

SEARCHLIGHT

SOUTH AFRICA

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The Killing Fields of Southern
Africa

The Shooting of Sipho Phungulwa

Inkatha versus the ANC

The AFL-CIO and the Trade Unions in
South Africa

Yhe Swapo 'Spy -Drama', Part II

Third Worldism – Albatross of Socialism



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A REQUEST TO READERS

If readers have documents of contemporary or historic interest that would bear republication, we would be pleased to receive them. They will be returned immediately.

THIRD WORLDISM: THE ALBATROSS OF SOCIALISM

Once Again On The Colonial Question

One issue separates *Searchlight South Africa* from most other socialist journals focused on South Africa: the editors do not support the nationalist or 'populist' movements. This journal does not acclaim their 'armed struggle', rejects their programmes (whether couched in reformist or radical phrases) and argues the need for a movement which will rally that class in a struggle for socialism.

Against the ideologues who proclaim the end of Marxism, and all the Stalinists who use the word communism to mislead, it is still necessary to state that a more human world society will be achieved through socialism.

What then of the nationalist movements in South Africa? While defending their right to exist and protecting them against the attacks of the government, there can be no support for their political philosophy and no support for their intervention in the trade unions or any other working class movement. Any such attempt by these populist leaders can only lead to a betrayal of the workers. This conclusion is buttressed by the article on the AFL-CIO by Paul Trehwela in this issue. For Mr Mandela in New York to call upon an organization that was CIA funded, to assist in building a trade union movement in South Africa is unacceptable. For the vice president of Sactu, Chris Dhlamini, to echo that request would be inexplicable if it were not that he is one of the leaders of the Communist Party.

From this it must follow that defence of those movements does not, and cannot, imply support for their aims, their tactics or their strategy. To do so would mean the end of an independent socialist movement, the betrayal of the working class and the repudiation of Marxism. It also means that it is not possible to accept any proposal that socialist groups immerse themselves in the populist stream.

Elsewhere in this issue there is an obituary to I.B. Tabata, one of the founders and leaders of the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) since 1943. Tabata's first commitment to the political struggle came when he joined the Workers Party of South Africa in 1935. In private he always claimed allegiance to socialism and internationalism and there is no reason to believe that he meant otherwise. However, by placing himself at the head of the NEUM, or its main section, the All African Convention, Tabata always appeared publicly as a nationalist. No matter how often he denied that he was a nationalist, or that his politics had not moved away from socialism, he remained in the groove of 'liberation politics'. Yet Tabata's association with the WP was well known and the NEUM was always described as a Trotskyist movement.

For nearly fifty years the South African Trotskyists were enmeshed in this dualism: a movement devoted ostensibly to internationalism and the working class that played nationalist politics, and nationalist politicians who were

condemned as Trotskyists. It was an albatross that hung around the neck of the anti-Stalinist left in South Africa. Tabata was not alone in pursuing his mythical socialism through a nationalist movement. Several of his co-leaders had the same philosophy and conducted the same dualist politics. Goolam Gool, Ben Kies, Janub Gool, to mention only a few, came from the Workers Party. Other smaller Trotskyist groups affiliated with the NEUM, explaining their move in entryist terms. The Labour Party was rejected as segregationist; consequently they would work inside the national movement and there find their way to a mass audience. Leading Trotskyists in Cape Town, like Hosea Jaffe of the Fourth International Organisation of South Africa (FIOSA), was elected to the executive of the NEUM.

Except for one group in the Transvaal, there is no evidence that before the late 1970s any Trotskyists worked inside the trade union movement or tried specifically to organize a working class movement. Thus far had they moved from Marxism. Only those who broke from the nationalist politics of the NEUM, but retained some of the Marxism they had first encountered (all so secretly) in that body, worked in the unions. But they did not have a Marxist movement behind them and when the time was obviously ripe for the emergence of a workers' movement, they were unable to offer a lead.

This criticism of Tabata is not meant to belittle the man. He devoted his life for the movement he helped create and he did not waver in his beliefs. The same must be said of others who believed (and some who still believe) in the correctness of their policy. Perhaps the historian will look back benignly on them and say that in failing there was some merit. Success would have bound all their adherents to that nationalist brand of petty bourgeois politics.

However, where members of the WP and FIOSA failed, the Stalinists succeeded. They worked inside the Congress movement, where they flaunted their ethnic origins and gave uncritical support to programme. Indeed, how could they do otherwise when they had drafted the main provisions of the 'Freedom Charter', and provided the theory of internal colonialism to underpin their control of the organization?

The Stalinists succeeded all too well because it was not possible to separate their policies from that of the ANC. It was meaningless asking who was a communist and who was a nationalist in the ANC. There was nothing to distinguish them even if an Africanist section finds it expedient to break away, in order to adapt more fluently to capital. A crystallization into separate elements is not only possible, it is inevitable and is already under way.

If this involvement in populist politics had been only a South African phenomenon it might have been possible to ascribe it to the political backwardness of the country. However, in country after country, particularly in the former colonies, leftist groups have tended to move in the same trajectory; and in the metropolitan countries, socialists of all hues have adopted an approach that leaves them indistinguishable from the nationalists.

There is little purpose in listing all the nationalist movements that have called themselves socialist, or flirted with one of the international tendencies. Nor would it be enlightening to list the organizations or the many prominent socialists (of all tendencies) in the west who have lent their names to the

nationalist cause. Readers of this journal can draw up a list, starting perhaps with C L R James, George Padmore, Frantz Fanon, or less well known individuals such as the Trotskyist spokesman Pablo (Michel Raptis). They might know organizations like the Lanka Sama Samaja in Sri Lanka, the FLN of Algeria, the CPP of Ghana, or the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. This would make a good parlour game but might divide the players by generation. The heroes of the fifties and sixties now lie forgotten, the victors of the seventies are no longer with us; and those who survive are all too often an embarrassment. Yet new names keep appearing, and socialists keep raising the flag aloft for new champions.

The movement with the longest popular support in the west is probably the ANC. Endless energy, and even more money, has gone into bolstering it. Support for the ANC has been drummed up by Stalinists and Trotskyists; by US Senators, Commonwealth Prime Ministers; churches, sports associations, and so on. But the ANC is unique. Most such love-stories are usually of shorter duration. There is little purpose in listing all those ephemeral attachments, but a few reminders might help. There were few socialists in the west who did not support at some stage: Nkrumah or Ben Bella; Neguib or Nasser; Nehru or Mahatma Gandhi; Sukarno; Ho Chi Minh or even Pol Pot in south east Asia.

Those who championed one or other of these 'Third World' leaders always had a catalogue of reasons: these men and their movements had to be supported because: they were anti-imperialist, they fought colonial oppression, their victory would weaken western capitalism. There were also always escape-clauses: it was granted that these people might not be socialists, or at least socialists as understood in the west, and when trade unions were suppressed this was overlooked or justified because of the weakness of the new state. When stories of oppression were publicised, these were rejected as inventions of western propaganda, or of imperialist intrigues — and of course some were. Other reports were hushed up because it was not politic to undermine these newly-liberated countries.

There were other rationalisations. These politicians would take their countries into the first stage of liberation if not socialism; they would enlarge the political opportunities by giving everybody the vote; they would nationalize the main assets — or at least take away control from western finance capital; they would break down colonial boundaries. They would strengthen the 'socialist bloc' said some; they would join the peace-loving people said others; they would join a new socialist international concluded those who neither believed there was a 'socialist bloc' nor an independent peace movement.

The Conflict in the Gulf

Little more than a decade ago sections of the left in Europe discovered the liberating impact of Islam on the people of Iran. The followers of Khomeini, they proclaimed, had removed the instrument of the CIA in Iran and a better society would emerge. Even if Khomeini could not, or would not, usher in a more just society, he would provide a transitional stage for new, more progressive struggles. In their arguments, socialists who expressed such sentiments,

negated every tenet of Marxism. Some were Trotskyists, but they had relegated the struggle for socialism to the back benches, replacing it with a two-stage, or multi-stage, theory of social struggle.

During the long and bloody destruction of all opposition in Iran, the 'progressiveness' of Khomeini was forgotten. But there is no indication that there was any reassessment of what had gone wrong, no serious attempt at reappraisal of theories that had failed them. If only they would have said, openly and honestly, that they had erred, but search their publications as one can, the subject is forgotten. They might not have been right, but they never make mistakes. One adventure over, leftists looked elsewhere in their search for causes to support. There was Afghanistan, Kashmir, Sri Lanka, Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, Palestine, Argentine and Chile. There were shooting wars everywhere and the left press found much to occupy itself in the battle for the 'Third World'.

Now at last, since 2 August, when Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait, there is a cause about which these left groups have found agreement. In unison they call 'Hands off Iraq' and some even declare that in the event of an invasion they will give their full support to Saddam Hussein's regime. Once again there are the same arguments, the same escape-clauses and the same rationalisations: This is an imperialist venture in order to keep control of oil; this is western capitalism protecting its investments; this is a move to preserve boundaries established by the imperialists when the Ottoman empire collapsed.

In some journals the argument goes further. Kuwait is an artificial city-state, created as a western haven, the possessor of oil and capital that is tied to Europe. Its existence cannot be justified and its defence is inexcusable. Thus sayeth the new Mercators as they peer at the map. Precisely which state can claim a right to separate existence, particularly in the middle East is left unsaid. Is it a matter of size? the nature of its government? or perhaps the number of persons per square mile of desert? How the predatory actions of colonial empires are to be undone and the pristine purity of the old era restored is not stated: but Kuwait has no right to exist. This is a venture into cloud-cuckoo-land. Socialists recognize that states must go, but in a capitalist world national sovereignty cannot be decided in a London back-room. The iniquities of the colonial past, and the post-colonial present need urgent attention, but that must be left to the people, all the people who live and work there: in Kuwait, in Kurdistan, east Timor, Kashmir, Tibet, Palestine, and so on. Only after they voice an opinion, and the people of adjacent territories are consulted, can such issues be resolved — at least for the present.

The reservations expressed by the left, in the case of Iraq, are stronger than usual. Saddam is described (correctly) as a tyrant, an executioner of trade unionists and communists, a man guilty of genocide. Nonetheless, they say, the Iraqi workers who dare not speak, the Kurds who are gassed into silence, and the students who are muzzled must defend Saddam Hussein, because he is fighting a 'just war'. It is called dialectics, no doubt — if by dialectics is meant finding an argument to justify the unjustifiable, to twist all logic to reach a prejudged conclusion.

Among all the reservations voiced by the defenders of Saddam there are few expressions of concern for the millions of 'gastarbeiters' who have been driven out — because presumably they had no right to be in a non-state. Nor was there recoil from the mass looting of Kuwait city — that had no right to be there. Perhaps the accounts of pillage and looting, of executions and repression are only western (and Egyptian? and Syrian?) propaganda. There might be exaggerations but they are not incompatible with what the Iraqi troops have done elsewhere. Or perhaps these are not of concern to socialists who know only that Kuwait is a non-state. After all, a non-state cannot be annexed.

Trenches in the Sand

To state this does not imply support for the war-mongers. That the hawks of America should beat the war drums is understandable: they have to prove that they are the one and only superpower. They alone can maintain the *status quo ante* in the Middle East. That Britain should wave the Union Jack needs no comment. Britain's subservience to the US is now a fact of history. Together they will fight — to maintain the hegemony of the Atlantic powers.

That the sheiks of the desert should call for the defence of their oil-wells is equally obvious: there lies their wealth and their power and it is their sacred duty to protect it. The Kuwaiti desert-lords demand war yesterday — and they will consider democracy tomorrow. The Saudi lords-of-the-holy-places demand war tomorrow and pump oil today.

Also, the demand that Germany and Japan pay millions into the war coffers makes sense. They must pay for the show of strength because ultimately it is they who will benefit from the smooth flow of oil. It is less obvious why the smaller European states blow the same war trumpets, but that is the price for backing an alliance, which alone holds the purse strings they need to open.

When it comes to the USSR and China, there are no words to describe the perfidy of men who would like to walk with big brother, but can do no more than crawl with a begging bowl. Gone is the demand for the defeat of 'predatory imperialism' or of 'paper tigers'. Those who support the warring parties are beneath contempt and readers of *Searchlight South Africa* will undoubtedly have come to this position long before they read this article.

What then are the slogans for which people are being asked to fight, and die? There are few leftists who believed that the promises of World War II would be kept, but there was a grandeur in the proclamations of Roosevelt and Churchill: in their Four Freedoms, and the Atlantic Charter. They would conquer evil and usher in the era of the common man. Millions did believe them. Stalin made no such promises. He called for a 'holy war' in the name of Mother Russia — and for that the Stalinists everywhere raised cheers, and not unlike today, worked for the 'holy' cause.

By way of contrast there are no such slogans today. But how could there be promises of Freedom? There is no freedom or democracy, no popular participation in the governments of those despotic states in the Arabian peninsula which, overnight, been joined the ranks of the alliance. What

freedoms can be offered to the people of the middle East when the fighting forces are drawn from the armies of Syrians and Saudi Arabia and Israel might be called in, or when the object is to restore the ruling caste of Kuwait? Although the language of WWII is used, it is the negatives that are employed: there are warnings of the dangers of appeasement, Saddam is likened to Hitler, and there is talk of Nuremberg trials. Just cheap jibes against the opponent and threats of retribution – and this against the men they financed and armed to stop the advance of Iran (now a 'holy ally'). Against a man who did their work for them by destroying the left (even if much of it was Stalinist). It is for this that troops have been drafted and asked to lay down their lives.

High Noon in the Middle East

The roots of the present crisis in the Gulf, as in all the areas of the Middle East, are complex. Historically it can be traced to the dismemberment of the crumbling Ottoman Empire after a century of rivalry between the Russian Tsar in the east, and France and Britain in the west. With the removal of Russia as a serious contender (after the revolution of 1917) the carving up of that once powerful empire was completed.

Britain and France took control and emerged as the hegemonic powers in the region. Their concern was with strategic placement and with oil. From the Mediterranean through the Red Sea and into the Gulf they aimed (separately) to secure their imperial interests. Suez was the one prize and this was secured by the British, at the head of an international consortium. A compliant monarchy was kept on the throne and the British presence was always obvious. Together, but with scarcely concealed rivalry, the French and the British drew lines in the desert to mark out the new 'protected' states. Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iraq, the Emirates to the east of Suez, the north African states to the west. Some were historically defined, although borders were hotly disputed and a cause of great tension. There was no place for sentiment and people like the Kurds found themselves incorporated into one or more state. None of these territories were economically viable, despite a flourishing agriculture in restricted regions. They were without transport systems, without industry, and without a bourgeoisie. A ruling class was moulded from the Arab sheikdoms and arbitrary city states were set up to protect oil interests.

'Favourite sons' were placed in power, drawn from the traditional tribal leadership. They were encouraged by the administrators to transform communal land into private property, and by means of tax relief were able to build up these land holdings into considerable estates. The only other group of people that exercised power were the young officers. They were the visible support for the ruling group and they were the ones who controlled changes of government.

England and France drew the borders, but they were eclipsed by the US, and the latter demanded its place in the sun. The wielders of economic power were the international petrochemical companies: they determined the extent of exploration, decided which fields to develop, what refineries to build. The only

economic development in the region was in real estate or in the market. Other developments before the second world war were negligible.

The infusion of capital into the oil fields and the growing need for commodities from Europe introduced new tensions into the region. No panoramic picture can depict the struggle to find exports to finance the newly desired imports, nor provide the background to strikes, riots, revolts or coups. In each case they arose from the local pattern of conflicting interests: of army against the monarchy—and of both against the metropolitan power; of fellaheen against effendi (translated through the cash nexus into peasant against landowner) and of both against France, Britain and then the US, or against a neighbouring territory. To this was added new rivalries, with war between Christians and Muslims, Sunnis against Shiites, Berbers against Arabs, Arabs against Jews. That is, local and national rivalries loomed larger than struggles against imperialism: religious leaders rallied supporters around their sects, war-lords fought for control of provinces, countries like Yemen broke apart, Iraq was at daggers drawn with Syria and engaged in a disastrous ten-year war with Iran. And the European powers played one group against the other.

There had to be change, partly because of growing disaffection in the middle east, but mainly because the balance of power in the world was altering. The European states weakened—and welcomed fresh capital investment from the oil-Sheiks. The oil that had once brought such vast profits to Europe and allowed Britain and France to manipulate regimes, had passed to other masters. The inheritors were the men who controlled the governments of these middle Eastern states. The rulers had become a rentier class, with vast real estate and commercial ventures in Europe or America, but the progress was uneven. Iraq, under the Ba'ath Socialist Party, undertook a programme of industrialization. This introduced new tensions which led to the massive repression of both workers and peasants, and workers' organizations were silenced. In a state controlled by the security force, Kurds and Shiites were persecuted or exterminated, and ultimately the country was plunged into a war in which hundreds of thousands were killed.

All of this is common knowledge and there can be no support for those who wish to maintain the *status quo*, or those who seek only to build their own fortunes. But the answer does not lie in the slogan: Hands off Iraq! Nor any other that can only usher in a new, equally iniquitous, equilibrium. Until socialists learn to direct their slogans to the working class, and find a response from that class they will be impotent. Their task is to call for the international solidarity of the workers of all lands; their specific call is for a confederation of the middle east and the overthrow of the sheikdoms and governing cliques. The toilers of the Middle East will only gain their liberty through joining with workers everywhere in the struggle for socialism.

The *Ancient Mariner* who could not call off the curse of the *Albatross* was doomed to destruction. Socialists who persist in wearing the Albatross of Third Worldism deserve no better fate.

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THE KILLING FIELDS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA.

In the late 1950s individual members of the ANC started a long trek into exile. A central executive committee of the organization was established and a military wing launched at the end of 1961. The movement—in-exile took on a life of its own, with only tenuous connections with South Africa. There were connections with persons in South Africa who had been members of the ANC before it was banned, but it was on an individual basis and the underground groups inside the country were poorly organized.

New political activity in South Africa seemed at first to have little or no connection with the external ANC. The trade unions that were organized in 1973 owed their formal structures to white student research groups or some veteran white unionists. They were not affiliated to the old Congress of Trade Unions (Sactu), or to any other black movement. Instead they founded their own independent federations and called initially for a working class movement. The other movement that grew internally was the Black Conscious Movement. Formed in the 1970s it was independent of the ANC, had links with the Christian Institute, and was closer to the PAC in ideology than to the ANC.

There was a distinct political revival in the 1970s. This was connected with several factors that moved black communities, and also black student bodies, to revolt. There was a downturn in the economy and a further impoverishment of the urban working class; an importation of black liberation theology from the US; celebratory enthusiasm as the Portuguese colonies won their freedom from colonial rule; and rebelliousness in the schools and colleges rooted in the collapse of the old school system.

Quite how much contact the ANC—in-exile had with the events of 1976–77 (the Soweto Revolt) is debatable. However, some internal cells were in contact with grass-roots committees and as the revolt spread it seems that individual members of the ANC made contact with groups of students. But whatever the connection, the external leadership exerted little direct influence on the pattern of struggle.

Running parallel to the strikes of the emergent black trade unions, the revolt extended over a year and affected black communities across the country. Finally, crushed by the state, large numbers of young people found escape routes across the borders. They sought other means of struggle, above all through military action, and pinned their faith on exile movements.

It was the ANC abroad that gained from the mass exodus of youth. Only they could promise, and provide, schooling and/or military action. Largely through its association with the South African Communist Party, the ANC had access to substantial military, financial and other support from a bloc of states tied to the Soviet Union and from an international network of political parties in touch with the media, parliaments, the trade unions, the churches, student bodies and the left across the world. The only serious rival to the ANC, the exiled Pan Africanist Congress, despite being closer in tone to the black consciousness current, had nothing to compare with this solid base of international support. Young supporters of black consciousness organizations

deserted in droves when they crossed into exile and found that only the ANC could provide the material means they were seeking.

The ranks of the external ANC grew, as did the ranks of Umkhonto we Sizwe (or MK). However, this did not necessarily create closer links between the ANC-in-exile and the political groupings that were being established in South Africa. The differences in location, in experience, and in daily activity could only keep the two components of the movement apart. Yet the nature of this politics (led by a petty bourgeoisie with national aspirations) led to the construction of similar institutions. The rise to hegemony of the security department inside Umkhonto we Sizwe, had as its complement, the formation of the 'comrades' in the townships. They were two sides to the same coin, even though the one side carried the king's head while the obverse carried a 'necklace'.

During the 1980s, the carrying of the AK-47 by the armed forces of MK was imitated in the townships where youth carried wooden replicas. Armed action was mythologized if it could not be adopted. But more than replica AKs were in evidence. Local leaders emerged who believed that they could dispense justice as MK could, through the possession of real arms. The two sectors of the ANC, grown apart, nonetheless found common methods of asserting themselves.

It is not certain whether direct links were built up between the armed officers abroad and would-be officers in the townships. Nonetheless there was a marrying of minds in the use of terror: in MK abroad and in the townships of South Africa. This dimension is explored in the article by Paul Trewhela. That is only one aspect of the spread of terror in the country. Another aspect, discussed by Baruch Hirson, concerns the emergence of territorial armies grouped around tribally oriented movements: namely, the armies built up to enforce control in the Bantustans.

