----- (nd), Notebooks, compiled for the biography of W H Andrews, copies at Borthwick Institute, York.

Defence Committee of Trade Unions on the Witwatersrand (1924), **The Story of a Crime: being The Vindication of the Defence Committee in connection with the Trial by Special Criminal Courts without Juries of 195 men and 6 women, arising out of the strike on the Witwatersrand in 1922**, published by the Committee, Johannesburg.

Charles R Diamond (1969), 'African Labour Problems on the South African Gold Mines with Special Reference to the strike of 1946', MA thesis, University of Cape Town.

Ernest Glanville (1922), **Through the Red Revolt on the Rand**, Argus Printing, Johannesburg.

Norman Herd (1966), **1922: The Revolt on the Rand**, Blue Crane, Johannesburg.

B Hessian (1957), 'An Investigation into the Causes of the Labour Agitation on the Witwatersrand, January to March 1922', University of the Witwatersrand MA dissertation.

Baruch Hirson (1979), 'Tuskegee, the Joint Councils, and the All African Convention', **The Societies of Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th Centuries**, Vol 10, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London.

----- and Gwyn Williams (1993), **The Delegate for Africa, the Life and Times of David Ivon Jones**, Core Publications , London. (forthcoming)

F A Johnstone (1976), **Class, Race and Gold: A Study of Class Relations and Social Discrimination in South Africa**, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.

D Ivon Jones (1921), **Report on Communism in South Africa**, International Socialist League, Johannesburg.

----- (1922), 'The Workers Revolt in South Africa', **Communist International**, October.

Thomas Karis and Gwendolen M Carter (1972), **From Protest to Challenge, A Documentary History of Adfrican Politics in South Africa, 1882-1964**, Vol 1, Hoover Institute Press, Stanford.

Phyllis Lewsen (ed) (1969), **Selections from the Correspondence of John X Merriman, 1905-1924**, van Ribeeck Society, Cape Town .

Wm R Louis (1967), **Great Britain and Germany's Lost Colonies, 1914-1919**, Clarendon, London.

Shula Marks and Richard Rathbone (eds) (1982), **Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa: African Class Formation, Culture, and consciousness, 1870-1930**, Longman, London.

Ray E Phillips (1930), **The Bantu are Coming, Phases of South Africa's Race Problem**, Student Christian Movement Press, London.

Edward Roux (1944), **S P Bunting: A Political Biography**, African Bookman, Cape Town.

----- (1947), **Time Longer than Rope**, Gollancz, London.

J H and R E Simons (1969), **Class and Colour in South Africa: 1850-1950**, Penguin.

J C Smuts (1952), **Jan Christian Smuts**, Cassell, London.

P L Wickins (1978), **The Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of Africa**, OUP, Cape Town.

Brian Willan (1984), **Sol Plaatje: South African Nationalist 1876-1932**, Heinemann, London.

Newspapers and Journals

Cape Times, Communist International, International, Rand Daily Mail, Round Table, Workers Dreadnought