Each and every territory had its own history of armed terror. The police and army were turned loose on demonstrators, boycotters, or critics. In this issue it is Inkatha control in Natal (and more recently in the Transvaal) that is of concern. Nonetheless in the coming years the armies established under government aegis in all the Bantustans will play increasingly important roles in the way a final settlement is reached and in this they will be joined by the commanders of MK. The latter will try to impose a hegemonic control on all black armed personnel in order to give the army a distinct political role in the country. This process is already well under way in the Transkei, Nelson Mandela's place of birth, where the Bantustan military regime of Major-General Bantu Holomisa has provided not only sanctuary to the Umkhonto chief of staff, Chris Hani (a politburo member of the SACP), but also a certain fusion of political ambitions. The murder in the Transkei of a former ANC prisoner from its dreaded camp, Quatro, in Angola is a feature of the Holomisa/Hani accord which Trewhela investigates.

This conjunction of MK with the Bantustan armies will not exhaust the groups that will, at local or at national level, place their stamp on the emerging society. It might be premature to give them an independent role, unless South Africa breaks up in Lebanese fashion. There is no firm indication as yet as to the

future role of vigilantes in the urban squatter camps and the rural hinterland, nor of the roving bands of youth who bear no responsibility to any but their own local leaders. Those who have dispensed the 'necklace' of yesterday will always find a supply of old tyres, of petrol and matches, if not AK-47s. It is perhaps remarkable that in all the terror and mayhem that has been witnessed in South Africa over the past two decades, there has not been more major bloodshed. That is, no killings that could equal the extermination of Kampuchians by Pol Pot, of Kurds in Iraq, Ugandans by Amin or Malawians by Hastings Banda's cohorts. These massacres and many more, in Chile, Argentine, Tibet and other countries, have not as yet been repeated on quite that scale in South Africa. Instead there has been a steady and continuous flow of corpses and of maimed.

Many were killed by local gangsters, others fell victim to white brutality. Month after month there has been news of men and women tortured, mutilated and killed. Those accused (but not often found guilty in the courts) were farmers, or other white citizens. Others were policemen, in uniform or plain clothes, killing routinely in the course of official duties. Those done to death include demonstrators or just bystanders, and those locked up at the mercy of their captors in prison cells.

Some of the more notorious of these killings have been reported in the British press. Others have gone unremarked because the press does not find the event 'newsworthy'. One such event, described below by Brian Oswin, demonstrates that alongside black infighting there is a more pernicious terror in South Africa: that wielded by the police and the army and, inevitably, by the right wing reaction which has emerged from the ranks of those bodies. Let there be no doubt, these swastika swinging bodies might not be able to mount an insurrection but they are capable of destabilizing communities, indiscriminate (and also calculated) killings as well as inciting others to murder. No equation of forces in the coming events can afford to ignore the threat they represent.

A DEATH IN SOUTH AFRICA: THE KILLING OF SIPHO PHUNGULWA

Paul Trehela

The Principle of Monarchy

The Mandela myth was mainly the creation of the South African Communist Party. As the most important organizer of ANC politics within the country and internationally for thirty years, especially through the media, the SACP in the late 1950s and early 1960s set about the creation of a very specific cult of personality.

The 'M Plan' of 1953, in which 'M' stood for Mandela, did more to surround the leader's name with a mystique than reorganize the ANC on a cell-system, as it was supposed to do. Ten years later, after the arrest of members of the

High Command of Umkhonto we Sizwe at Lilliesleaf Farm in Rivonia, the emphasis was not principally on a collective call: 'Free the Rivonia nine.' The fate of an entire generation of political victims was absorbed into the fate of a single individual: 'Free Mandela.' Such personification of thousands of individual acts of imprisonment by the state might have been good media politics, but it was the negation of democratic accountability. It represented the introduction of the monarchical principle as a staple into modern South African political life. More urgently, it was a trivializing of politics which took the issue away from matters of substance and concentrated attention on the persona of one man.

It is now clear that Mandela's last three years in prison were a secret cloister of discussions, cultivated by the state, in which the Olympian remoteness of the regime was imparted to the politics of its leading opponent. In essence the fate of the whole society devolved in isolation upon the judgement of one man, whom prison appeared not so much to exclude from the people as it served to exclude the people from the secret deliberations between this one man and the state. This was a spectacle, in which a single individual cast a shadow on a vast audience through his non-presence.

And thus we come to Caesar's wife. As the decades of Mandela's imprisonment went by, the mystique of royalty, the principle of divine right, passed by law of succession to his wife, who became the representative of the idea of the sacral on the earth of township politics. In so far as Mandela in prison was mystically always present through his absence, Mrs Mandela as consort played a very material Empress Theodora, or perhaps Lady Macbeth. The more the myth grew through Mandela's unworldly situation in prison — alive, yet dead to human contact, the unseen mover in the power play of southern African politics — the more an extraordinary status attached to his wife.

During the 1960s and especially in the 1970s, Winnie Mandela won widespread respect for her resistance to the government. She defied loss of husband, banning, banishment, prison and unremitting police harassment, emerging from the 1976 student revolt as an important political leader. She was an emblem of defiance. The fact that her political philosophy was shaped by a crude nationalism opened her to the abuses of the 1980s: a matter greatly facilitated by her unique status as oracle to the unseen leader on Robben Island. In conditions of unremitting social tension, culminating in near-insurrection in the period of the 1984–86 township revolt, these circumstances produced their own deadly result.

This would have been venal enough if her courtiers had principally been adults. It was in the nature of South Africa in the mid-1980s, however, that her retinue was composed largely of children. Old Socrates drank hemlock, by order of an Athenian court, on a charge of corruption of youth, but Mrs Mandela's corruption of youth proceeded under the title *Mama we Sizwe*: 'mother of the nation'.

A principal automotive arm of the 1984–86 township revolt was the schools boycott, interlinked with other campaigns such as the rent boycott. The effect of the schools campaign was ultimately catastrophic; but this movement of the youth (the 'young lions') also put an immense head of pressure under the

regime. Their organizing role in rents boycotts and in getting urban councils disbanded cannot be ignored. When unemployment stood at 40 per cent and over, and underemployment was very high; when 800,000 or more were employed in petty hawking; and when the youth themselves faced the prospect of miserable paid jobs or no jobs at all, the school was no magnet of attraction at the best of times. The schools boycott led to illiteracy; the bleakness of prospects made literacy irrelevant.

The schools boycott was associated with the slogan (endorsed in practice by the ANC) 'Liberation before education', also phrased as: 'Revolution today, education tomorrow.' Across the country, tens of thousands of children decamped permanently on the streets, a huge, amorphous army, a children's crusade, brought into existence by this mass of declassed youth merging with the very large stratum of the unemployed and the criminal *bohème* of the townships.

Educated by the streets, since they were amenable to no force of adults in the society, these children became the masters of their parents and the vehicle by which the ANC leaders acquired their ticket to the talks at Groote Schuur. Adults not in South Africa need only imagine the effect of permanent, unbroken school holidays in their own homes, and on their own streets, spiced with the sadism of South African social conditions. This was the milieu in which teenage armies, teenage generals, teenage courts and teenage executioners gave lessons in patriotism to the workers.

An Autocracy of the Young

An inversion in culture was the dye in which all subsequent South African political life was stamped. Having fought the battle for the trade unions over the preceding decade, the workers worked while the children militarized themselves. In this way the township won political hegemony over the factory, the workless over the worker, the child over the adult. The revolt of the young – uninfluenced by any mediating influence of the trade unions – found its expression partly in the 'necklace' killings by means of a burning tyre soaked in petrol. Small left-wing groups critical of the new reasoning were ordered to shut up, or else. Critical individuals were silenced or driven out. It was in this environment of menace that a founder member of MK said during the period of the township revolt: 'I know where the government stands, I know where Inkatha [the political arm of the KwaZulu Bantustan] stands, but I don't know where the "comrades" stand. If the ANC radio from abroad ordered them to kill me, they would do it.' (personal communication, 1986)

Leadership by children of the streets was fatal to any bond (in Russian terms, *smychka*) between town and country. The phenomenon of a counter-revolt by migrant workers, in their tribally segregated barracks, in opposition to the revolt of the township youth had already appeared in 1976, both on the Rand among Zulu workers at the Mzimhlophe hostel in Soweto and among Bhaca workers in the hostels at Nyanga East near Cape Town. In each case, resentment by migrant workers at taunts and harassment by the politicized youth of the cities gave rise to pogroms against township residents, with the

active connivance of the police. In the following fourteen years, the ANC learnt no lessons from this incubatory period of rural/urban slaughter, which reached its full horror in the PWV (Pretoria–Witwatersrand–Vereeniging) region in August and September 1990, and afterwards.

A further consequence of this paedotocracy, or government by the young, was the milieu out of which arose the Mandela United Football Team—a euphemism of the same order as the term Civil Co-operation Bureau for the secret assassination department run by the South African Defence Force. Mrs Mandela, who advocated liberating the country ‘with our necklaces and our boxes of matches’ during the 1984–86 township revolt, reigned as queen of the ghetto over this gang of youngsters, whom she housed, organized and goaded into functioning as an instrument of political control over the townships. This group, since linked to sixteen murders, was founded by her at the end of 1986.

The Empress of the Damned

It would take a novelist or dramatist of great power to illuminate the motives of this woman, enduring loss of husband, banning, exile and imprisonment, transformed into a scourge of mothers through her teenage wolfpack. How far was the brutalized behaviour of the ‘football’ club simply an expression of the generalized brutality of South African conditions, brought about by its predatory social production relations? At what point did international adulation of Mrs Mandela feed the mania? Or the attentions of South African white bourgeois society, which introduced her to its salons as the townships burnt? Or the courts, which for several years declined to prosecute, despite agreement between prosecution and defence on evidence relating to Mrs Mandela in a case in 1988 resulting in imposition of the death penalty? Or the South African press, which never reported this and other matters? (This legal record, unreported in South Africa, was made public by John Carlin in an article, ‘Terrorized by “Winnie’s boys”’, in the *Independent*, 21 September 1990.)

‘Winnie’s boys’ were generally just that—boys. But boys transformed into killers. The rise of political violence as a means of political control in the townships, associated most blatantly with the Mandela team, became institutionalized at the same time as torture, imprisonment and murder of internal critics within the ANC had become routine practice abroad. The nature of the ANC security department in its exile camps—before, during and after the township revolt—was described in *Searchlight South Africa*, No 5. Serious historical research is needed before an accurate picture emerges of the nature and orientation of political violence in the townships in the 1984–86 period and afterwards. It is likely, however, that the methodology of Mrs Mandela’s boy scouts in dealing with critics was reinforced by knowledge of how the ANC security department conducted itself abroad. According to court records agreed by prosecution and defence, Oupa Seheri, a trained ANC guerrilla, carried out a double murder in Soweto while staying in Mrs Mandela’s house, where he also kept the murder weapon. Two other trained ANC guerrillas—Peter and Tsepo—were later killed in a shoot-out with the police in the home

of Jerry Richardson, the 'manager' of Mrs Mandela's 'team,' who was sentenced to death for the murder of 14-year-old Stompie Moeketsi Seipei.

Seipei was himself typical of this army of youth. Having played his part in the township wars, he was murdered on or around 3 January 1989. Mrs Mandela's household — 'packed with youths...part barracks, part boarding school, part prison', in Carlin's description — was the arena in which an ad hoc disciplinary committee tried cases and ordered punishments, administered then and there by physical violence in the yard. After having been abducted from a white priest's house and brought to Mrs Mandela's house for 'trial' and a beating, Seipei was taken away by Richardson and disposed of. The image of this child, coupled forever with that of the 'mother of the nation', will remain a vignette of the period in which the ANC re-won political hegemony in the townships. And inextricably associated with these, a third image: of a young girl engulfed in flames before the television cameras, a victim of 'our necklaces and our boxes of matches'.

What repelled the residents of Soweto was a methodology of coercion, in essence no different from that which produced the 1984 mutiny in the ANC abroad. Within South Africa it was only less organized, given that the ANC lacked parastatal powers. A 'crisis committee' was set up by ANC loyalists in Soweto in July 1988 to watch over Mrs Mandela, according to Carlin: it was helpless against the 'football team,' and failed to save lives. The turning point came with Seipei's murder, which caught the attention of the media. Shortly afterwards, in a remarkable press conference on 16 February 1989, the acting general secretary of the United Democratic Front, Murphy Morobe, read a prepared statement on behalf of the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM). Speaking on behalf of the then most important network of ANC supporters in the country, Morobe said:

We have now reached the state where we have no option but to speak publicly on what is a very sensitive and painful matter. In recent years, Mrs Mandela's actions have increasingly led her into conflict with various sections of the oppressed people, and with the Mass Democratic Movement as a whole. The recent conflict in the community has centred largely around the conduct of her so-called football club, which has been widely condemned by the community. In particular, we are outraged by the reign of terror that the team has been associated with. (quoted by Carlin)

Since then, both before and after the release of her husband, the ANC made strenuous efforts to rehabilitate Mrs Mandela as the consort of the probable future president of South Africa. She was seen sweeping the streets of Alexandra township together with residents in a photo-opportunity prepared by the former Alexandra Action Committee, under the guidance of its most prominent activist, the trade union leader Moses Mayekiso (now a member of the central committee of the SACP). This process of political sanitizing was not confined to South Africa. In a press conference in London on 4 June, during one of her husband's international tours, not a single question was put to her by the world's press as she sat beside him, concerning the affair of Seipei and the football club. The mythology of political sanctity was international.

The ANC must have imagined that reality was what it willed it to be. It appointed Mrs Mandela as its 'head of social welfare' on 21 August this year – despite everything. To residents of Soweto that decision must have appeared equivalent to appointing a child molester to head an orphanage, and it produced an angry protest demonstration outside ANC offices in central Johannesburg by black social workers. That ANC leaders such as the secretary general, Alfred Nzo, should have even considered attempting to 'rehabilitate' Mrs Mandela in this way, after the statement by the MDM, is an indication of the autocratic matrix in their thinking. It is an index also of a tension between the bureaucratic centralism of the ANC in exile and local organizations created spontaneously within South Africa before and during the 1984–86 period: a tension continuously present since the return of the ANC leaders, and one tending towards the negation of local democracy.

Return of the Exiles

It is not hard at this point to understand the political environment in which eight former members of the ANC in exile – six of them victims of the repressions abroad – returned to South Africa from Tanzania in April this year, as reported in *Searchlight South Africa*, No 5. Their return was mentioned in the article 'Inside Quadro,' which introduced 'A Question of Democracy: The ANC Security Department in the 1984 Mutiny in Umkhonto we Sizwe', written by five participants in the mutiny, then (and at the time of writing this report, still) refugees in Nairobi.¹ The authors of the article – Bandile Ketelo, Amos Maxongo, Zamxolo Tshona, Ronnie Massango and Luvo Mbengo – first came public with an account of their experiences in a long interview published in a British newspaper, the *Sunday Correspondent*, on 8 April, while the other group of eight were being held in prison in Malawi after having fled Tanzania in an effort to reach South Africa.

Since May, when material for issue No 5 was got ready for the printer, the ANC security apparatus in exile has moved in some strength back to South Africa, merging with the youth milieu from which the Mandela 'football club' was drawn. In part this took place illegally, through the ANC's underground channels, but it also took place through a special amnesty agreed between the government and the ANC within the negotiating process. One of the first to return legally – preparing the way for senior commanders of MK such as Joe Modise (commander) and Chris Hani (chief of staff) – was the ANC's head of intelligence, Jacob Zuma. These were the conditions in which Siphon Phungulwa, one of the group of eight who returned to South Africa in April, was murdered in a daylight public assassination in Umtata, the main town of the Transkei, early in June.

Phungulwa was one of the closest colleagues of the authors of the article on the 1984 mutiny. After active involvement in the 1976–77 youth uprisings in the Port Elizabeth area, he left South Africa to join MK with his close friend Amos Maxongo, one of the authors of the article. Under the 'travelling name' Oscar Sizwe, he was one of the first group of MK cadres posted to Lesotho to help establish and organize ANC underground structures in the Transkei and

Border areas. This was appropriate since he knew the region, and his first language was Xhosa. At that time he was 'working very closely to Chris Hani and acting as his bodyguard' (letter from Ketelo, 17 July 1990).

Hani is reported to be a member of the Politburo of the SACP (*Front File*, October 1990). He appeared on the platform at the public launch of the SACP in Soweto on 29 July, speaking only in Xhosa. Ex-detainees regard him as a Xhosa chauvinist, a current vigorously resisted by the mutineers both before and after the mutiny. When Phungulwa was murdered, Hani had already returned to South Africa under amnesty and had begun to set up a base operation for MK in the Transkei 'homeland', working under very favourable conditions provided by the military regime of Major-General Bantu Holomisa, the first of the Bantustan leaders to adapt to the new dispensation. Even when the South African government withdrew Hani's amnesty in July and arrested leading MK figures following capture of large quantities of arms and computerized instructions relating to the so-called Vula military operation, Hani continued to enjoy protection in the Transkei. The indemnity was later restored by the government.

In exile, following his mission in Lesotho, Phungulwa had 'gone through the trying times in the struggle to democratize the ANC' (Ketelo). He took part in the 1984 mutiny in Angola, was next door neighbour to Ketelo in the isolation section of the State Security Prison in Luanda after the crushing of the mutiny in Viana camp and then shared a cell with him in the ANC detention camp, Quatro (officially, 'Camp 32'). He remained in Quatro until the former mutineers were released in December 1988.

After they were transferred by the ANC to Dakawa camp in Tanzania in January 1989 and permitted to take part in normal exile activities, Phungulwa was the main person responsible for organizing sports and culture among the exiles, whom the ANC prisoners on their arrival found very dispirited and apathetic. Towards the end of last year he was elected Sports and Cultural Co-ordinator for all the exiles in Tanzania, 'known practically by every ANC member in the region'. In general, it was only the former mutineers, with their attachment to democratic principles and their pronounced notions of political commitment, who could breathe life into the moribund structures in the camps. It was not long before these pariahs, who were not permitted to mention the mutiny or the repressions they and their colleagues had suffered, became an alternative pole of leadership to the security-dominated ANC bureaucracy in Dakawa.

On 16 September 1989, one of the seminal events in the life of the ANC abroad took place. In an astonishing rebuff to the ANC leadership, two former mutineers were elected to the leading positions on the most representative body of all the exiles in Tanzania, the Regional Political Committee, at an annual general meeting attended by several top-ranking ANC leaders, including one — Andrew Masondo — regarded by the mutineers as among the ANC leaders most responsible for the reign of terror in the camps.

The two ex-prisoners from Quatro chosen to represent thousands of exiles in Tanzania were Omry Makgoale (the MK district commander in Luanda before the mutiny, elected chairperson of the RPC under his 'travelling name')

of Sidwell Moroka, also known as Mhlongo) and Mwezi Twala (elected organizing secretary, under the travelling name Khotso Morena). Both had been members of the Committee of Ten, elected in Viana camp on the outskirts of Luanda to represent the demands of the armed personnel of Umkhonto to the ANC leadership in the middle period of the mutiny in 1984. Makgoale had been present in Quatro prison when the leading figure in the mutiny, Ephraim Nkondo (known to the mutineers by his travelling name, Zaba Maledza), was dragged through the prison with a rope around his neck, shortly before his death.

By voting Makgoale and Twala to leading positions on the RPC, the ANC exiles in Tanzania effectively endorsed the standpoint of the mutineers of 1984 against the ANC National Executive Committee and the MK High Command, which had violently repressed their demand for a democratic conference. Twala was one of the group of eight who later escaped from Tanzania with Siphophungulwa in January this year, and was the main spokesperson when they gave a press conference in Johannesburg on 16 May after being released by the police.

Within days of the election, the ANC leadership set out to negate its embarrassing result, culminating in an administrative *ukase* of the NEC in October dissolving the RPC and attempting to replace it with an appointed Interim RPC which the ex-detainees correctly described as a dummy body. This was an event of the greatest importance for the future of democratic conditions in South Africa, since this dissolution of an elected body was the work of a small number of individuals who within six months were engaged in negotiating with the South African regime for a new form of government in the country. The question of the detainees proved to be a nerve signal indicating the future political complexion of South Africa itself.

The Struggle for Democracy

Phungulwa fought alongside his prison comrades from Quatro to reverse this system of administrative decree. At the annual general meeting of the Zonal Youth Committee (ZYC) in Dakawa on 14 December – in the presence of the SACP leader Rusty Bernstein, of the Regional Department of Political Education – he argued that ANC officials should not dictate ‘who should be elected’. He opposed the idea that individuals elected to the RPC should agree to participate in an appointed ‘dummy structure’. A person who was elected by the people, he stated, ‘should serve the interests of the electorate not certain individuals. As the ANC has taught us, we should elect people of our choice’. (minutes, signed by the ZYC administrative secretary, Neville Gaba, 28 December 1989)

At this meeting, one of the most important in the fight of the ex-mutineers against bureaucratic despotism, Bernstein pointed out that he was ‘happy to see the spirit of democracy. In his opinion the meeting was conducted in the spirit of perestroika and glasnost, a spirit that requires truth about things’. (minutes) It is not known how Bernstein reconciled these oily words, sanctioned from Moscow, with the silencing of the leading activists in the

democracy movement in the ANC shortly afterwards, or with the manner in which they were driven into flight from the ANC and its host state, Tanzania, or with Phungulwa's murder.

A motion calling on an elected office-bearer of the dissolved RPC 'not to participate in the dummy interim structure' was passed by the ZYC, after contributions from Makgoale, Twala and Phungulwa setting out the history of the struggle for democracy within the ANC. By continuing the fight for electoral accountability through the ZYC, the former prisoners made it plain that they had not given up the principles of the mutiny, but that these now had a wider audience than ever. It was a forthright challenge which the ANC leaders were not slow to respond to. Within a fortnight, ANC headquarters in Lusaka sent two NEC members, first to the camp at Mazimbu and then to Dakawa on 24 December, in order formally to exclude the mutineers from office in any of the ANC structures, as reported in *Searchlight South Africa*, No 5. The two delegates from the NEC were Chris Hani, who had played a major part in the suppression of the mutiny, and Stanley Mabizela, whose colleague from Fort Hare University College in the early 1960s, Sizakhele Sigxashe, had concluded the mutiny with public executions.

On 28 December, following 'the decision of the NEC,' the ANC coordinator at Dakawa, Sidwell Khoza, insisted by letter that Phungulwa be removed from his position as cultural coordinator, along with eight others holding elected office in various local structures, including Ketelo, Maxongo, Makgoale and Twala. 'A sense that anything might happen at any time set in, as the community awaited the reprisals that might follow', the Nairobi refugees wrote in their history of the mutiny (p 65). 'There was a need to pre-empt the actions of the security department, which would have definitely followed.' Three days after being removed from office on Khoza's instruction, Phungulwa and the ex-detainees (but not Makgoale and some others) resigned from the ANC in order to remove themselves from its jurisdiction, and thus hopefully avoid arrest and possibly death.

At first they tried to place themselves under the jurisdiction of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Dar es Salaam, the Tanzanian capital. They received no assistance, a thread that runs throughout the history of the UNHCR in the face of appeals for help from the victims of the nationalist movements in South Africa and Namibia. Instead, they were arrested by the Tanzanian government and held in detention during the visit by Walter Sisulu.³ The conviction that they could get no protection either from the UNHCR or from the Tanzanian regime, which they viewed as in league with the ANC apparatus, convinced the ex-mutineers that their only safety lay in flight.

Bandile Ketelo and Zamxolo Tshona succeeded in reaching Nairobi on 22 January, after having been deported three times back to Tanzania in handcuffs by the Kenyan immigration police, and 'threatened with death if we came back to Kenya' (letter from Ketelo, Nairobi, 14 June 1990). Others arrived in two groupings in March, including Amos Maxongo and his companion Selinah Mlangeni and their small baby. All suffered extreme hardship, including arrest, before being provided accommodation by the All African Council of Churches at the YMCA in Nairobi.

The other group of eight, including Phungulwa and Twala, attempted to make their way from Tanzania back to South Africa via Malawi, on the principle that 'better a South African jail than the ANC "security"', (*Searchlight South Africa*, No 5, p 30). Arrested and imprisoned under very grim conditions in Malawi, they were interrogated there by South African security police, returned to South Africa by air by the government, detained by the police for three weeks in Kimberley and then released in Johannesburg on 15 May. The following day they presented the story of the mutiny and the repressions within the ANC at a press conference in Johannesburg organised for them by a Reverend Malambo, a figure with a political history allegedly associated with the South African government. While an ANC supporter accused them of being 'askaris' (former ANC members 'turned' by the police into secret assassins for the state) and to the disbelief of anti-apartheid journalists, they gave a detailed account of the mutiny and repressions within the ANC, confirming the information provided by the Nairobi group to the British press in April and the article appearing in *Searchlight South Africa* in July. Phungulwa at this time had only three weeks to live.

Friends of *Searchlight South Africa* were present at this press conference and had discussions with some of the ex-detainees afterwards. A fairly detailed report of the occasion, and of their allegations, appeared the following day in the Paris journal, *Liberation* (17 May). The group stated that they intended to form an association of 'parents of those who died or were detained in exile'. They had a duty to look after the interests of those they had left behind. It was necessary to obtain explanations from the ANC and to organize their comrades' return.

Shrouding a Murder with Slander

Days before Phungulwa's murder, the ANC's chief of intelligence, Jacob Zuma, took issue with the ex-detainees, claiming that a statement at their press conference that the ANC was holding more than 500 dissidents was false and that the correct figure was just over a hundred. He publicly smeared all the ANC prisoners, including the group of Twala and Phungulwa, with responsibility for 'participating in assassinations and spying'. The method of the Moscow Trials was deliberately invoked against the ex-mutineers, in order to discredit their fight for democracy. 'There were people with instructions to sow discord within our forces and our membership, to raise complaints about petty things and to aid a situation of uncertainty, even with specific instructions to organize mutiny', he told *New Nation*, a pro-ANC weekly funded by the Catholic Church (25 May, reported in *ANC Newsbriefing*, week ending 3 June).

As stated in an open letter delivered to Nelson Mandela on his visit to London in July, these remarks by the ANC's chief of intelligence were 'a lie and an incitement to murder' (open letter to Nelson Mandela from Solidarity with Ex-Swapo Detainees, London, 3 July 1990). A close colleague of the leading Stalinist Harry Gwala during his imprisonment on Robben Island, Zuma is responsible for very important positions within the NEC in the negotiating

process: he is a member, for instance, of the ANC working group responsible for determining political offenses in association with the South African government, deciding on release of political prisoners and immunity for exiles (*South*, 10 May, reported in *ANC Newsbriefing*, week ending 20 May), and is on the ANC committee responsible for investigating the carnage in Natal (NEC statement, 25 July). One need only grasp the primacy over the ANC bureaucracy in exile of its security apparatus — staffed mainly with members of the SACP and trained by the KGB — to gauge the weight of Zuma as chief of security, and the implication of his slander on the former mutineers. For many in South Africa, the label 'enemy agent' has been a death sentence.

Not long afterwards, Twala was told that he had 'forfeited his right to live in the townships' because of his comments at the press conference, following a 'comrades meeting' in Evaton, where his family lives. His young accusers said later: 'We ordered the family he was visiting to kick him out immediately'. (*Weekly Mail*, 8–14 June) In fleeing Tanzania for South Africa, the group had failed to reckon with the township vigilantes, whose activities received heightened expression in Mrs Mandela's football club and correspond nicely to the political theory of Mr Zuma. The phrase 'forfeited the right to live' rings ominously: it appears to have been a commonplace of township jurisprudence.

Zuma's statement could only mean that the ex-detainees were being set up for murder, either at the hands of township thugs or by ANC security personnel returned from abroad. Either way there would be no problem. The ANC/SACP was in the process of transferring security personnel from Mazimbu in Tanzania to South Africa, one of whom (travelling name Lawrence) was shot dead and others arrested by the police. In general, Umkhonto seems to have used its security personnel on numerous clandestine missions within South Africa, partly at least because of their greater loyalty to the SACP.

Phungulwa was killed in the territory he had previously helped to organise for military operations by MK. He had gone to the Transkei with Nicholas Dyasopi, a colleague from the mutiny and one of the group who had returned with him via Malawi, in order to explain to ANC members about the situation of the ex-mutineers. An appointment was made to speak to the chief representative in the ANC office in Umtata. A report from South Africa explains what followed:

On the day of the appointment, when the comrades arrived in the office they were told that the man they were supposed to meet was not present and therefore they were asked to wait a bit.

When the comrades realized it was getting late they began to leave, but officials insisted that they should wait until six o'clock as there was going to be a meeting and the man they were looking for would surely attend. But as the comrades could not wait any longer they left.

Outside the office there was a car with two occupants who sternly looked at them. On their way to the location they saw the same car following their taxi. At the point of their destination, the car overtook and blocked the taxi and that was where Sipho Phungulwa was shot. Dyasopi managed to flee and tell the story.

The use of the car and the weapon (a Scorpion machine pistol) recalls evidence agreed between prosecution and defence concerning the same means used in a double murder in Soweto in 1987, involving Oupa Seheri — a trained ANC guerrilla, infiltrated back into South Africa from abroad — operating from Mrs Mandela's house. Further, on leaving the ANC offices in Umtata shortly before he was shot, Phungulwa had recognized one of the two men in the car as a former ANC guerrilla whom he had himself trained in a military camp run by MK in Angola. This information became available when Dyasopi was able to alert his comrades to what had happened.

An Expendable Life

After the murder, some of the ex-detainees living in Soweto appeared on South African television and explained their case. As chief of staff of MK, Hani, who was in South Africa at the time of the murder setting up his own base of operations in the Transkei, was interviewed on the same programme and obscured the issue in the same manner as Zuma by presenting the ex-detainees as killers acting on behalf of the South African state. Without exception, former mutineers whether inside or outside South Africa considered Hani to have been ultimately responsible for Phungulwa's murder. They consider that Phungulwa — with his detailed knowledge of MK operations in the Transkei and his past role as Hani's bodyguard — was killed because he knew too much and because he had infringed on territory where Hani was setting up his own local military fiefdom, separate from the Johannesburg base of Joe Modise, the Umkhonto commander.

A month later, Nelson Mandela was confronted with information about Phungulwa's murder and the demand for an investigation by the ANC in an open letter from a small group set up in London, Solidarity with Ex-Swapo Detainees (Swesd). When the same issues were raised before journalists from all over the world at a press conference in central London on 4 July, during his world tour, Mandela 'brushed aside' the question in a 'steely' manner, according to a front page report in the British press the following day. His comment was cynical: 'I have never known a dead man to be able to identify the person who killed him'. (*Guardian*, 5 July) A letter delivered personally to Archbishop Desmond Tutu on 21 June in Oxford, where Tutu was receiving an honorary degree, asking him to support an inquiry into Phungulwa's murder, likewise failed to get a reply.

During the same period, ANC security in the camps in Tanzania told exiles that the ex-mutineers who had returned to South Africa or were living as refugees in Nairobi were 'true enemy agents who came to cause confusion amongst our ranks'. The language is very similar to that employed by Zuma, as ANC security chief, shortly before Phungulwa was shot. Security officials (nicknamed 'Selous Scouts,' after a notorious detachment in Ian Smith's forces in the last years of white rule in former Rhodesia) also stated that Phungulwa had been killed 'because he went to attack ANC offices in the Cape' (private communication in possession of the author). This transparent falsehood was an implied admission that he had in fact been killed by the ANC.

Despite having been presented by ex-detainees with a document setting out the history of suppression of the struggle for democracy in the ANC during his visit to Tanzania in January, Walter Sisulu at the most senior level of the ANC's old guard from Robben Island—second only to Mandela—also publicly repudiated the ex-detainees in much the same way as Zuma and the security apparatus in Tanzania. There is a systematic refusal, or inability, on the part of the ANC to confront its own history, not different from the inability of Mandela to confront the history of his wife. Instead, the big lie serves as a means to repress further, and even—as in the murder of Phungulwa—to prepare and justify assassinations. A leading MK commander, Mosima Sexwale, who spent 18 years on Robben Island, effectively conceded that ANC members had been involved in Phungulwa's murder when he met the Nairobi group on 31 August/1 September in Nairobi to urge them to rejoin the ANC: he stressed, however, that this had not been on instructions from the leadership (letter from Bandile Ketelo, 11 September).

Shortly after Phungulwa's murder, following a similar approach by Sexwale and the ANC national organizer and former MK leader from the 1960s, Wilton Mkwazi, the six surviving members of the group which had returned via Malawi—not including Dyasopi—were reported to have agreed to rejoin the ANC (*New Nation*, 29 June). When the Nairobi group were asked to rejoin the ANC by Sexwale, they refused. In the event of any meeting with the ANC leadership, they wanted to be independent. That is how the matter rests before the ex-detainees, among an estimated 40,000 exiles, return.

A Premature Truth

Zuma and Hani are men with whom capital can deal. None better than such as they to police the embers of revolt! As men of the political generation of the 1960s, they could not forgive the mutineers for holding up to them the principles of the youth of 1976—above all, its inability to compromise on democracy. For the earlier generation of the time of Zuma and Hani, Stalinism was a magnetic pole of attraction: not so for the youth of 1976, who imbibed some of the spirit of the changed world politics of 1968. This clash of political generations, as much as anything, explains the opposing places in the conflict between the 'mother of the nation' and the children of 1976.

The return of Siphosiso Phungulwa, after thirteen years' exile, was the return of one of the children of that period—one of the most thoughtful and dedicated of its children. In the meantime, the hope and promise of that time had given birth to strange fruit, both in South Africa and abroad. A study of the period from 1976 to 1990 would indicate that it produced initially the most democratic process of self-organization in the country's history, the formation of the black trade unions. It was a period as full of promise as in any country's history. The contribution of the ANC to this process was minimal. The formation of the unions into a force within the society was achieved, if anything, despite obstruction by the ANC and the SACP in exile (see 'Two Lines within the Trade Unions,' *Searchlight South Africa*, No 3). The independence of the unions presented itself initially as a major obstacle to ANC political hegemony,

a barrier to be knocked down before the country could be made safe for the present negotiations.

The means by which this was achieved required that the principles of the generation of 1976 be barbarized—in other words, that their revolutionary sting be drawn. The suppression of the generation of 1976 by the ANC security department in exile in the mid-1980s, alongside the rise of political hoodlumism as a way of death within the country, marked a political reaction against the most radical tendencies within the society: a campaign of repression which, in the manner of the 20th century, branded its victims as the counter-revolution. It is Zuma and Hani, not the ex-detainees, who shake the hand of the South African state, dripping in blood.

South Africa, too, has its revolution betrayed, and the mutineers of 1984 are witness to it. Thus the response: Off with their heads! Wipe out the infamy! from the ANC security apparatus. Alongside the myth of Mandela and the sinister figure of his wife, one must place also the corpse of Sipho Phungulwa. He had been back in South Africa for less than two months, half of that time as a prisoner of the state, the other half as a marked man by the ANC. The great majority in South Africa will shortly discover how little they are to gain from the current changes. Precisely because of that, the mutineers endure the fate of those who tell a premature truth. It may be asked why attention should be focused on this one death, when the period since the unbanning of the ANC has produced so rich a harvest. It is because this murder, like none other so far, reflects back on the principal mythology of the transition period: the myth of the ANC, reaching its most celestial heights as the Mandela myth.

Notes

1. As explained in the article in *Searchlight South Africa*, No 5, the ANC's prisoners in Angola renamed the detention Camp 32 after a hated prison in South Africa, the Johannesburg Fort, known colloquially as 'Number Four.' This then became transformed into the Portuguese for the word four, 'Quatro'—which we spelt incorrectly as 'Quadro.' There were other errors in the article, in which real names were occasionally confused with the pseudonyms (or 'travelling names') that ANC exiles received when they left South Africa. ANC combatants whose real names were confused with their travelling names include Mwezi Twala, Vusi Shange and Bandile Ketelo.

2. Ephraim Nkondo was the younger brother of Curtis Nkondo, the former president of the Azanian People's Organization (Azapo) and current president of the national teachers' organization, Neusa. He was known to the mutineers by his travelling name, Zaba Maledza, the name in which he appears in *Searchlight South Africa*, No 5. In 1976 he had been a student at the University of the North at Turfloop, active in the black consciousness students' organization, SASO. A published report on the mutiny, the pamphlet *Fighting the Crazy War*, by an anonymous participant, is dedicated to Nkondo under the hope that in a democratic South Africa 'the ghost of Zaba Maletza and others will be laid to rest'.

3. A picture of the grim conditions in the prison system of Tanzania is provided in the autobiography of the former leader of Swapo, Andreas Shipanga, held without trial in Tanzania from 1976 to 1978. Shipanga was falsely charged by Swapo with having spied for the South African government. His account of his years in prison in Tanzania appears in, *In Search of Freedom: The Andreas Shipanga Story, as Told to Sue Armstrong*, 1989, Ashanti, Gibraltar.

DRAGONS TEETH IN SOUTH AFRICA

Baruch Hirson

The Shame of Tribal Fighting

Over the past three years more than 3,000 lives have been lost in Natal and nearly 1,000 in the southern Transvaal. The number injured and maimed is not known; the loss of homes, burnt and gutted, is probably not even recorded. It is not possible to sit by complacently, while the carnage continues. It must be stopped, or inevitably the people will hold the leaders of the respective movements responsible for this carnage.

It is necessary to state the facts bluntly.

Political movements are exploiting the old clan and tribal symbols to rally their followers against opponents. Whether it be the Inkatha movement, raising troops in the style of traditional *impi*, rallying around the traditional cry of *Usuthu!* and accusing the ANC of being a Xhosa movement; or whether it be the ANC levelling charges of Zulu tribalism and pretending to be free of ethnic rivalry, there is enough evidence to say that tribalism has raised its ugly head. The only people to gain from this clash are those that hold the reins of power: the government of F W de Klerk, the right wing opposition, and the generals who control the police and the army.

The ANC and Inkatha, together with many of the smaller movements, are using the frustration and despair of the black communities to whip up passions for their own political ends. They stand by cynically (or they encourage mayhem), shedding the blood of the people in order to get at the head of the queue to speak to their white counterparts.

At national and at provincial level they mobilize their supporters and urge them on to battle. They invoke the crudest slogans to spur the people and, let it be admitted, their followers are often more bloodthirsty than their leaders. In the name of liberty and freedom they slash, mutilate, maim and kill.

But the strife does not only take place in the streets and the townships. The cancer that has gripped whole communities is to be found inside the very organizations that claim to be non-tribal. The stories emerging from once loyal members of MK and the ANC is one of ethnic rivalry among the leaders, of accusations and counter-accusations about a 'Xhosa leadership', or of 'Zulu betrayal', or of similar claims and rebuttals about other peoples (African, Indian and Coloured) who make up the South African population.

There is also the nasty smell of racist prejudice in the tone adopted towards some of the people, all leading members of the ANC and of the SACP, held by the police in connection with the so-called Vula operation in Natal. Four of the eight leading figures arrested (and apparently tortured), are of Indian origin. Nothing is said openly, but it is this that is suggested when they are described as the 'Cabal'.

The first inclination is to shout 'Shame!' at those who act this way. But shouting will serve no purpose. A shame it is, but that will not solve the problem.

There can be little doubt that the very nature of national politics draws its sustenance from this kind of prejudice and backbiting. What is happening now in South Africa, with its 'war-lords' and 'shack-lords', has its parallels elsewhere where national movements have dominated the towns and countryside. The situation in South Africa is only made more complex by the emergence of gun-toting gangs from within the state apparatus and the black political movements.

The use of vigilantes and/or criminal gangs to do the dirty work of political groups, and of overt racism to destroy opposition, has a history that stretches back in history. It was a feature of Tsarist Russia, of fascist Italy and of Nazi Germany, and more recently, of CIA operations in Europe. In condemning those excrescences, supporters of so-called resistance movements tend to ignore similar crimes perpetrated in the name of 'freedom' in the former colonial world: from Chiang Kai-shek to Pol Pot, Saddam Hussein to the Ayatollah Khomeini, Idi Amin to the Emperor Bokassa, the Burmese Generals and all their clones across Asia and the Middle East, through Latin America and Africa. Whether it was the criminals who became rulers, or the rulers who acted as criminals, is irrelevant. They were ruthless in their oppression and left behind a legacy of misery.

Shifting Fields of Battle

The recent massacres in South Africa, highlighted by the killings on 13 September on a commuter train carrying township workers home, has sharpened the debate on what is happening in South Africa. In this, one of the worst incidents of its kind, twenty six men and women were shot dead or hacked to pieces, and over 100 wounded, by armed thugs. This was a two pronged attack on unarmed commuters: one gang armed with guns and pangas stormed through a packed train, killing at random, a further detachment ambushed those trying to escape on a railway platform. The gangsters acted with military precision and were obviously highly trained. Not one word was uttered and there was no obvious immediate means of identifying the perpetrators. It was subsequently reported that members of the Inkatha branch of the Jeppe hostel in Johannesburg were responsible, but the accused claimed that they had been assaulted and forced by the police to sign confessions (*Independent*, 7 November).

The current wave of killings is usually traced back to September 1987 in Natal: over the past two months the battle ground has shifted to the PWV area. To explain what is happening journalists, alongside the ANC and the government,

have now discovered a *hidden hand* at work in the country. This is too simple and explains very little.

For the past four decades hit squads have existed in South Africa, harassing, intimidating and killing opponents of the regime. When prominent figures were targeted there was some publicity, but the assassins were never found and, until the recent disclosure of hit squads, the police and military remained protected by the government. But similar murders of less well known figures, particularly in the black townships remain hidden in the overall statistics of weekend crime. Assaults, injuries and deaths have all been ascribed to criminal elements and in the anarchy of township life there has been no possibility of proving otherwise. Only on rare occasions, when eye-witness reports could not be silenced, was the existence of hit squads mentioned. Such was the case in 1957 when police, organized in flying-squads, terrorised the population of Zeerust and crushed all resistance. Yet, little attention was paid to the disclosure of police terror in Father Hooper's book, *Brief Authority*. The flying-squads continued to operate unimpeded in other rural areas ignored or overlooked.

The brutality of the police, and particularly the special branch, was conclusively exposed when detainees disappeared, or were mysteriously found to be dead in their cells, through the late 1950s and 1960s. Although, once again, there were never any arrests, and all allegations of police misconduct were brushed aside, there was no longer any doubt about the fate of those who fell into the hands of the state security.

Ultimately there was universal condemnation of police brutality when Steve Biko, the leader of the Black Consciousness Movement, was brutally murdered in 1977. But he was only the most prominent in a long series of men and women who were 'eliminated' by the police. The total toll will never be known. Thousands were wounded or killed during the 1980s, when squatter camps were destroyed, demonstrations dispersed, students and strikers shot down, or men and women just disappeared. In the process political activists, community leaders, trade unionists, students and academics, among others, were systematically removed.

The list of victims includes those killed by letter bombs or booby traps, those who were gunned down, or those who died mysteriously in car 'accidents'. This was no *'hidden hand'*. The state was directly involved and no one can take their denials seriously.

Parallel campaigns of police and army oppression also took place in the Bantustans, or so-called homelands. These puppet regimes have brutally removed opposition groups, stopped boycott movements and prevented working class organization. Discontent has been snuffed out by armed vigilantes, and the jails have been filled with people accused of opposing the government. Reports of killings have filtered through the censored media, but in most cases a tight censorship has concealed the extent of the violence employed to silence discontent.

These events place South Africa high among those states that rule by naked terror, but this pales into insignificance when compared with South Africa's involvement in neighbouring territories. Raiding parties into Lesotho,

Botswana, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe have killed scores of men, women and children. Sometimes excused as 'hot pursuit', sometimes denied, and sometimes carried out by local agents (military or otherwise), the South African government built up an atmosphere of terror in neighbouring territories. Those raiding parties were only the visible tip of South Africa's policy of destabilization in the region. Opposition inside Namibia was stifled by an administration that was as vicious as any in South Africa and, to maintain its control, South African troops, backed by locally recruited hoods, conducted a campaign of terror against all suspected opponents. The struggle spilt across borders into Botswana, Zambia and Angola, and that provided an excuse to wage war against the MPLA government in Angola. In this the South Africans fought alongside Unita, the internal army that aimed to destroy the MPLA government. The fact that the MPLA government is tainted by its Stalinist origins does not alter the criminal nature of South Africa's war.

An even greater crime was (and is still being) committed in Mozambique. In that unhappy country Renamo has waged a war of attrition against the government that has brought misery and destruction to large tracts of the land. Renamo has no known programme except that of destabilizing the country. Its origins are unclear but it is known that the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organisation used it in 1974 to destabilize Mozambique in a failed attempt to deny the ZANU guerrilla army a base to the east of Rhodesia. Renamo was adopted as a satellite army by South Africa when Ian Smith, the Rhodesian would-be white messiah, was ousted. Its forces have killed, pillaged and destroyed entire provinces, descending to the lowest level of barbarism: men have been killed, women raped, ears, noses and limbs hacked off. Here too, there has been no 'hidden hand'. Renamo has official spokesmen in Portugal — and instructions from South Africa have been discovered in a captured Renamo campsite.

The involvement of the South African army and police force in criminal acts throughout the region is not in doubt, not in the past, and not today. In almost every case it has been possible to locate the centre from which the commands emanated, in Pretoria, or from some Bantustan capital. Only in some cases has there been an element of doubt. Rogue elements inside the police or army, with the connivance of their commanding officers (and cabinet ministers), have used their own operatives to carry out one or other dirty tricks campaign.

Who Are The Collaborators?

South African has a highly trained and equipped army, backed by police hit squads and armed police. But the security forces have also relied on a vast body of informers for its intelligence and hit-men for their more nefarious activities. Some were volunteers, come to earn their pieces of silver; others were bludgeoned into service. The state has enrolled criminals, people broken under detention, or men seeking to advance their own interests, and a *lumpen* element has been employed to terrorize opponents. Among the latter were vigilantes in the squatter camps who wiped out opposition groups with police connivance — after the latter proved unequal to that task.

But the state's most valuable allies, both inside and outside South Africa, have been organizations based on ethnic groups. This has been most clearly seen in Angola and Mozambique, where men with distinct tribal affiliations, hoping to ride to power on the backs of the South African army, became willing allies in the terrorgame. In Angola it was Unita, a movement with a strong ethnic backing, that sided with Pretoria. In Mozambique, Renamo found its main recruits among ethnic groups excluded from the ruling party, Frelimo. In Angola the tribal element is indisputable.

The same factor has been brought into play in the killingfields of South Africa. One of the first indications of the use of ethnic (or 'tribal') conflict extends back to clashes in the mine compounds in the early parts of the century, many of them encouraged by the mine-owners in an obvious divide and rule tactic. But it would be too simple to attribute such clashes to the employers alone. Rivalries that extend back through the 19th century separated men from different ethnic groups — and these were given new form in the mines with the appearance of kinship or age-group gangs. Tensions were always close to breaking point in the compounds where accommodation, food, and work conditions were atrocious. In these all-male societies there were rivalries over women (and over the younger men) that were explosive, and the official ban on alcohol led to clashes over scarce supplies. In the ensuing fights the rival groups merged with kinship groups that had their own record of petty gangsterism.

But much of the estrangement was over work conditions. Men from different ethnic groups were allocated different jobs, with differential rewards, that led to understandable jealousy. This was further exacerbated when different ethnic groups took opposing views on possible strike action. The fights that followed were bloody and often fatal.

These clashes were not confined to mine compounds. Conditions in the towns, which generated frustration and despair, led to the formation of gangs, many organized around kinship or age-group, almost all drawn from a single clan or ethnic group. These gangsters were beholden to no-one. They took what they wanted and left a trail of destruction behind them. They could be bought off or bribed, but ultimately they terrorized the townships. The fact that so few were brought to book by the police is not surprising. What is still unknown is the extent of collaboration between these gangs and the police in removing persons deemed 'undesirable' to the authorities.

However, local officials (on the mines and in the towns), whose task it was to control the work force, knew how to manipulate ethnic differences for their own ends. Accommodation was arranged on ethnic lines, group rivalries were encouraged through 'tribal' dance competitions and work tasks were allocated to specific 'tribal' groups. In particular policing in the compounds was allocated to 'loyal indunas' or 'headmen', Zulu-speakers were used as night-watchmen, and so on.

It is uncertain when the government found it convenient to work formally with one black ethnic group against others. A change in government policy, at least overtly, took place when Prime Minister Verwoerd and then Vorster found it possible to work together with the black governments in Malawi,

Lesotho and Swaziland, and then with Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia. Provision was even made to accommodate diplomats from neighbouring African territories, even if the police blundered from time to time in invoking discriminatory legislation against embassy staff. This was the time when the peculiar South African phrase *foreign natives* took on new meaning.

It took time to absorb these lessons and apply what was found expedient in the independent African states. Excluding early attempts at winning friends among voters when there was still a limited franchise in the Cape¹ the Hertzog and Smuts governments had limited contact with blacks who were willing to cooperate in making segregation acceptable even in the 1930s and 1940s. These included the conservative Coloureds in the Cape in 1944 who were prepared to work within segregated institutions, and Africans who worked within the Transkei Bunga, the Advisory Boards and the Native Representative Council. But these people had no large scale following and were discarded after the National Party victory in 1948.

The 'Homelands' policy provided some working relationship, but its impact was minimal because of the policy of divided political representation. The newly elected leaders of the Transkei and Ciskei, of Bophuthatswana and so on, were recognized as camp-followers but they were outside the realm of politics in white South Africa.

New possibilities for the government emerged from an unexpected quarter. The ANC, seeking support in the rural areas in the 1970s, turned to the one region in which they thought they had an ally. The story, as told by Oliver Tambo, President of the ANC, in his political report to the National Executive Committee, in 1985 was that:

It was...in this context that we maintained regular contact with Chief Gatsha Buthelezi of the KwaZulu bantustan. We sought that this former member of the ANC Youth League who had taken up his position in the KwaZulu bantustan after consultations with our leadership, should use the legal opportunities provided by the bantustan programme to participate in the mass mobilisation of our people on the correct basis of the orientation of the masses to focus on the struggle for a united and non-racial South Africa. In...our discussions with him, we agreed that this would also necessitate the formation of a mass democratic organisation in the bantustan that he headed. Inkatha originated from this agreement. Unfortunately, we failed to mobilise our own people to take on the task of resurrecting Inkatha as the kind of organisation that we wanted, owing to the understandable antipathy of many of our comrades towards what they considered as working within the bantustan system. The task of reconstituting Inkatha therefore fell on Gatsha Buthelezi himself who then built Inkatha as a personal power base far removed from the kind of organisation we had visualised...In the first place, Gatsha dressed Inkatha in the clothes of the ANC...Later, when he thought he had sufficient of a base, he also used coercive methods against the people to force them to support Inkatha...²

Tambo failed to foresee the outcome of the process that the ANC had set in train. An organization built on tribal foundations, whether 'dressed in the

clothes of the ANC' or not, was bound to put its own ends before that of a wider national movement. This became apparent one year after Inkatha was founded when the black workers of Natal staged a series of wildcat strikes and Barney Dladla, a member of the KwaZulu cabinet, placed himself at the head of a workers' demonstration. Although this was too radical for Dladla's colleagues, and he was removed from his post, Inkatha gained in prestige from his act of support. The country was then thrown into turmoil when students of the (tribal) university colleges rallied to the overthrow of Portuguese colonial rule in Mozambique, followed by the revolt of school youth (in 1976) throughout the country. The crisis concentrated the minds of government, first very tentatively and then more determinedly.

Buthelezi and Inkatha received some recognition as potential allies of the white minority. He seemed to fit the bill from many angles. He was head of a Bantustan government – and although there was some doubt about his credentials because he would not accept independence status for KwaZulu, the credibility this earned him among sectors of the black population became an asset. Parallel to this, the organization of the Inkatha movement on ethnic lines was in keeping with government policy of single-race political parties, and the stress on chiefly control was also in line with the prevailing political philosophy. Buthelezi was also an open and even enthusiastic supporter of a capitalist economy: this stamped him as a man who could be trusted.

The events of 1976–77 were crucial. Inkatha's reactionary role was revealed when its youth members turned against students who joined the struggle on the KwaZulu college campus. Thereafter migrant workers in Soweto, whose homes were in KwaZulu and who were either reluctant to accept, or opposed to, calls by the youth for one day strikes were mobilized to attack the men of Soweto who stayed at home.

There is no clear evidence about the sequence of events. Did the migrants oppose the strike call and then rally behind the Inkatha banner, or did Inkatha mobilize the workers and urge their opposition to the stay-at-home? Whichever came first, there was no doubt that leaders of Inkatha, including Buthelezi, were in the hostels (against official police instructions) in the aftermath of attacks on the student-led strikers.

Even more sinister was the presence of the police behind the migrant workers as they attacked the students and the strikers. The position of the police was clear: they aimed to crush the revolt that had started in the schools and colleges. The position of Inkatha was also evident: its leaders opposed the student-led revolt and they provided a tribal ethos for the migrants in Soweto. I exposed the role of these migrants, the police and Inkatha, in my book *Year of Fire, Year of Ash*, and believe the evidence was indisputable.

The conflict with Inkatha men came to the fore again in 1987, following a dispute between striking workers in Howick (Natal) and the Inkatha leadership. This spread across Natal leading to clashes that were politically motivated (Inkatha versus supporters of the ANC) but assumed all the aspects of an ethnic dispute. The fact that the ANC (and the trade union movement) in Natal were predominantly composed of Zulu-speakers does not negate the evidence of an ethnic divide. Inkatha is no more homogeneous than the ANC.

Inkatha includes local businessmen, administrative personnel, and also the more conservative, more rurally based population (and consequently the migrant workers), the unemployed, the lumpen, and a section of the criminal population, but it is also unashamedly the movement of Zulu nationalism. The ANC did have a somewhat different mix, and although it is not very different in overall class composition in the towns, it had the support of the more urbanized (and more skilled) workers. The differences were more marked, both in the rural areas – where land possession placed overwhelming power in the hands of the traditional leaders – and in the squatter camps where Inkatha was able to recruit the ‘lumpen and the dispossessed’.

There was one further factor that set the ANC apart from Inkatha. Although ANC members in Natal are predominantly Zulu, it also included Pondo and Xhosa workers, and has now opened its ranks to whites and Indians. This does set the ANC apart from Inkatha, which place its reliance on tribal affiliation, but in many other respects the demands of both organizations do not differ by much.

Inkatha's rank and file include the demand for more land for the farmer, work opportunities for the unemployed, trading rights for the hawkers and shop-keepers – and for the leaders, the right to take their place in the ‘political kingdom’ that is offered by the talks on negotiations. The nationalism of the ANC (in alliance with the Stalinists) is rendered more complex by the presence of the trade unions and the seemingly wider community from which its members are drawn, but there are the same demands for land, work, trading rights and the right to enter the *political kingdom*.³

The programme of the ANC, when stripped of its populist appeals, is little different from that of Inkatha. There is the same mix of interests, the same heterogeneous membership to satisfy. Ultimately, because both movements aim to form an alliance with the capitalist establishment, whether with de Klerk, or by any other means, they converge in their demands. In fact, Buthelezi and the Inkatha movement saw the need to follow the capitalist line when the leaders of the ANC were still tied to the rhetoric of the Freedom Charter with its demands for nationalization of the mines and banks. It is difficult to see where the two movements differ now in their view of the economic future of South Africa.

Where then is Tribalism?

The question of tribalism, or more cogently, ‘post-tribalism’, was raised inside the ranks of the Communist Party in the 1950s. The debate opened when Lionel Forman, recently returned from Prague, advanced the ideas of the Soviet academician Potekhin who ‘specialized’ in African studies. That savant, working from Moscow and using the crude notions of nationalism then operating in the USSR, declared that the Zulu people were a nation. They had all the attributes required of such a people: territory, language and a common historical heritage. Consequently, they had to be considered a nation in some future South African confederation. Forman was convinced by Potekhin's arguments and spoke of the need for Communists to consider the

implications of there being several nations in the country. When confronted, in debate by JH Simons (also of the CPSA) on the need for unity in the struggle against apartheid, Forman argued that he was speaking of the needs of a post-apartheid society. In such a state the Zulu people would have to be encouraged if they wished to develop their language, literature, and so on.⁴

At no point in that debate was the question of the viability of such a state discussed. Kenneth Jordaan who took part in the forum, quite clearly as a non-Stalinist, did focus on the economic aspects, saying that the basis for independent nationhood had been destroyed under the conditions of capitalist control. All that he would concede was the right to cultural and linguistic autonomy if the Zulu people so demanded after liberation.

Ignoring this debate, social scientists continued to speak of tribalism and of tribal differences in South Africa. This was bolstered by the many pictures and postcards for tourists that featured bare bosomed (and obviously nubile) women; rickshaw pullers in full regalia; men engaged in 'tribal' dances; Zulu warriors waving spears; 'tribal' chiefs and indunas at ceremonial functions, and so on. All this fitted naturally with the philosophy of the National Party government and was used in the fashioning of the Bantustan policy.

It was partly as a reaction to official policy that white oppositionists rejected the use of the word 'tribe'. But there were also other considerations. Tribalism as a concept, was rejected as a term of derision, associated with primitiveness, relegating people to a 'lower' social standing. Many of the terms current in the country, they said, were coined by whites and had no historic legitimacy: 'chief', 'Nguni', 'Bantu', and a battery of words were as spurious as 'fanagalo', the pidgin language used on the mines. In fact, all the words were divisive if not insulting. The word 'tribal' was out and the word 'ethnic' took its place. That was convenient because 'ethnic' also served to replace 'race' as a concept.

A new brand of revisionist historians and other academics were in the forefront of the move to clear away the terminology they found repugnant. Some of the fruits of that move can be found in the volume edited by Leroy Vail, *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*. Vail's introduction to the volume reflected the desire by academics to avoid the crude connotations embedded in the concept 'tribalism' and to understand the continued response of African communities to local loyalties. Whether this loyalty is ascribed to 'ethnicity' (as is now preferred), or 'tribalism' is less important than understanding the localism and parochialism expressed in the concept. Ultimately the lesson that emerges from the studies in the book is expressed in the title: that is, the *creation of tribalism*.

For Vail and his associates the creation of tribalism can be traced, in most cases, to missionaries, administrators, anthropologists and historians, who defined the boundaries of local communities. They did this for a variety of reasons: it was convenient for administrative means, particularly where rule was exercised by the 'chiefs' on behalf of the colonial power; or useful to the missionaries, who provided uniform calligraphies to otherwise preliterate people in order to spread the gospel; or fitted the precepts of anthropologists, sociologists, or historians, who were imbued with the philosophy of social Darwinism.

However, the new tribalism was also of functional value to many Africans, including the traditional political hierarchy that was transformed into a branch of the state bureaucracy; the men who were drawn into the labour market because it was the one security to land possession (and the more restrictive the land laws, the more the land was treasured); or to the tribal elders who sought 'possession' of the women who were confined to the 'tribal' area. That is, tribalism (and it is time to drop the inverted commas) was built afresh with each generation of administrators and tribal chieftains to meet the needs of the roles they played.

But the creation of loyalties around the tribe was only possible because of the traditions, real and supposed, upon which it could feed. The core element of any group identity was the language (whether given new form by the missionaries – as stressed by academics – or even created anew as in the obvious case of Swahili in east Africa)⁵. To these must be added the customs that were handed down through the parents or kin-groups, including religion, chiefly veneration, initiation, circumcision, dancing, bridewealth, food and taboos. None of these were necessarily of long standing but were accepted by the youth and were sacrosanct. It is these that are transferred from generation to generation – the essential residue from the past, however much adapted and altered – and these helped define tribal identity.

New requirements and accepted tradition are inextricably bound together and adapted to meet the changing requirements of each tribal (or even clan) group. It becomes dependent on, and also changes with, educational facilities and economic status, and with this, on prospects and rivalries that open up in jobs, living conditions and political developments.

In a society like South Africa where the division of labour and of living standards is so heavily influenced by ethnic considerations, the divisions between Africans and other black communities is itself a cause of considerable strain. The heavy dependence on ethnicity for advancement opens up gaps between the different communities. It also underscores new tensions between African tribesmen who compete for scarce resources and bolster this with the learned tradition of past (pre-colonial) conflicts. Tribalism, far from being eliminated by economic development is given a new lease of life by the changes to which everyone is subjected. It is bolstered by the administration and the employers because it can be used to atomize the workforce: and it is reinforced by the tribesmen themselves as a protection from the authorities. This, despite attempts from within the ranks of both the oppressors and the oppressed to blur the boundary between tribalism and integration into the modern market economy.

Nationalism and the Tribal Tradition

When the South African Native National Congress (precursor to the ANC) was formed in 1912 it was the hope of those early pioneers that tribal differences would give way to a new national ideology. The desire was sincere but the spirit was weak. Despite continued calls to unite the people (exclusive to blacks in the case of the SANNK/ANC), the tribal identities of the African

people were never forgotten. Early recollections of Congress leaders were of study groups in which the prowess of 19th century chiefs was proclaimed,⁶ and this was repeated by speakers and writers through the century.⁷ In fact, the Congress consisted in theory of 'two houses', a lower house of commoners, the upper house of chiefs. Initially the chiefs provided some of the funds for Congress, but their absorption into the state structure removed them effectively from the organization. This did not end the connections. ANC leaders always mixed with, or sought contact with chiefs at all levels.

Furthermore, there were frequent references to the tribal origins of the leaders – and many of them were open champions of one or another tribal group. Among the presidents of the ANC were Pixley ka I Seme (married into the Swazi royal family), Dr Moroka (scion of a chiefly family and apparently proud of his forefather's hospitality to the Boer trekkers), Albert Luthuli (affectionately known as 'Chief' because that was what he had been before the government deposed him), and the current Vice-President and effective head of the ANC, Nelson Mandela (also from a chiefly family). The connections with traditional society went far beyond veneration of chiefs. Commoners like Josiah Gumede, the ANC President from 1927 to 1930, who presented a radical face, was to earn his living as an *inyanga* or herbalist, deeply embedded in tribal custom. Even the rural communist leader of the northern Transvaal during the 1930s and 1940s, Alpheus Maliba, wrote in praise of the Venda chiefs and was a visitor at their kraals when he toured the Zoutpansberg region.

The connections are many and various. The use of chiefly symbols by Nelson Mandela is well known (see the many references to his use of tribal dress in biographies) that of Chief Luthuli somewhat forgotten, despite his use of tribal costume when he accepted the Nobel peace prize. He describes his founding of the Zulu Language and Cultural Society in his autobiography *Let My People Go*. The Society's aim, as laid down in its Charter, was to preserve the heritage of the Zulu people 'apportioned to us by Divine Guidance of the Almighty, the Creator, Who gave people their several Languages, Customs, Traditions and Usages'. The society, furthermore, set out to restore the past traditions of the Zulu people, to preserve Zulu traditions, laws, usages and customs and modernize the Zulu language (pp 37–38).

The point that I am making is that tribal traditions, tribal lore and tribal customs were never far below the surface. The fact that such men also proclaimed the unity of all Africans cannot negate their deep ties with sectional interests.

The loyalties to kinship were not necessarily loosened by passage through the school system. If anything, the bonds grew tighter because of the regional concentration of schools and churches. The Xhosa, living in the eastern Cape, attended schools and then Fort Hare (the only college that catered for Africans over many decades), and qualified as an African elite. The process under which this elite was produced was peculiar to a colonial situation. Xhosa-speakers enjoyed a privilege both geographical and historical in origin: they were the first in contact with the missionaries, and therefore the first into

the mission schools and colleges. Priority of conquest had produced its own law of uneven development here.

The young students rebelled against their teachers and the paternalistic conditions of the schools. There were periodic strikes and riots, and these educational establishments were hotbeds of black nationalism. Yet, ultimately, these same men (and particularly those who were not expelled) banded together to form an essential part of the leadership of the ANC. Even when they mixed with men from other regions of southern Africa at Fort Hare, the Xhosas were in the majority. The consequences were inevitable: a broad black nationalism in which all were bound together, with sectional loyalties that were bound to obtrude.

It was the bonding at Fort Hare that provided a crucial sector of the ANC leadership in the 1950s, and in this the Xhosa-speakers predominated. But friendships at Fort Hare also provided the possibility of contacts even outside the ranks of the ANC—particularly after 1960 when that organization was banned. Gatsha Buthelezi was a fellow student of several future ANC leaders at Fort Hare and this provided the basis upon which the ANCers would later urge upon Buthelezi the need to form a regional organization to fight for the freedom they had espoused together. It was from this that the revived Inkatha movement was born. The veneration of chieftdomship, taken with an opportunistic desire to bypass the ban imposed by the government, was at the roots of a movement which became a rival of the ANC.

Generalizations about national movements are difficult, if only because the multiplicity of different local conditions must be taken into account. However, it can be said with some confidence that those movements that have been backed by classes with strong economic roots tend to be unitary (and eliminate all rivals); similar movements born in poverty, with no such class to bolster them, tend to be fissiparous and splinter. In the latter case unity is achievable only through the use of armed force. It is that which lies behind the establishment of military dictatorships in so many backward (or 'under-developed') societies. The use of guerrilla troops, or of armed gangs and vigilante groups, as in South Africa, is evidence of such backwardness and a harbinger of a splintered society.

Is There a Way Out?

It is not possible to see a way out of the inter-movement killings, inside the politics of national liberation. The leaders do not have the will or the ability to end the conflict. They might stitch together an armistice, but the name of the game is the elimination of all rivals or of schism. Those that ally themselves to the ANC or Inkatha, or the smaller movements like the PAC or Azapo, can only be lending their energies to a politics that is ultimately destructive. There is no way out in that direction.

The two alternatives that are on offer today can only lead to anarchy and bloodshed. That is: the elimination of rivals or a patched up peace which splits at the seams. That is the best scenario—provided that right-wing parties do not intervene (as 'allies' or otherwise) to provoke even greater violence.

Whether the working class can intervene to transform the nature of South African politics is doubtful. It has not been able to form its own political organization, and at the moment seems beholden to the neo-Stalinist movement, the SACP. Yet the organized workers alone can find a way to win over, or at least neutralize, the Zulu migrant workers in the Transvaal. They alone can influence at least a section of the men who are forced to fight with the rampaging Inkatha gangs. It is a task that needs patience, energy, and also a new political philosophy. Failure to do this work will lead to more lost lives, more maimed men and women, more grief.

When the white political parties are put into the equation the outlook looks even bleaker. Ignoring the so-called Democratic Party (who are ciphers when effective forces are sought) there is only the party of government (the National Party) and the range of right-wing parties (extending from the Conservatives to the neo-Nazi gangs). F W de Klerk and his government claim to stand on the high ground, aloof from these killings. Yet it was the instruments of government, the police, the army, and the hit squads, that generated and inspired the killings throughout the region.

For Mandela to call on de Klerk to police the country in order to stop the killings is to call on the hangman to tighten the noose. The *hidden hand* is openly in control and the ANC leadership has, wittingly or otherwise, invited the police and the army to determine the future political development of South Africa.

Notes

1. I have excluded reference to many cross-ethnic attempts at cooptation. One of the more significant attempts occurred in the early 1920s when General Hertzog solicited the aid of the trade union leader Clemens Kadalie for electoral support when the African vote was still a factor in Cape politics.

2. *Documents of the Second National Consultative Conference of the ANC, Zambia, 16–23 June 1985*, pp 20–21). Tambo was not interested in historical niceties. The existence of the organization *Inkatha ka Zulu* extends back to 1922–23 when the Zulu aristocracy needed a body to campaign for state recognition for the king. It was revived by Chief Luthuli in 1935 (to promote Zulu identity and to secure recognition of the Zulu paramountcy). Buthelezi became chief minister of KwaZulu in 1972 and resurrected it as Inkatha Yenkululeko Yesizwe in 1975. See S Marks (*passim*) and Hirson (1981).

3. I stress this phrase because these were the words of Kwame Nkrumah when he campaigned for control of Ghana. That 'political kingdom', without economic viability or the possibility of economic transformation started with a bang and ended with a whimper.

4. The debate is discussed in Hirson (1981)

5. A leading member of the PAC, Peter Raboroko suggested using Swahili as the lingua franca in the 'liberated' South Africa, *Liberation*, No5, Sept.1953.

6. Thus the memoirs of Selope Thema describes papers given on the pre-colonial chiefs and their respective powers.

7. See e.g I B Tabata, *The Awakening of a People*. At his trial in 1963 Mandela also spoke of his fascination, as a child, with accounts of tribal heroes.

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WELVERDIEND SPELLS DEATH A STORY OF OVERKILL

Brian Oswin

Epilepsy is Infectious

Welverdiend is neither unusual or unique.

It is a place where young men who have been beaten to death in a police station: just another small incident, in a remote town, in a country in which violence has become routine.

Welverdiend is little more than a village, 80 miles to the west of Johannesburg. It is serviced by blacks in the township known as Khutsong, a 'sprawling, trash-strewn township of 60,000 that sits on a treeless plain between Welverdiend, about ten miles west, and the conservative mining town of Carltonville, five miles east', writes Scott Kraft, a *Los Angeles Times* staff writer. For some utterly unknown reason the young men of the township seem to suffer from epilepsy which comes on when they are interrogated in the police station. Then, without any previous history of that complaint, they throw a fit and die soon after. Because the illness is so widespread the relatives are not informed of the fatality. However the epilepsy is sometimes transitory. After two or three days it might appear that it was only a phantom disease. The victim did have a fit, but soon recovered. Then, apparently, another young man had a fit,

because he assaulted and killed his friend. It all happened inside the police station—witnessed by the policemen who stood by, unable to intervene. Because freedom is coming to South Africa, this leads to a police inquiry. It might even lead to an inquest where witnesses will swear on oath, and...justice will be seen to be done.

The first time this mysterious disease was noted in Welverdiend was in January 1990. Before this the young men did not seem to have shown signs of epilepsy, catalepsy or any other -lepsy.

It was Nixon Phiri who first showed signs of the disease. He was one of several youths arrested on 16 January inside a Khutsong squatter camp and taken to the police station. One by one the youths were taken into an interrogation room to be questioned. Phiri and his friends were accused of burning a van in the township. Thomas Tshabalala, aged 16, told lawyers that he had been punched and kicked until he signed a confession. Phiri was made of harder mettle. According to Tshabalala and two other youths, Pule Mac Mothupi and Ismael Booyens (in separate and independent statements), Phiri was told to remove his shirt. He was then taken outside and they heard him screaming and his body hitting the floor. Phiri was shouting: *Yo nana yo, na sena!* It is not me! Booyens said he saw Phiri taken outside where water was splashed over his face. He was then taken back to the interrogation room.

There were renewed screams and then silence. Nixon Phiri was dead.

Two weeks later Tshabalala and Mothupi were among 25 killed during police action 'to quell township disturbances'. Booyens took the hint and went into hiding.

There was an internal police inquiry and there police officers reported that Phiri had been nervous and agitated. He began talking incoherently. The mysterious disease had apparently taken hold of him because they said: 'He suddenly started shaking...and fell off a chair against a steel cabinet.' There were two policemen present, one white and one black. They said they tried to apply mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, but he died. The report on that investigation, released nine months after the death, said that all the officers in the unit testified to the truth of the story.

That was strange, because the lad had grown up on a white-owned vegetable farm about ten miles from the township and had no previous signs of illness. Not, that is, since the age of two when he had a brief period of what his mother called 'chest pains'. Nonetheless, after intensive police questioning, both his mother and aunt signed statements saying that Phiri had suffered epileptic attacks from childhood. Neither of the women could read and both attached their thumb prints to their respective documents. 'We were scared', said Mrs Phiri, in an interview with a journalist.

The story of the steel cabinet, so conveniently placed, was suspiciously like the yarn concocted by the police to explain the death in 1977 of Steve Biko. It was thus fitting that Dr Jonathan Gluckman, who had exposed the circumstances surrounding the death of Biko, should have been called in to conduct a private autopsy. He found that Phiri had died of a brain haemorrhage associated with external injuries. He said that he would be surprised if the

injuries had been caused by an epileptic seizure and said that he thought the youth had been badly beaten up.

Donald Brunette, the Transvaal attorney general, has said that following the police inquiry there was no case against anyone.

Epilepsy Strikes Again

Only six months later, on 12 July, 15 year old Eugene Mbulawa, described as a 'young activist', was in the same interrogation room. His best friend, William Makgatje, was also present. Handcuffed, he waited his turn to be questioned.

The youths were accused of causing mayhem in Khutsong, a charge they denied. Mbulawa was accorded the usual treatment: he was slapped across the face and, while being interrogated, a policeman kicked his feet out from under him, sending him crashing to the ground. Makgatje was taken away and the examination apparently continued. Ten hours later Mbulawa was unconscious and an ambulance was called. The disease had struck again. The ambulance men were informed that Mbulawa had had an epileptic seizure.

On 13 July the youth died without recovering consciousness. The attorney engaged by the boy's family demanded that the police be charged. Once again, there was a police inquiry at Welverdiend. It seems that if Eugene Mbulawa had had an epileptic seizure, that was not the cause of death. In fact, it was reported that Makgatje, handcuffed and under police control, had murdered his friend. Presumably, he had also been the victim of a seizure. On 20 September, two and a half months after the police had watched him murder his friend, he was so charged.

The sordid details of events leading up to the interrogation and deaths have been disclosed by the lawyers acting for the family. In the slum-yards that are called townships, the youth of Khutsong have been led into a spiral of violence that is the outcome of deprivation, desperation and destruction. For some time now the police of the area have cracked down on political protest, particularly in the schools. In waves of counter-violence the Khutsong youth have burnt cars and homes, attacked police cars and black policemen. They have accepted no external discipline but called themselves loyal soldiers of Umkhonto we Sizwe. Mbulawa, whose parents lived under more comfortable conditions than others in Khutsong, was known to his school friends as 'Castro' because he spoke so often of the achievements of Cuba, and was said to have belonged to the group of 'freedom fighters' known as the 'Kadafi gang'. To the police he was no 'freedom fighter' and no Castro. Just 'a cheeky kaffir' who was asking for trouble.

In June the police dropped leaflets on Khutsong from an aeroplane offering rewards of R5,000 (about \$2,000) for assistance in arresting troublemakers. This was an invitation to armed vigilante groups to go from house to house seeking out the miscreants. Finally, in what seems an obvious trap, peace talks were arranged between the vigilantes and the young rebels. Soon after they met, supposedly to drive to Johannesburg for talks, the police swooped and arrested 23 youth, including Mbulawa and Makgatje. They were driven to

Carltonville and forced to take cold showers, fully clothed. It was mid-winter and they were left dripping wet, without towels or blankets, for the night. The next day they were driven to Welverdiend and the round of tortures began.

According to statements collected by the lawyers, they were subjected to tortures, including electric shocks to the genitals. At the end of the day most confessed to the charges made by the police. Mbulawa and Makgatje were kept for the end. These were the two with whom the police particularly wished to deal.

They did. Mbulawa was beaten beyond recognition. He was the only one who did not appear in court next day because he lay in hospital, unconscious. He died that evening.

Too many people had seen his battered and swollen mouth, his loose teeth, his rasping breathing, to accept the claim that he had died as a result of an epileptic death. There had to be another reason. Ten weeks later Makgatje was charged with murdering his friend by 'slapping and hitting him with clenched fists'. Quite obviously, Makgatje had been afflicted with this mysterious disease and, in an uncontrollable fit, although handcuffed and under the watchful eye of the police, had turned on his friend.

Equally obviously, no policeman would ever, or could ever, have hit the poor youth. The Transvaal attorney general Donald Brunette, a man of some reading and a man of law, who knows what Marx and Lenin said, explained why the accusations against the police were made:

Its written in Marx's books. Its written in Lenin's books. You must discredit the security forces. It's part of the tactic of revolution. And we've had this from the ANC for 30 years now.

Presumably aware of the fact that this might not be altogether convincing he added: 'No policeman is going to be so stupid as to just kill a guy in a police station. There are a whole lot better places to kill him.' He offered no further details.

It is categorically denied, in circles that know, that Donald Brunette has ever suffered from epilepsy, catalepsy or narcolepsy.

My thanks to Alex Buchman who sent me a cutting from the Los Angeles Times of 23 October 1990, with an extended report on the events of Welverdiend by Scott Kraft. I have drawn heavily on Mr Kraft's account. Side by side with the story of Welverdiend, the Los Angeles Times carried a report on its front page of an award of \$12.5 million to be paid to the family of a black man beaten to death by two skinheads, members of the White Aryan Resistance (WAR) movement, in Portland, Oregon. They were egged on to further violence by the two leaders of WAR. The jury decided that the award must be paid by the two leaders, the two skinheads, and WAR.

THE KISSINGER/VORSTER/KAUNDA DETENTE GENESIS OF THE SWAPO 'SPY-DRAMA' :Part II

Paul Trehwela

Between Imperialism and Revolt

The totality of antagonisms in Zambia, sharply heightened by the war in Angola and the detente scenario of Vorster and Kaunda, became concentrated within Swapo during 1975. With the Zambian regime as active protagonist, the pressure bearing downward from the major bourgeois states coincided with a countervailing force pressing upward on the Swapo leaders.

In late 1971/early 1972, Namibia was shaken by the most important labour struggle in the country's history: the strike of the Ovambo contract workers, who, as Soggot writes, demanded 'freedom to travel, to work where they liked, to live where they liked, and to work where the pay was highest' – basic demands against a system of labour control more severe than any existing in South Africa at the time.⁸ This was the first salvo of the working class in its series of strikes in southern Africa during the 1970s, resulting in the organization of workers in combative trade unions: a phenomenon that was to change the balance of forces in southern Africa. Then, in April 1974, the officers' coup in Lisbon brought down the Caetano dictatorship, ensuring the emergence of black-ruled states on the borders of South Africa and Namibia, headed by organizations which had undermined Portuguese colonial rule through armed insurgency.

The new working class militancy, followed by the collapse of Portuguese colonialism, radicalized young people in South Africa, especially high school and university students, and acted as a mighty stimulus towards the Soweto revolt of June 1976. The effect was felt even more immediately in Namibia, with student campaigns that were the precursors to the events in Soweto. Both in its labour and its student struggles, Namibia lit the fuse to a mass of combustible material that was later to explode in South Africa. The interconnection between the two fields of struggle, at once so alike and so unlike, will prove a fruitful field of study for future historians.

In a chapter headed 'The Young Prophets', Soggot records that the year 1973 'ushered in a startling efflorescence of Swapo and Swapo Youth League (SYL) activity' (p 76). Formed in the 1960s, the SYL had been roused by the Ovambo workers' strike to act on its own, independently of its parent body, during the second half of 1972:

The way the Youth Leaguers went about their work was particularly memorable: they presented their listeners with a remarkable melange of prophecy and challenge. Though not given to the mystical belief that freedom would fall from heaven, many members were gripped by the certainty that 1974 was to be the definitive year of freedom in Namibia...[With] a mixture of interpenetrating fact and optimism, fantasy

and political pragmatism, many SYL leaders came to believe and to put out the idea that 1974 was the final year of struggle (p 77).

Soggot does not refer to the Swapo crisis in Zambia in 1974–76; but he perceives its source within Namibia itself, indicating that the campaign of the SYL, with its 'promises of imminent messiah-like liberation', gave rise to a 'tactical tension between Swapo and the Youth League...' (pp 77–8). This tension within Namibia was reflected in rebellion abroad. Swept forward by the activism of the SYL, large numbers of youth, especially high school students, and from a very broad ethnic spectrum, organized resistance within their home communities against the South African regime. They suffered repression and fled abroad to join Swapo's military wing, Shipanga, in Lusaka at this time, recalls his astonishment as 'one group after another arrived. There must have been about six thousand newcomers between 1974 and 1975' (Armstrong, p 98).

Eager for combat, highly principled, courageous, intensely democratic, the young militants demanded intensification of the war with all the self-confidence of youth, just when the Vorster/Kaunda agreement required that Swapo be curbed. As one activist in the SYL during that period in Namibia recalls: 'We felt that we had our own destiny in our own hands. Despite South African power and oppression, we felt that we could push it all through.'⁹

In a memorandum to the Swapo leadership drawn up at the SYL's headquarters in Lusaka on 26 February 1975, the Youth Leaguers in Zambia expressed their 'fear' over the relationship between themselves and 'the comrades who have been here before us', noting 'a gap between us...a result of mistrust or suspicion'. Whenever they asked about something, the memorandum continued,

we are accused of being:—

1. Reactionaries
2. destroyers of the Party
3. and that we are fighting for power

—*Swapo: The 1976 Anti-Corruption Rebellion*, p 2.

The psychology of the Swapo leaders against their internal critics is summed up here. This political mind-set, more than anything else, produced the purges of 1984–89. Against this ingrained suspicion, the SYL demanded full internal democracy within their organization. Their standpoint was emphatic and eloquent: 'we deserve every right to ask where we do not understand and to contribute wherever necessary.' These young militants had not left Namibia to exchange South African repression for an equivalent regime in Swapo. 'We strongly repeat that our right to ask or criticize must not be denied or ignored...The call that "all members are free to challenge" must be put in practice.' Specifically, the SYL demanded information about Swapo's constitution following its amendment and review at the Tanga congress more than five years previously, as well as requiring information about 'what form of government Swapo shall establish in Namibia'.

The letter noted that there were times when members in Swapo camps in Zambia did not have food, some were without clothes and there were severe problems with transport, while at the same time party cars were 'used as individual properties' by leaders. 'Leaders must be good examples', demanded the SYL, noting that at almost every meeting up to that time the reverse had been the case, leading to 'a spirit of fear among the members towards our leaders'.

These were telling demands to place on the leaders of any nationalist movement, ringing with the intemperate spirit of Paris in 1789. This rebuke from the Swapo youth led to a meeting on 4 March 1975 at Libala in Lusaka between six members of the Swapo's executive committee (Exco) and 15 members of the SYL, the 'first of its kind', according to the leader of the SYL delegation, Ms Netumbo Nandi Nujoma and Moses Garoeb, the administrative secretary, were absent, but among those present were: Shipanga, Mishake Muyongo (Swapo vice-president, later to play a venal role in the arrest of Swapo critics, only to leave the organization with his own accusations of tribalism and regionalism in 1980), Peter Sheehama (Muyongo's assistant in the 1976 repressions, now minister of security), Nanyemba as secretary for defence, and Peter Mueshihange, now minister of defence, whom Shipanga accuses in his book of 'working rackets' in Lusaka with Nujoma and Nanyemba at that time. Shipanga is specific in his charges:

Nanyemba was very shrewd. He had little formal education, but he was clever. He lived like a warlord, womanizing and spending money freely. He had many business interests: he was in partnership with Nujoma and Mueshihange in two nightclubs in Lusaka—the *Kilimanjaro* and the *Lagodara*.

One of Nanyemba's tricks was to order supplies from the biggest chemist shop in Lusaka and to get one of our supporting governments or groups to settle the bill. Next day the goods were on sale in the Second Class Market [the Asian shopping precinct]...Nanyemba simply pocketed the proceeds. All this was well known in Lusaka, and there were even jokes about how blankets given by Swedish anti-apartheid groups were making the leaders of Swapo rich (Armstrong, p 101).

Charges of corruption were prominent in the criticism of the Swapo leadership by the youth. At the Libala meeting, the SYL members expressed their 'burning desire to know the constitution of the Party'. A member of the Exco (no doubt Shipanga) confessed that 'the drafting committee did not meet. NOTHING IS DRAFTED.' The minutes continue: 'One member of the Exco stressed that it is high time that Swapo should be in possession of the constitution.' It then emerged that the Central Committee had never met since it had assumed office, and that its term of office of five years had expired (so also, therefore, had that of the executive committee). The tone of the meeting was heated. As the minutes report, 'anything short of the immediate calling of the [four months overdue] Congress was not acceptable, one youth shouted'. Severe criticism was made by the SYL of the absence of an acting treasurer-general or an independent auditor. If this was not remedied, the Youth could

not rule out 'the suspicion of corruption and misappropriation of funds' (*Swapo: The Anti-Corruption Rebellion*, pp 4-6).

What cheek! These young upstarts had dared interrupt their elders and betters, the future property-owners of Namibia-in-exile, in their act of primitive accumulation. As the cauldron of civil war in Angola now began to boil over, the young militants of the SYL began an intense struggle against the would-be bourgeoisie of Swapo before it had even come into being. To the leaders of Swapo this was more than just a threat, it was an outrage striking against their whole *raison d'être*. It was precisely an audit, financial or political, to which they could not submit.¹⁰

By the end of 1975, with the South African invasion of Angola in full spate, nothing had materialized from the March meeting of the SYL and the Exco. On 10 December the SYL in Lusaka issued a follow-up memorandum to the Exco, reiterating its demand for a congress, accusing the leadership of preventing a congress from being convened, and asserting that its mandate had expired (as it had, a full year previously). The SYL now also cited general corruption, indiscriminate 'round-ups', 'threats', 'oppression' and 'ruthless intimidation.'

Four months later, on 21 April 1976, the Zambian army and police made a pre-dawn raid in Lusaka, arresting 13 Namibians, six of them leaders of Swapo, including the secretary-general of the SYL and three Exco members: Shipanga, Mishima and Immanuel Engombe. The South African military had begun its withdrawal from central Angola in January, Savimbi had begun his retreat to southern Angola in February, the tortured ZANU military leaders appeared in court on the same day as the Swapo arrests and Kissinger arrived in Lusaka six days later (27 April). These arrests without charge or trial of the most influential Swapo critics secured the political environment for the detente talks in Lusaka between Kissinger and Kaunda.

The six Swapo leaders were detained in Namufobu Camp, where ZANU members had until recently been kept (*Swapo: The Anti-Corruption Rebellion*, p 7). By this time the bulk of the ZANU fighters, detained in Zambia since March 1975 following the murder of Chitepo, had been released and had left for Mozambique. The imprisoned ZANU commanders had smuggled a letter from their Zambian prison shortly before the Swapo arrests, addressed to the front-line presidents, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the UN secretary-general, stating that the Zambian government was 'itself a suspect' in the murder of Chitepo. They were convinced, now more than ever, that it was because of

the resolute stand against detente and Nkomo which Chitepo and us took, that Comrade Chitepo was killed and we are being processed for our legalized murder (Martin and Johnson, 1981, p 189).

By now, Robert Mugabe had been provisionally chosen as leader of ZANU by camp officers in prison in Zambia, in place of the more pliable Sithole – secretly chosen by Vorster and Kaunda to govern in a future Zimbabwe, along with Nkomo and Bishop Muzorewa – failed to condemn the killing of thirteen ZANU members by the

Zambian army in Mboroma detention camp on 11 September 1975. Sithole's silence on the killing of his own party members by Kaunda's regime, acting for its detente partners, settled his future. Politically, he was finished as leader of ZANU. The lesson was not lost on the leaders of Swapo. When the Zambian army killed four Swapo members at the same camp nearly a year later, on 5 August 1976, Nujoma and the Swapo leaders around him preserved their positions by enforcing a permanent state of siege within the organization. Sithole disappeared from view; Nujoma became father of the nation.

In a statement known as the Mgagao Declaration, 'one of the most important documents' of the nationalist struggle in Zimbabwe (Martin and Johnson, 1981, p 200), the jailed ZANU fighters declared Zambia to be 'hostile enemy territory' and called for the OAU Liberation Committee and the governments of Mozambique and Tanzania to evacuate them to a 'safer' country so that they could continue the armed struggle. ZANU's central committee, meeting in Salisbury a week after Chitepo's murder, had already sent Mugabe and Edgar Tekere secretly to Mozambique at the end of March 1975 to prepare for resumption of military activity.

Later, in London, Mugabe stated on the BBC Africa Service on 21 January 1976 that:

President Kaunda has been the principal factor in slowing down our revolution. He has arrested our men, locked them up, and within his prisons and restriction areas there have been cases of poisoning, and there's also been murders.

Interviewer: By who?

Mugabe: By his men. By Kaunda's army.

(Martin and Johnson, 1981, p 210).

On the same day, in another interview, Mugabe asserted that the detente exercise had 'caused the death of our Comrade Chairman Chitepo'. Assisted by the presidents of Tanzania, Botswana and also Mozambique (the Frelimo leader, Samora Machel), Kaunda aimed to 'throttle us and throttle us completely.' Chitepo had been murdered 'through or by direct participation of the Zambian government.' The Zambian government had turned out to be 'an enemy of our revolution' (*Revolutionary Zimbabwe*, No 3, pp 1-5). As Mugabe pointed out in a speech in London on 30 January, the detente exercise had in fact been 'hatched in the cities of Washington and London' (*ibid*, p 29): it was to these powers that Kaunda was responding.

Mugabe gave expression here to a very general opinion within ZANU. Within weeks of Chitepo's assassination, an official ZANU publication produced in Sweden accused the Smith regime of having carried out the murder 'with the connivance and complicity of Kaunda', so as to further the 'horse and rider, master-slave detente in Southern Africa' (*Zimbabwe Chimurenga*, March 1975).

From the subsequent detailed investigation of the assassination by Martin and Johnson, Zambian state connivance with Chitepo's killers is not proven but is not excluded. The writers identify the actual killer as Hugh 'Chuck' Hind, a former member of the British Special Air Service (SAS), who had been

recruited in Britain in 1967 by Watchguard, a private security firm run by the founder of the SAS, Col David Stirling, as one of a small team of instructors of the Zambian Police Paramilitary Unit and Kaunda's presidential bodyguard. Possibly still while working with Kaunda's bodyguard in Zambia, Hind was recruited to the Rhodesian security body, the Central Intelligence Organization (CIO), for which he did secret agent jobs on call on a retainer basis after he had gone to live in South Africa. As Martin and Johnson remark, one of Hind's 'very considerable' assets was 'his contacts with the Zambian police and paramilitary from his days as a Watchguard instructor...' (1985, p.52). Hind had no problem flying out of Zambia shortly after Chitepo's murder, later returned 'frequently' to Zambia and was killed in a car crash there on 'one of the missions to Zambia' in January 1977 (pp 85, 86). It remains possible that Chitepo's assassination was a joint Rhodesian-Zambian state operation, as ZANU radicals suspected at the time.

A year later the Zambian state apparatus was turned on Swapo. Shortly after the arrests of Shipanga and his colleagues in April 1976, two of the six escaped and secretly told diplomats and the foreign press in Lusaka what had happened. Unlike Mugabe and the ZANU commanders, however, the top Swapo leaders had actively connived at the Zambian arrests. Shipanga reports that Theo-Ben Gurirab (now minister of foreign affairs in Namibia) visited his house suspiciously late a few hours before the arrests began, and two other Swapo leaders - Muyongo and Sheehama - publicly supervised their detention. 'Muyongo was in a transport of delight. In his red sports car he drove ahead of the convoy hooting the horn' (Armstrong, pp 109-10). Shipanga reports having been told earlier that Muyongo, Nanyemba, Ben-Gurirab and Dr Libertine Amathila (now minister of health) had said they were 'going to arrest me and my group', and that at another meeting before their detention, Sheehama, Amathila and John Ya Otto (now secretary of the National Union of Namibian Workers) had 'sentenced us all to death' (ibid, pp108,132). Given the history of arrests and executions within Swapo, these are matters that require investigation, especially since three of the six people mentioned by Shipanga are now government ministers.

The arrest of Shipanga and his colleagues followed a further sharpening of the political struggle within Swapo, similar to the struggle within ZANU. After the abortive meeting between the SYL and the Swapo executive in March 1975, the focus of opposition to detente had moved to a still more potent force: the Swapo military wing, concentrated in Zambia's Western Province. These troops were in camps intermediate between Zambia and areas controlled by Unita, and within striking distance of the eastern prong of the South African army's thrust into Angola. With the South African invasion of Angola, it became both a political and a military necessity to neutralize them. Together Nujoma and the Zambian army ensured this.

Swapo's Secret War

The South African army had moved in strength into southern Angola in September 1975, a month after the beginning of fighting between Unita and

the MPLA.¹¹ By mid-November a South African motorized column had arrived at Huambo (formerly Nova Lisboa) and Bie (formerly Silva Porto) on the Benguela Railway, half way to Luanda. Under 'enormous pressure emanating from Washington', according to R W Johnson, writing not long afterwards, the South African army attempted to hold its forward position on the coastal route to Luanda despite superior MPLA and Cuban forces (p 155).

Some time after this, units of the Swapo military were ordered into battle in Angola on the same side as Unita and the South African army, against the MPLA and its Cuban allies. This crucial, hidden episode in the history of Swapo was the subject of a letter written on 13 March 1976 by members of the Swapo military wing based in Zambia in Western Province. Addressed to Nujoma as president, the letter of the Swapo fighters implicated the top leadership. According to the letter, Nujoma had taken responsibility for the Angolan front and Nanyemba for the Zambian front. The then chief of intelligence of Swapo, Jackson Kakwambi, had himself 'led our fighters to fight alongside the Boers against the MPLA'. Although it was Kakwambi who had given this order to the fighters, it is unthinkable that as chief of intelligence he would have taken such a perilous political step without a policy decision at the highest level of Swapo. The subsequent purge of Swapo members who opposed collaboration with the South African army rules out any other interpretation. There can be no doubt that Nujoma, Nanyemba, Sheehama, Mueshihange and others, under pressure from the Zambian military and from Kaunda himself, ordered this action.

The Swapo fighters who sent this letter to Nujoma in March 1976 apparently still had no knowledge of the detente operation or the constraints it placed on Swapo's military struggle against the South African regime. They supported the SYL demand for a national congress and a new constitution, repeated accusations of corruption, denounced the closing down of SYL offices and reported the following bizarre incident:

Captured Metal Boxes

The Investigation Committee has captured two metal boxes...which were at a certain Island approximately 1000 metres from enemy [presumably South African] bases in Angola. It was guarded by a special group paid by Defence Secretary comrade Peter Nanyemba. These guards receive special treatment. On the day when the Investigating Committee captured these Metal Boxes, the Chief in Commander [*sic*] Awala told the Committee that these boxes contain Party Secret Documents.

a. Why are the Party Secret Documents kept at the front-line while the headquarters is in Lusaka?

b. Why are these comrades [the guards] paid although they are Party members?

(*Swapo: The Anti-Corruption Rebellion*, p 8).

The Swapo fighters were near to mutiny, but on opposing grounds to those of the revolt led by Thomas Nhari in ZANU. They complained that their commanders had given their weapons to Unita, leaving them without guns.

Other weapons had been buried, while they had had to arm themselves with sticks. Some 150 Swapo fighters had been sent into Angola 'without enough ammunition, weapons, no communication and no food, and their fate is unknown to this date'. Further, a certain Shikangala had been 'given a gun by Peter Mueshange to kill the comrades who are against corruption'. They protested against public accusations that Shipanga (not yet arrested) was 'collaborating with the enemy'. Against the 'treacherous acts of the commanders,' in whom they had 'completely lost faith', they declared:

WE REJECT:

A. ANY MISSION ASSIGNED BY THEM

B. TO BE LED INTO BATTLE BY THEM.

This was, unwittingly, an act of defiance against the detente scenario itself. It could not go unpunished, nor did it.

In another letter, written the same day and addressed to the Liberation Committee of the OAU (which at this period also endorsed detente), the Swapo military wing in Western Province declared that it had passed a motion of no confidence 'in the leadership of the whole party, and the commanders in particular'. Their arms had been intercepted by the Zambian authorities and their commanders had told them they were 'not allowed to operate from Zambian soil anymore'. They were resolved to go and fight, but not under the present leadership. First they had to reorganize the party through the holding of a congress. Concerning their own safety, they wrote:

we have 900-1000 ready-trained soldiers without arms or any means of self-defence. We are expecting a surprise attack at any time. The enemy is always shelling in our vicinity. At night we observe flare-lights from the enemy side.

Effectively, they had been disarmed within distance of the South African army and its allies. Their own leaders had placed them in a situation in which they could be massacred at will. Out of desperation, they appealed to the OAU to provide transport to convey food to them at the front 'during the whole transitional period until the congress is held', as well as arms for each soldier and heavy guns for self-defence. This appeal from the expendable victims of detente, an appeal against a cynical act of betrayal, leaves a sickening impression: as also the whole of the subsequent spy-drama, which followed inexorably from the conduct of the Swapo leaders at this time. The dedication and naivety of the Swapo fighters had its complement in the duplicity both of the organization to which they belonged and of the OAU to which they appealed - fruitlessly - against it.

On 23 April 1976, two days after the arrests of the dissident Swapo leaders in Lusaka supervised by Muyongo and Sheehama, the disarmed fighters on the front again defied what they expected to be their imminent death, this time by execution. From Western Province, they issued 'The PLAN Fighters' Declaration', noting that some members of their committee had already been

detained by Swapo. Swapo's Political Commissar had told them 'we are going to cut off your heads'.

The whole history of Swapo, they declared, was 'a tragic one.' In the face of anticipated death, they made a specific statement of their ideals. They gave a detailed account of Swapo's military collaboration with the South African/Unita forces and—for the first time in these documents—issued a general declaration of their belief in a socialist future. 'We won't be silenced because of fear to be executed', they stated.

To be silent means to betray our country. This is a noble task to us, for we believe that Namibia will only be free if these internal enemies are destroyed. We sacrifice to die in order to open and smooth the way to the next generation. To close one's eyes to these evil things means not only to betray Namibia, but also to betray Africa as a whole. Some people may prove us wrong today but history will prove us right. (p 12)

They considered the Angolan civil war to be 'a tragedy to Africa'. Indeed it was, and is, except so far as it served at the cost of immense suffering to wear down (but not defeat) the South African military. Once again, the PLAN fighters expressed their revulsion at being 'forced by reactionary commanders to fight alongside the boers against the MPLA'. They had illusions in the socialist character of the MPLA, whose troops they regarded as 'not only our African brothers, but...allies in pursuing socialism...our comrades in arms against colonialism, imperialism and foreign domination from the African soil'. While naive in taking the politics of the MPLA at its face value, the declaration called emphatically if simplistically for socialism, against which they contrasted the corruption and property interests of the Swapo leaders. They had information from reliable sources, they wrote, that there were:

people in the Swapo leadership who are having farms, hotels, shops and bank accounts, that is why they are less interested in the liberation struggle. When we demand the National Congress where a clear, socialist line be drawn, they consider us enemies, this is because we believe that socialism is a better society. We are against exploitation of man by man and condemn in the strongest terms the exploitation of our mineral resources by foreigners. This is one of the reasons why they don't want the Congress to be held, because they know that in a socialist Namibia there will be no room for private owned shops, hotels etc. (p 13).

The declaration gives extensive details of Swapo battles against the MPLA in central Angola: at Munyango, Kanguembe, Luso and Serpa Pinto. These appear to have been railway battles, in keeping with the interest not only of Unita but of the Kaunda regime and its patron, Lonrho. As Bridgland reports, Kaunda had 'stressed to Savimbi the importance of reopening the Benguela Railway' (p 187). The same interest was doubtless stressed, no less forcefully, to the leaders of Swapo, dependent then on Zambia for their military bases. Luso, Kanguembe and Munyango are station-towns running east to west along the railway. Keeping these open for Zambian (and Zairean) colliery traffic under a Unita administration was the main concern of the Kaunda regime.

Further west along the line of the Benguela Railway, Unita had major bases at Huambo and Bie during the period of the South African advance. It was from Huambo that Unita had declared a Social Democratic Republic on independence day (11 November), at the same time as the MPLA declared the People's Republic in Luanda. Serpa Pinto was the eastern terminal of a shorter, more southerly east-west railway line meeting the Atlantic at Mocamedes. It would appear that Swapo troops were committed to battle in early February during the MPLA/Cuban counter-offensive which dislodged the South African army, and with it Unita, from the Benguela Railway, from Huambo and Bie, and from central Angola. Their role would then have been to help protect the South African army and its Unita clients *in retreat*, when they were most vulnerable. It was a complete reversal of the military goal for which the PLAN fighters had left Namibia to join Swapo.

In each case, the Swapo commanders in these battles against the MPLA are named: Kakwambi, Nakade, Intamba, Hauluyondjaba and Embashu. Details are given about three separate incidents in which Unita was given truck-loads of Swapo arms, while Swapo fighters were in one case left only with sticks. When they demanded weapons, they were told 'Swapo is Unita and Unita is Swapo'. In another incident, PLAN fighters say they were 'defending the MPLA flag' at Ruyana and Mivungu in a major engagement involving trucks, helicopters and reconnaissance planes, against 'the boers, Shipenda rebels and foreign mercenaries'.¹² The civil war in Angola, which was also a war of the super-powers and thus also an ideological war, had become a civil war within Swapo, with its troops committed simultaneously on both sides: by coercion on the side of Unita, voluntarily on the side of the MPLA. It was a critical moment for the Swapo leadership.

Under these conditions, write the PLAN fighters, the Swapo commanders 'began to hate us' and made a separate base for 'loyal' forces. 'They began to call us rebels and a splitting faction within Swapo with Andreas Shipanga as president.' At this point the declaration becomes unclear. It emerges—without details—that between fighting in Angola and their subsequent suppression, the PLAN fighters mutinied.¹³ They arrested two commanders (Kafita and Ushona), whom they accused of burying arms in the ground. Ten days before Shipanga's arrest, on 11 April, a delegation of 15 PLAN fighters from the rebel camp went to the 'loyal' camp at Shatotua to present their case to 150 fighters and trainees, under the command of a Swapo officer, Namara, and under the overall control of a Zambian lieutenant with his own troops. The PLAN delegation was overpowered by Swapo loyalists, seriously beaten up, tied up for a night and a day and compelled to release the 'two corrupted commanders' in return for their own temporary freedom. According to the PLAN fighters, the Zambian troops saved their lives but did not intervene when they were tied up. When they wrote their declaration 12 days later, they expected the firing squad.

Mass round-ups by the Zambian army were already under way, clearly with the agreement of Swapo leaders, when the declaration by the PLAN fighters was written. By June 1976, well over a thousand dissidents were in the Zambian army's detention camps (*Swapo: The 1976 Anti-Corruption Rebellion*, p 16).

Nujoma and the exile leadership responded to the threat to their authority by the method of the witch-hunt, with Shipanga cast in the role of Satan.

At the same time two other means were employed by the leaders against the members: a party commission of inquiry, which was not to inquire but exonerate, and the long-delayed Swapo congress, which was not to express the interest of the membership but to thwart it. In the report of the party commission of inquiry submitted to Nujoma in June 1976 there was no mention of Swapo's part in the detente process, and only rudimentary references to corruption: wisely for the commissioners.¹⁴

Shortly before this the Swapo congress, convening at long last in Walvis Bay at the end of May, condemned those who had most ardently called for it — then in detention in Zambia — as South African government spies. The participation of the exiled leaders in the Vorster detente strategy, alongside the South African army, together with their corruption, was concealed from the members within Namibia. Only with the detention of a major part of the exile membership could the leaders have safely convened the congress, and then only by staging this fraudulent token of democracy as faraway as possible from those who knew what had happened. Nujoma was re-elected president. As the editor of the anti-corruption document wryly observes:

In telephonic contact with Lusaka, the internal leadership distributed pamphlets describing how the youth were 'mised' by Andreas Shipanga, the arch villain. At public meetings, house-gatherings, and in private conversations an account was given of Shipanga, the Pied Piper of Windhoek, leading two thousand well-trained guerrillas and Youth members against minor problems in the movement. He 'plotted' against the life of Nujoma, etcetera, etcetera (p 16).

In the same month, leaders of the Youth League arriving from Europe were taken straight from Lusaka Airport to detention. In effect, they were lured by the Zambian state and by Swapo leaders into a trap — a phenomenon that appeared again in the Swapo spy-drama in Angola in the 1980s.¹⁵ With the PLAN fighters and the SYL imprisoned in Zambia, the Walvis Bay congress subverted the substance of the demand for democracy by conceding its appearance. It had a strange and horrifying sequel. For many who played a prominent role in organizing this corruption of democracy, or who slandered the Youth League in the interests of the clique around Nujoma, there followed a tragic fate.

Tauno Hatuikulipi, later a member of the central committee and the military council, died in a Swapo prison in Angola in 1984, accused of being a South African government spy. In the 1970s had been the director of the Christian Centre in Windhoek, a forerunner of the Council of Churches of Namibia which functioned practically as the religious arm of Swapo. His death was not announced for six months, and it was then alleged that he had died by swallowing poison.¹⁶ Another member of the central committee, Lucas Stephanus, was killed by Swapo in Lusaka the same year, and his body never found.¹⁷ Eric Biwa, also on the central committee and now a representative of the Patriotic Unity Movement (PUM) in the assembly in Windhoek, was

deported from Cuba to Angola by plane in 1984 with one leg in a plaster cast, detained on arrival and kept for five years in pits in the ground. Benedictus Boois, also on the central committee, suffered the same fate. The vice-secretary of the Walvis Bay congress, Othniel Kaakunga, subsequently a member of the Swapo politburo, went into exile and was then tortured and detained for three years, two of them in solitary confinement. Of these, Hatuikulipi, Stephanus, Biwa and Boois had scornfully dismissed a group Swapo members, led by Hermanus Beukes, who approached them in Namibia in August 1976, concerned about rumours of impending executions of dissidents (*Swapo: The 1976 Anti-Corruption Rebellion*, p.16).

Having helped to strangle the demand for democracy raised by the '74 Youth League, these internal leaders were caught in the noose they had helped to weave. The accusation 'South African spy' which they had pinned on the SYL and the PLAN fighters in the 1970s came to haunt them in the 1980s. At the same time, the PLAN security apparatus necessarily took on the character of witch-finder general, the grand inquisitor for whom even the slightest sign of mental independence was threatening.

In this it was assisted by its *alter ego*, the South African army. Not long after the May congress, perhaps aiming to inflame internal strife within Swapo and discomfort the opponents of the now discredited detente strategy, South African forces attacked two camps of Swapo 'loyalists' in western Zambia on 11 July, killing 24 guerrillas and wounding 45. That, more than anything, wrote *finis* at the bottom of the detente scenario. One of these camps, Shatotua, was the base at which Nujoma's loyalists had captured and nearly killed the members of the PLAN fighters' committee exactly three months earlier, on 11 April. Despite Shipanga having been in detention at this time for 82 days, Katjavivi continues to report – without investigation or even further comment – that 'Swapo attributes this attack to Shipanga's followers and holds him responsible' (p 107).

By the time of the Shatotua attack, the Swapo leaders were rapidly adapting to the changed turn of events. They had committed their troops to the losing party in the Angolan war, and had compromised themselves through their association with the South African army: policy blunders which could only be covered over by suppression of the most principled of their members, systematic falsification of the truth and vilification of any critic. It still remained necessary to adapt to the winning side. This Nujoma and his cohorts did with alacrity. Nujoma's alliance with Savimbi had begun in the mid-1960s, when as Bridland reports, Swapo enabled the first trained Unita fighters to traverse Tanzania and Zambia in order to reach Angola, and when Nujoma provided Savimbi with a Soviet Tokarev pistol (pp 69–71). Now, with the cry '*vae victis*' in the air, Nujoma threw in his lot with the conqueror, abandoning Swapo soldiers in Unita-held regions to their fate. Former Swapo members say these fighters were killed by Unita.

Despite continued fighting, the result of the Angolan war in its first phase was clear. By December 1985, the US Congress decided to end all aid to Unita and the FNLA. As Shipanga explains, from that time:

the Vorster–Kaunda–Ford plan for Angola, with Nujoma in tow, was doomed.

Nujoma began defaching himself from the Pretoria–Lusaka–Washington coalition, and by March 1976 he was spending a lot of time in Luanda negotiating with the MPLA and the Russians...⁵ (Armstrong, p 131).

Already in December 1975 he was visiting Cuba and the USSR (*Black Review*, 1975–1976, p 215), and in July 1976 – following an enlarged central committee meeting near Lusaka – Swapo played the Brezhnev card with a new political programme cut to the changed political situation, adapted especially to its need for bases in southern Angola. It pledged to unite all Namibian people, ‘particularly the working class, the peasantry and progressive intellectuals’ into a vanguard party ‘capable of safeguarding national independence and of building a classless, non–exploitative society based on the ideals and principles of scientific socialism’ (Katjavivi, pp 108–9). In the same tones might Mafia Godfathers seek the solace of Mother Church. Having played one side in the cold war system in Angola, Nujoma now reversed his alliances to play the other. Stalinization of Swapo advanced apace, leading to the crimes of the 1980s.

Only the grisly final act of the Vorster–Kaunda–Nujoma detente required now to be completed. In a press statement on 5 August 1976, Nujoma publicly threatened all the ‘dissidents’ with death by firing squad, adding the graceless lines quoted at the head of this article: ‘The agents of the South African regime and imperialists have been rooted out of our movement, and the Central Committee carried out a systematic purge of all the traitors’. (quoted in Armstrong, p 133) By this time, in addition to the thousand Swapo fighters at Mboroma camp at Kabwe, north of Lusaka, a further six hundred returning from training in the Soviet Union had been immediately arrested and also locked up there. On 5 August 1976, the same day that Nujoma made his brutish remark about the firing squad, the starving unarmed guerrilla fighters tried to break out of Mboroma to march in protest to Lusaka. The Zambian army opened fire, killing four and seriously wounding another thirteen. It was a replica of the killing of thirteen ZANU fighters at Mboroma by the Zambian army the previous year. Shipanga reports:

In documents that they smuggled out of Mboroma, the fighters’ complaints were familiar. They demanded a Congress. They objected to corruption in the leadership. They objected to the transfer of Swapo arms to ‘Unita reactionaries’. They wanted the OAU to provide them with trucks so that they could be transported from Zambia to Angola to begin fighting again in Namibia.

Eventually many of them were transferred to Angola, but several went before Swapo firing squads as soon as they arrived. Many were also kept back in Zambia. There has been very little news of them since, although several are known to have died in detention over the years (pp 133–34).

Angola now became the killing ground for the Swapo leadership, in mockery of the PLAN fighters’ illusions about the socialist character of the MPLA for

which they had been ready to give their lives. The Swapo leaders, who directed their troops to fight against the MPLA on the side of the South African army, were now given a free hand by the MPLA to murder on Angolan soil the Namibian fighters who had demanded to fight with the MPLA, against the South Africans and in opposition to the Swapo leaders. Swapo in Angola became a mincing machine for any member with critical opinions.

Shipanga, whose application for habeas corpus was an embarrassment to the Zambian state, was secretly hustled across the border with his colleagues to prison in Tanzania, where there was no habeas corpus. On 4 March 1978 South African troops slaughtered hundreds of Namibian civilians in a refugee camp at Kassinga in southern Angola. Again, as in the Shatotua killings, Shipanga was accused by Swapo in radio and press reports of having personally led the South African troops into Kassinga. Despite the fact that Shipanga had been a guest of the Zambian and Tanzanian prison systems for nearly two years at the time of the massacre, and was only released on 25 May 1978, the slander stuck. The Swapo leaders were diligent students of Goebbels' doctrine of the big lie. Shipanga reports that when he eventually returned to Namibia after his release from prison—to commence a political career that actually did involve collaboration with the South African authorities, which he had denounced before—he met 'terrible hostility' from the black population because of his alleged complicity in the massacre at Kassinga (p 142).

The psychopathology of Swapo in exile lies in its double life as a nationalist movement: as rebel against the South African regime, and as accomplice of that regime against its own members. Discussing his recent novel, *Chicago Loop*, which deals with murder, the writer Paul Theroux has spoken of the fascination of people leading a double life, since here the writer can 'explore the public and private life and the contradictions between them and also the way in which they mesh together' (*WH Smith Bookcase*, Easter 1990). Swapo concentrates within itself the contradictions of the whole genus of nationalist movements which came to power in Africa since 1957, and also of those international agencies, organizations and individuals which support them. In the relation between the apparent rationality of its aims and its psychotic inner life, its totalitarian internal regime and its proclaimed goal of liberation, the needs it purported to address and the self-interest of its leaders, Swapo provides a laboratory for study of the inadequacy of the existing politics in Africa. It is a form of politics that requires to be submitted to criticism, as a barrier to a genuine emancipation.

As an organization living a lie, Swapo could only be hyper-sensitive to the opinion of any honest person, or even the gentlest of critics. From this stems its guilty paranoia, its morbid suspiciousness, the stuff of which in governments historic crimes are made. With its para-statal authority—first in Zambia, then in Angola—Swapo was camouflaged not only by terror and secrecy but by the whole spectrum of late 20th century official society, including states (both bourgeois and stalinist), churches, the United Nations secretariat, the liberal media, Labour and stalinist parties, well-meaning individuals of all kinds and the majority of the 'trotskyist' left. Its true history tells us as much about these agencies as about itself.

Common purpose between the South African regime and Swapo, as much as their antagonism, acted to produce a common methodology of rule by terror. Its sources are international as well as local. In this way, through the civilizing agencies of the great powers — the US and the USSR — as well as of their medium and lesser acolytes, a process of barbarism was cultivated in southern Africa, now reigning in Windhoek with all the panoply of state. The investigation of Namibia's modern history has barely begun. It has the texture of one of the bloodier of Shakespeare's dramas. That is sufficient for the liberal and socialist luminaries of the universe to find in Namibia the pretext for their suppressed religious zeal.

NOTES

8. Soggot acquired first-hand knowledge for this superbly written factual history as senior counsel in trials of Swapo members in Namibia. People whom he helped save from prison and even from the gallows, such as Victor Nkandi, later died in Swapo's prisons in Angola. Among those he defended in court against the South African regime was the most prominent leader of the contract workers' strike, Johannes Nangutuuala, whose brother Frans was murdered in Angola after resigning from Swapo — allegedly by a prominent member of the present government in Namibia (personal communication from Windhoek, February 1990).

9. Interview with Hewat Beukes, London, 8 April 1990. Editor of the pamphlet on the *1976 Anti-Corruption Rebellion*, Beukes is a son of Hermanus Beukes. His older brother Hans, who had been a member of Swapo's national committee in the early 1960s, fled from Lusaka after the 1976 arrests, and his sister Martha Ford — a member of Swapo's politburo, and secretary of its Women's Council — was later forced out of Swapo. Hewat Beukes and his wife Erica were active in the Swapo Youth League inside Namibia in the 1970s and are now leading members of the Workers' Revolutionary Party of Namibia.

10. My thanks to F S for these comments.

11. Oleg Ignatyev, *Pravda* correspondent in Angola, asserts that South African troops crossed the border into Angola to take command of the Calueque dam on the Cunene river on 8 August: in his view 'the beginning of direct South African aggression against Angola' (p 137). Stockwell says the advance into Angola began in the second week of September (pp 163–4). Johnson gives the date of the initial South African military advance into Angola as 14 July, part of a series of events that 'bear all the hallmarks of Pretoria-Washington coordination' (pp 144, 147). Marcum indicates that South African troops first crossed into Angola in June. About this time, when military collaboration was being prepared with the South African regime, Savimbi made statements distancing himself from Swapo (Marcum, p 268). Marcum cites a report in *Die Transvaler* (Johannesburg) in May 1975 on the break-up of the Unita-Swapo alliance (note 233, p 441). Reality was more complex.

12. Daniel Chipenda, the former MPLA leader and military commander, subsequently fought alongside Unita and the South African army. Mivungu is possibly Mavinga, a south-easterly town near the Zambian border.

13. Eight years later, between January and May 1984, the 'overwhelming majority' of ANC military cadres in Angola mutinied against oppressive conditions in Umkhonto we Sizwe after fighting against Unita alongside the MPLA in western Angola (see Bandile Ketelo et al, 'A Miscarriage of Democracy', *Searchlight South Africa*, No 5). The outbreak of mutiny in the ANC military wing, following the mutiny in PLAN in 1976, can only have played a part in setting loose the Swapo spy-drama of the 1980s.

14. Similarly, there is nothing concerning Swapo's participation alongside the South Africans in the Angolan war, or of charges of corruption against the main leaders, in the 'official' history by Katjavivi (1988), formerly Swapo representative in Western Europe and now a deputy in the national assembly. This contrasts with a factual presentation of the allegations of the Swapo militants by R W Johnson in 1977, only a year after the mutiny. As he notes, since late 1975:

even the external (guerrilla) wing of Swapo had been racked by a major split. A large section of the leadership had launched a bitter attack against Nujoma for refusing to call a party congress...Among the allegations they wished to ventilate at such a congress were their claims that the leadership had connived in Zambian support of Unita; that arms meant for Swapo had been diverted by Kaunda to Unita; that Swapo forces had actually been ordered to fight alongside Unita and the invading South African columns in Angola...(p 254).

Relying apparently on some of the same documents published in Namibia in 1987 by the 'Independent Group,' Johnson's merit as a historian — writing shortly after the events he was recording — was that he took these documents seriously. He was in no doubt of Nujoma's venality as a political leader, reporting Nujoma's threat to punish the dissidents by firing squad. How is one to characterize the subsequent historians who neglect this episode, and Johnson's book? (The author became aware of this passage in Johnson's book only after publication of the first half of this article).

15. Rudolf Kisting, a member of the SYL in Namibia in the 1970s, enjoyed a meal with Nujoma in Harare in the 1980s after returning from study (and marriage) in the Soviet Union. Nujoma urged Kisting to give his services to Swapo in Angola. This was Kisting's intention in any case. He then flew to Luanda in the company of one of Nujoma's bodyguards, who had been present at the meal, and was arrested by Swapo security very shortly afterwards. After torture and years in the pits in southern Angola, he was released last year along with other recipients of President Nujoma's hospitality (communication from Kisting's sister, Dr Sophie Kisting, who was present at the meal).

The same fate befell Kavee Hambira, then working for the Swapo radio programme in Luanda. 'In May 1984 I was told by Mr Hidipo Hamutenya that I was to fulfil an assignment for approximately one week in Lubango. I flew from Luanda to Lubango. When I arrived at the airport the chief of security of Swapo, Solomon Hauala, met me and he immediately arrested me'. (affidavit submitted to the supreme court in Windhoek, 15 September 1989, published in Basson and Motinga, p 176) Hamutenya is a member of the

Swapo politburo and is now minister for information and broadcasting in the government. Hauala has been appointed head of the Namibian army. After torture on a daily basis for ten days and imprisonment in the pits for five years, during which time he states Hauala and Hamutenya personally forced detainees to make false confessions on video, Hambira was released in May 1989.

16. Herbstein and Evenson transmit a crucial error of historical fact, which serves to besmirch people such as Hatuikulipi. They write of 'Swapo's ally, the MPLA' at the time of the 1971-72 contract labourers' strike in Namibia (p 21). This is incorrect. Swapo at that time was allied not with the MPLA, which then had minimal influence in southern Angola, but with Unita: an alliance which Swapo retained until 1976 when Unita, with its CIA and South African backers, lost the war (in its first phase).

This error obscures the nature of Swapo's relation to Unita and to the South African army, during the war in Angola in 1975-6. This prevents an understanding of the evolution of the spy-drama and allows the authors to write of 'the network' in relation to Swapo's prison victims, as if Hatuikulipi and others were in fact spies (p 168). There is no word in this book on SWAPO's de facto convergence with the South African military in Angola in 1975-76.

Though they deal of necessity with the war in Angola, Herbstein and Evenson do not refer to Marcum's basic two-volume study, *The Angolan Revolution* (1969, 1978). There they would have read that 'As late as 26 September 1975, the MPLA reported that it confronted hostile Swapo soldiers in southern Angola' (Marcum, 1978, note 277, p 444).

17. Communication from Othniel Kaakunga, Windhoek, 23 February 1990.

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[See also Part I for other references]

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Obituary

THE DUALISM OF I B TABATA

In recent months several people who were prominent in resistance politics in South Africa have died. We appear too infrequently and have too little space to record their passing. However, these are some who have, in their own way, spent their lives in pursuit of the ideal of freedom and democracy. Throughout their adult lives they fought against an iniquitous society and they have added to the forces of opposition in the only way they thought fruitful. We cannot pass them by in silence.

Isaac Bongani ('I B') Tabata, who died in exile in Harare in October 1990 was one such person. The editors of this journal had profound differences with the man as politician and differed with him on many issues, but there are aspects of his life that helped build the tradition in which we follow.

I B Tabata was born in Lesseyton, near Queenstown in the eastern Cape in 1909. There are few records available of his early life but it does seem more than a coincidence that he was 12 years old when the Bulhoek massacre (recorded elsewhere in this edition) occurred. There can be little doubt that this event influenced him profoundly and helped shape his perception of the nature of the struggle in South Africa.

Tabata's first entred politics through his activity in the Lorry Drivers Union in the early 1930s. He joined the Cape African Voters Association and was attracted to the Workers Party of South Africa, associated with the International Left Opposition. That party, composed of people repelled by events in the USSR, adopted a set of theses in 1935 that determined its subsequent practice. These comprised a document on the land question that placed the agrarian struggle at the centre of any revolutionary transformation in South Africa; a declaration condemning the war preparations in Europe; and a statement on organization that pointed to underground activity as mandatory for any revolutionary party.

Tabata joined the WP and throughout his life endorsed the principles of that organization. He placed the agrarian struggle at the centre of all his political activities in South Africa, and he would not disclose his socialist commitment until he went into exile in 1963. His open activity was always confined to liberation politics and although he remained secretly loyal to the principles of the WP he discouraged socialists from propagating their views openly.

As a member of the WP (or perhaps at the time he was an associate) he attended the first conferences of the All African Convention (AAC), summoned in 1935 to oppose the new Native Bills introduced in Parliament. It was as a leader of this body that he subsequently made all his public pronouncements and it was in terms of the Convention's programme that he made his mark. Yet among close friends he espoused his views as an orthodox follower of the Fourth International, spoke of communism as his ideal, and expressed his belief in the need for internationalism.

The Convention aimed to establish a large opposition force, comprising representatives of every African community in a federal body, to struggle against legislation that would remove Africans from the voter's roll in the Cape Province; demarcate the area of land that could be occupied by Africans in South Africa, and control the movements of Africans in the urban areas.

The AAC, although it attracted the attention of all the main political bodies of the time (including the ANC and the CPSA) did not get its message to the majority of Africans in the country and failed to provide the leadership to oppose the legislation. The programme (based on non-collaboration with the government) was flawed by compromise and within a few years it declined and was all but forgotten. The ANC, which had been a constituent part of this new federal body, withdrew its support. Although it too was ineffectual, its departure reduced the AAC to a few shadowy committees. The final act of abdication came in 1939 when the AAC, together with the ANC, declared its loyalty to the government in its declaration of war against the axis powers.

The one remaining committee in the AAC during the first years of war was in the western Cape. There, the AAC, with Tabata as its secretary made a number of statements, neither radical, nor even urging any action, but indicating that it still existed. In fact, Tabata, together with others who were to appear as a potential new leadership in 1943, continued to function inside the WP, which seems to have survived as an underground socialist group until some undisclosed date in the early 1950s when it was dissolved. These included Goolam Gool, Janub Gool (Tabata's wife) and Ben Kies. Precisely what the WP did after war was declared has never been disclosed. It issued no statements, printed no documents, and its officials do not even seem to have written any letters. It was the fly inside the bottle that nobody ever saw.

The full story of the calls in 1943 for the reactivation of the AAC and the calling into being of the Anti-Coloured Affairs Commission (later the Anti-Coloured Affairs Department or Anti-CAD) has still to be told. What is central to this short note was the fact that these two bodies acquired some prominence in that year and in December the two bodies met together to launch a Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM). The new organization was bound together in a programme of democratic demands that centred on the call for a universal franchise, and the scrapping of all segregation legislation. Known then as the 10-Point Programme, it was claimed by its proponents to be the most far reaching of liberation programmes in the country.

The NEUM leaders believed that the South African Indian Congress (under the new radical men who aimed to take control of the body) would join the united body and then, together, could campaign for a society based on one-person-one-vote. The nature of the transformed South Africa was left vague to accommodate the many different elements it was hoped to attract to its ranks, but it did call for radical changes in the economy, including the scrapping of existing land legislation. Members of the NEUM even assisted Dr Dadoo (a staunch Stalinist) and Dr Naiker in their campaigns to oust the conservative Indian leadership and take control of the provincial and national Indian Congress. However, once that was achieved, obvious political differences stopped Messrs Dadoo, Naiker, et al, joining with the NEUM.

Looking at the events of 1943–45 retrospectively it is obvious that the political field lay open to the group that could find a way to mobilize the black communities. The NEUM had several advantages. Although its constituent bodies were ethnically exclusive (as were all movements outside the left at the time), the NEUM had no colour bar. It included at its conferences leaders of rural organizations, urban communities, ethnic organizations, trade unions, and representatives of the two small Trotskyist groups. No other liberation movement had ever opened its membership in this way. The NEUM leadership reflected this wide spectrum of interests and included among its ranks some of the older, more conservative personnel (like Prof D D T Jabavu, Dr J S Moroka, and Rev Z R Mahabane) and also the young turks drawn from the WP and associated bodies). It was Tabata and Kies and the Gools who represented the more radical ideas then current. With them they brought the main body of the Cape African Teachers Association and the Teachers League of South Africa (the Coloured teachers association). It was these persons that had a grasp of programmatic problems that exceeded anything previously formulated in the several movements that aimed to rally the Africans, Coloureds or Indians.

There can be little doubt that Tabata played a prominent role in defining the attitudes that became the hallmark of the NEUM: the call for the vote, opposition to the rehabilitation scheme on the land and the use of the boycott weapon against all segregated state institutions. With this came a vocabulary, borrowed from wartime terminology that was distinctive to NEUM members: the ruling class was dubbed *'herrenvolk'*, those that worked in segregatory bodies were called *'quislings'*. It was a language of derision but it lacked analytical content.

Unlike in nursery rhyme, words did hurt, but the sting was always skin-deep. The ridicule thrown at opponents was only an irritant, but members of the NEUM hurled verbal invective as if it was live ammunition. The boycott, a slogan that found a certain resonance among the students at Fort Hare with whom Tabata had contact, was elevated into an absolute principle and only helped isolate the NEUM. Among those attracted and then repelled were the young Congress Youth Leaguers (Nelson Mandela et al) who were attracted to Tabata's ideas and took the boycott tactic into the ANC.

Tabata, in his agitation against the rehabilitation scheme in the Transkei (which earned him one short stay in prison), kindled hope in radical circles that something might be done, but he never translated words into action. There is no record of members of the NEUM being involved in any of the peasant revolts through the 1950s. When challenged on this, Tabata and his co-leaders always spoke of the need for a trained cadre before engaging the state in struggle.

Tabata always derided other movements for only reacting against the latest state regulation and never taking the initiative on its own grounds. There was a certain truth in that, but the NEUM never found the issues on which to challenge the state and ultimately it led to abstentionism. The NEUM never had its trained cadre and was never able to initiate that struggle for the removal of segregatory bodies. Time and again the NEUM remained aloof from the

struggles of the time, and although there was justification for criticising other movements for their many ill-considered campaigns, it became the hallmark of the NEUM that it never entered a political struggle — except verbally.

The leadership spoke, condemned, insulted and threatened, but did not engage in political action, neither in the rural areas nor in the towns. There has been no serious consideration of what went wrong in the NEUM, but obviously the problem went beyond the failure to engage in struggle. In seeking to explain this inaction it seems that the reason can only be found in examining the political philosophy of those who led the NEUM. Tabata and his friends were not nationalists. Their primary outlook was internationalist and their goal was socialism. Appearing as leaders of a democratic national liberatory movement (and always strenuously denying any socialist connections), they were unable to pursue any socialist aims. Yet their hearts were not (at least initially) in following the nationalist trail. Their stress on the land question (which stemmed from their membership of the WP — see *Searchlight South Africa* No 4), and their propagation of democratic demands tied them into a nationalist framework from which they could not break. They were called Trotskyists by their opponents — which they denied — but they never adapted to their position as leaders of a national liberation movement. The failure of this section of the left in South Africa arose from its inability to advance socialist demands while leading a movement that was based on a programme of bourgeois demands.

The deficiencies of the NEUM must be apparent today to all socialists working for a transformed South Africa. What is not often realized is the fact that any attempts at marrying national liberatory and socialist demands within the same organization must fail. In private discussions on Nkrumah and events in Ghana, for example, Tabata saw this clearly, but he could not or would not recognize that he played a similar self-contradictory role in South Africa.

Despite this failure it is necessary to give Tabata his due for some of his statements about the problems facing the African people. He saw the need to raise the issue of education to the forefront and his attack on Bantu education (or as he called it in his 1959 monograph *Education for Barbarism*) played an important part in the mobilization of African teachers in the Cape. Even more notable was his rejection of the use of the boycott weapon in schools, on the ground that political movements had no right to push children into the foreground of the political struggle. Tabata had significant things to say, and they warrant reiteration today. They are part of the history of struggle in South Africa.

Because of the centrality of the land question in the WP, Tabata recognized long before any others that the rehabilitation (or 'betterment') scheme, imposed by the government on the rural areas, would become an issue over which the peasants would fight. Fight they did, but he erred in continuing to believe that this remained the single most important issue facing the African population in South Africa. At no stage did he ever place the workers at the centre of the struggle for a transformed South Africa and this failure stemmed from the thesis to which the WP was tied. This exclusion of the working class, or its relegation to second class status in the struggle, was in keeping with the

abandonment of open socialist demands inside the movement he came to lead. It was a complete negation of everything that Trotsky represented.

Ironically, the NEUM splintered on the proposed land solution in 1958. Tabata and his faction (which was strongest among the African section) proposed that when the land was redivided it should be on the basis of private ownership. Ben Kies and those who opposed Tabata rejected this.

Finally, when it came to the crucial question of how to oppose the government on the land question, Pondo activists who had been affiliated with the AAC and were preparing for revolt, approached members of the NEUM for assistance. Although Tabata's role in the discussions that took place is not known, his followers (in the main) rejected the appeals on the grounds that such a revolt had no chance of succeeding. That was an estimation that was correct, but reluctance to enter into a struggle because it could not succeed, was a recipe for political suicide.

After the Pondo revolt of 1960 the NEUM went into rapid decline. With the police uncomfortably close to detaining the leaders of the NEUM, and with many of its leaders removed from their teaching posts, a large part of the African leadership went into exile. Tabata fled South Africa in 1963 and never returned. In exile, as President of the African Peoples' Democratic Union of South Africa, he formed an alliance with the Pan Africanist Congress — the outcome of two strands of his political philosophy: the elevation of colour over class analysis and the centrality of the demand for land.

He lived out his life believing that he would still return on the tide of the revolution in which he believed. He has now returned to his native soil. His friends and relatives had to secure permission to be in South Africa for a month so that they could bury him in his native Transkei.

This is not the occasion to take issue with many of Tabata's statements but in the light of events over the past year one matter must be aired. In 1956, after the invasion of Hungary by the Soviet Army there was a deadly silence in the 'left' press in South Africa. The first paper to support the invasion was the *Torch*, mouthpiece of the NEUM. It condemned the reforming regime of Imre Nagy. Tabata concurred, claiming against all the evidence, that there was an imperialist conspiracy against the Warsaw Pact countries. Consequently, he said, he gave unconditional support to the Soviet invasion.

To the end Tabata believed that his ideals would be fulfilled. It was a forlorn hope, but for his friends it will stand as his obituary.

Baruch Hirson

Note by author: I do not wish to intrude in this brief survey but some points made above need elucidation. I first met I B Tabata in 1944 and worked in the NEUM during 1944–45 and 1950–57. In 1950 in consultation with Tabata I set up the People's Press in Johannesburg to publish his book, *The All African Convention: The Awakening of a People*. It was a book with which I profoundly disagreed and in 1957 I wrote a rebuttal, under the assumed name R Mettler, entitled 'It is Time to Awake'. My final break with Tabata followed an argument in Cape Town in 1956 over events in Hungary.

THE BULHOEK MASSACRE, 1921

On 24 May 1921 190 Israelites, (the name chosen by a chiliastic black church group) were killed and approximately 200 wounded by troops at Bulhoek, near Queenstown in the eastern Cape. It was an unpardonable action perpetrated by the Smuts government, and the United Communist Party of South Africa, a small Cape Town group, issued a protest leaflet under the headline:

Murder! Murder!! Murder!!!

The authors accused the government of using troops 'headed by a brutal assassin...in the gruesome mutilation of hundreds of Natives who were Christians and a passive community'. A meeting was called five days later where a resolution was moved condemning the 'wilful and wanton murder'. Furthermore, speakers called upon the workers of South Africa 'to organize for the overthrow of the Capitalist system which alone is responsible for the perpetration of such acts of barbarism'. Capitalism was condemned for forcing men to sell themselves for starvation wages and this was seen as 'a tragic perversion of the rights of humanity to suit the capitalist book'. This it was said, was 'the work of a Government headed by an assassin' (*Cape Times*, 31 May).

According to Wilfred H Harrison, *Memoirs of a Socialist in South Africa, 1903-47* (n d), four members of the group, Harrison, William and D L Dryburgh and William Green were arrested on 18 May, the first two charged with slander, under a *plakaat* of March 1754, for having published this document, and the other two for distributing the leaflet. Harrison and W Dryburgh were found guilty – but the law under which they were tried was no longer in force, and they were discharged on appeal; D L Dryburgh and Green were fined.

On 24 June 1921 the Communist Propaganda Group, consisting of five members, dissolved itself in an act of solidarity and, as far as can be determined, rejoined the United CPSA. Henceforth the entire energies of its members were devoted to building a united South African Communist Party.

Frank Glass, a member of the Propaganda Group, wrote a long article entitled 'The Commune of Bulhoek'. There is no indication of where the article was printed, but the typescript has been found among his extant papers. For the reader today it is interesting as an account of a young socialist reacting to an act of savagery committed in the name of the state – and it is noteworthy for the passionate protest against the unnecessary loss of life. In its attack on the government it cannot be faulted, and it also summarized, quite succinctly, the factors leading to the confrontation of 24 May. However, in his romanticisation, Glass glossed over the basic problems of the day: that is, the huge disaffection throughout the eastern Cape that had been temporarily contained under wartime conditions, a discontent that was heightened by severe droughts and large scale impoverishment. In the absence of any other meaningful

method of obtaining redress leadership fell to seers and priests who offered a way out. Their promises were illusory — but they were believed; their defiance was unsustainable — but their followers did not waver. This was a recipe for disaster, and alongside any commendation for bravery it was necessary to spell out the futility of chiliasm and indicate that the way forward lay in very different directions. The communalism of this sect had nothing in common with the communism that Glass professed. Nonetheless the article stands as a landmark in the political development of the young Frank Glass.

THE COMMUNE OF BULHOEK

Frank Glass

An act of unprecedented and diabolical savagery was committed by the Capitalist government of South Africa, at Bulhoek, Queenstown, Cape Province, on May 24th., and as a result, the blood of 200 native workers who were slaughtered, cries out for the destruction of the murderous system which is responsible for their deaths. The following are the facts:

The 'Prophet' Enoch, an educated native, gathered round him a number of people who regard themselves as a Christian congregation — this took place several years ago. Their distinguishing belief revives what was an expectation of the primitive church that has reappeared many times in history — the expectation of the impending return to this earth in physical form of the Founder of Christianity. A certain hill at Bulhoek was marked out by the 'prophet' as the place whence the faithful will be caught up into a state of glory when the looked for return occurs. It happens that on this hill there lies a parcel of ground which belongs to the 'Prophet' as an allotment holder in the location near Queenstown, and that among his followers and fellow-worshippers are holders of neighbouring allotments.

The 'Prophet' with his few followers settled on their allotments, and started the church 'One God and the Saints of Christ'. They obtained special permission from the authorities for their outside adherents to visit Bulhoek at a certain time of the year, for the purpose of joining in a religious festival. The number of their adherents grew by leaps and bounds, and each year a very large proportion of those who joined in the festival, instead of returning to their homes when it was over, remained behind at Bulhoek. Rapidly, as a consequence, a village of fair dimensions soon came into being, which was recently estimated to contain about 350 small houses. It has been stated that a part of the commonage was annexed by these people, in order to extend their village, but this report has not been satisfactorily confirmed.

Let us see for a moment how the village was conducted. In the first place, they barred the health-officer and sanitary-inspector and set up sanitary arrangements of their own, which, by all reports, proved to be efficient and satisfactory. They blocked the road passing through the village, and build a dam on it. Their pursuits were purely agricultural, such as mealie growing etc.

They refused to pay taxes, or to obey any existing laws, but set up a code of laws of their own. Their actions were entirely peaceable, as the following extract from a report laid before the South African Native Congress shows. 'During the month that the congregation has been assembled at Bulhoek, no violence or theft or any breach of the common law has been committed by its members, and the neighbouring Europeans have been in no way molested.'

'Bolshevism in practice', do you say? Well, these are the very words with which the Secretary of Native Affairs designated the whole affair. And, leaving aside the religious fanaticism which has inspired their actions, is he not right? The land they have is held and worked in common, and the few head of cattle they possess are the common property of the village.

But, what sort of a reception did this wholly successful experiment in Communism receive at the hands of the land owning community of South Africa? The farmers in and around Queenstown were positively alarmed. A large number of native farm labourers had already left the farmers who employed them and migrated to the Bulhoek commune, and the latter could evidently foresee the day when there would be no farm labourers to exploit. Certain it is, that the natives prefer a thousand times to have their own native village, where they can work on their own land peaceably to being exploited as a farm 'hand' by a baas (master).

Ultimately, the Queenstown farmers sent a deputation to the Government, and demanded that these 'Israelites', as they were called, who said they were a lot of dangerous fanatics, should be evicted from Bulhoek without delay. The Government, which, of course represents the interests of the farmers and land-owning classes of South Africa, had no alternative but to obey orders. They informed the 'Israelites' that they had committed a breach of the law in annexing the commonage (this charge has not yet been verified), and in refusing to pay taxes, and in refusing to submit their village to inspection by official Sanitary and Health inspectors; on these grounds they ordered the unfortunate 'Israelites' to destroy their village and return to their homes, notwithstanding that the majority of them had no other homes to go to.

As was only natural in the circumstances, the 'Israelites' refused to destroy the work of years, and stated in reply that they would not shift from Bulhoek without express orders from 'Jehovah'. Needless to relate, 'Jehovah' did not reveal himself, and so, after further threats from the Police Authorities which were paid no attention to, preparations were made to evict the 'Israelites' from Bulhoek by force.

A force of a thousand Police was assembled at Queenstown, and on the morning of May 24th, armed with rifles and bayonets, and accompanied by a machine-gun detachment and some artillery, they set out for Bulhoek. On their arrival, their force was formed into fighting order, and a demand for surrender was sent into the village. The 'Israelites' were preparing for a defence and refused to surrender. Col Truter, who was in command of the Police Force, then gave the order to advance. The 'Israelites' blocked the entrance of the village, and attempted to stem the advance with assegais, knives and sticks, etc, but these crude weapons were no match for the weapons which the opposing force possessed. Nevertheless, the 'Israelites' put up a brave fight in

defence of their commune, but they were outnumbered almost three to one, and, in ten minutes 200 of them had been slaughtered and another 125 wounded as a result of a withering machine-gun fire. Seeing that it was futile to resist further, the village was surrendered and the work of demolition was commenced. Thus was suppressed in blood the commune of Bulhoek.

Oh, what an act of heroism my countrymen — machine-guns against sticks and assegais! Throw up your hats ye freedom-loving Britishers, and sing 'Britons never shall be slaves'. But, listen! The Johannesburg *Star* thinks that 'less expense would have been incurred if one or two bombing aeroplanes had been employed'. Ye Gods, and this in the year of our Lord 1921!

However, this brutal act of savagery is but indicative of the brutal methods of suppression to which the Capitalist class will resort in order to preserve their system intact. If ever proof were required of the cheapness of human life where the interests of private property are concerned, surely the cold-blooded butchery of those 200 natives at Bulhoek affords such proof.

The first practical demonstration of the success of Communism in South Africa has been destroyed, but the IDEA of Communism still remains, and CANNOT BE DESTROYED. The seed of Communism has been sown at Bulhoek, and has aroused the fierce hatred of the master-class of South Africa, who have attempted to kill it with the utmost ferocity.

But, long after the firing of the last shot, and long after the burial of the last corpse, the memory of the Bulhoek Commune will shine in the hearts of the native proletariat of South Africa, oppressed and downtrodden as they are in every corner of this vast continent. This memory will serve as a beacon, lighting the path which they must tread in their emancipation, and it will in some measure help to spur them on to unite with their white fellow-slaves for the destruction of the Capitalist system and the establishment of Communism, looking for inspiration and guidance, not to Jehovah, but in the justice of the workers' cause.

Michael Wade (1941–1990)

The editors regret to announce the death of Mike Wade, after a prolonged illness in Jerusalem at the age of 49. Mike was best known for his books and articles of literary criticism and book reviews. A friend and supporter of *Searchlight South Africa*, he had promised us a contribution, but ill-health stopped him writing this article.

He did not often speak about his political activity in South Africa, but any-one reading his reviews will have noticed that he was one of the few writers who referred knowingly to the National Committee of Liberation, a body involved in sabotage from 1961–64, when many of its leading members were arrested. Mike was a member and escaped arrest only because he was at that time on holiday in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe.

Those who knew him in the 1950s will remember that he was one of the few student activists who, at the time, condemned Stalinism.

ADVERTISEMENT

YOURS FOR THE UNION: CLASS AND COMMUNITY STRUGGLES IN SOUTH AFRICA, 1930-47, by Baruch Hirson, Zed Books. Special pre-publication offer to Subscribers £6.00 (incl p&p), from *Searchlight South Africa*. The publishers now advise that the book should be available by March 1990.

A major new history of the Black working class in South Africa, covering the years from the end of the depression to the collapse of the general strike, by Black miners, in 1946. Set against the background of expanding industry and the Second World War, this is the first account of the workers and organizers who built the Council of Non-European Trade Unions; and of the men and women who conducted major campaigns to improve living conditions in the black townships. Among the personalities discussed are trade union organizers Dan Koza and Max Gordon, Naboth Mokgatle and Mike Muller, and hitherto unknown workers who tried to organize the work force around them. The title of this book is taken from the greeting of one such individual, Willie Bosiamé.

The workers fought a many sided struggle: for higher wages and better working conditions; against police harassment; against rising transport costs; for better housing; and also against the deterioration of conditions in the rural areas in which they still had roots. In this history of organization and struggle, the events covered include the Vereeniging riot of 1937; the strike wave during the war and the bus boycotts and shanty town movements. There are also accounts of the struggles against the implementation of the land laws in the Zoutpansberg, and the campaign to remove educational control from unsympathetic missionaries in the Bethanie district.

The author participated in some of the events recorded in this book, but only includes accounts that are backed by documentary evidence. In reading the documents of the time he was struck by the relevance of much of that experience to events today. The attempt at building a working class movement in the 1940s is as pertinent to contemporary South Africa as it was in those days of global warfare.

During a long career of political involvement Baruch Hirson has been a political organizer, a lecturer in Physics and in History, a political prisoner. He is the author of *Year of Fire, Year of Ash: The Soweto Revolt* (Zed Press, 1979).

THE AFL-CIO AND THE TRADE UNIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Paul Trehela¹

'It is clear that whatever shape the future South Africa will take, the labour movement has a crucial role to play...'

— Irving Brown, founder of the African-American Labour Centre (AALC)².

'At the highest level, [Central Intelligence] Agency labour operations are effected through George Meany, President of the AFL, Jay Lovestone, Foreign Affairs chief of the AFL and Irving Brown, AFL representative in Europe — all of whom are effective and witting collaborators'

— Philip Agee, CIA operative in South and Central America³

'Using money and, where necessary, the CIA, the US labour aristocracy began to carve out a sphere of influence for itself on African soil that would later be embodied in the African-American Labour Centre (AALC), administered by the notorious Irving Brown from his office in New York'

— The official history of the South African Congress of Trade Unions⁴

'Washington's interest in the SA labour scene is very high'

— Charles Daris, labour attache at the US consulate, Johannesburg, 1982; previously special assistant to the US ambassador in Vietnam in the late 1960s

The Cold War System in the Unions

The cold war is dead, but the trade unions in South Africa — the strongest in the continent — remain the repository of its ghostly presence.

Like the living dead of Gothic horror, Stalinism has thrived in the unions in South Africa in the past few years in proportion as its international control centre has disintegrated. The paradox may be summed up in the person of Chris Dlamini, vice-president of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), who is also a member of the internal leadership group of the now legal South African Communist Party (SACP). Eight years ago, as president of the then Federation of South African Trade Unions (Fosatu), Dlamini made a visit to Zimbabwe after which he stated that although some people in the country were liberated, workers were not. 'Worker liberation', he stated, 'can only be achieved by a strong, well organized worker movement'. (MacShane et al, p125)

This suggested a critique of the logic of nationalist politics in southern Africa. In the phrase 'worker liberation' and its suggestion of the need for an end to capitalist society, Dlamini expressed similar sentiments to Fosatu's general secretary, Joe Foster. In April 1982, in one of the nodal points in the development of the trade union movement, Foster called for a 'society controlled by workers', and for a 'political presence for worker organization' in which workers would 'play a major political role as workers' (ibid, Appendix 1).

There was an implied critique here of the adequacy of nationalist organizations such as the African National Congress to represent the working class, and of the SACP – with its two-stage theory of revolution – for confining itself to the purely bourgeois programme of the ANC.

From exile, the SACP interpreted Foster's speech as a political attack upon itself, and launched an assault against his presumption – endorsed by Fosatu as policy – that a working class political organisation be formed out of the unions separate from and by implication critical of and even hostile to the SACP. This was a threat to the SACP, which then had a negligible presence in the trade unions or anywhere else within South Africa. Foster stated in the same speech that workers in eastern Europe did not 'control their own destiny' and needed to establish 'more democratic worker control'. For the SACP, receiving funds and resources from these same states, this was an open declaration of war. Leaders of Fosatu were perceived as engaged in a general syndicalist attack on Stalinist politics.

The Stalinist states of eastern Europe are now overturned, Foster has disappeared into political oblivion, while Dlamini is celebrated by the SACP as a jewel in its crown. He plays an intriguing role. On 25 June, barely a month before he identified himself as a leader of the SACP at its legal launch in Soweto on 29 July, Dlamini was welcomed as an honoured guest in the US by the American Federation of Labour–Congress of Industrial Organisations (AFL–CIO), the most important organisation of cold war politics aimed to undermine Soviet influence in the trade unions and tame workers everywhere. Lane Kirkland, president of the AFL–CIO and the leading US official at the reception, had been co-chairman of the Committee on the Present Danger, which ideologically prepared the Reagan administration for its arms build-up against the Soviet Union. For a leader of the SACP, such a reception was as if Mephistopheles had been greeted at the gates of heaven.

The reception, on 25 June, was to honour Nelson Mandela, and with him Dlamini, during Mandela's triumphal US visit. The reception was held at the Washington headquarters of the AFL–CIO's sub-department on Africa, the African–American Labor Centre (AALC), a body previously denounced by the SACP as a front for the CIA.

The spectacle of a leading representative of the most important Stalinist party in Africa being received by the AFL–CIO in Washington marks the end of an epoch in the trade unions internationally. This whole period was one of exceptional difficulties for independent organization of trade unions. In the USSR there was no body to defend working class rights. In the west the workers were caught between the Stalinists, whose aim was to attach the unions to the World Federation of Trade Unions and by so doing convert them into an arm of the Soviet state, or the so-called 'free' trade unions which would operate as an arm of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The AFL, prior to its merger with the CIO, defined its policy in 1944:

Free trade unions are independent organizations controlling their own terms and conditions of membership, deciding their own rules and discipline of membership, able to make a contract with assurance of

fulfilment. Free trade unions are not state controlled nor are they auxiliaries of the state dominant party, or any employer or employers' organizations. Free trade unions are not subject to any political party nor do they serve as party tools. Power of deciding policies and the course of the organization is lodged with the union membership (quoted in Peterson, p 42, n 10).

Through its own politics, and greatly promoted by the character of the Stalinist regimes in eastern Europe in the immediate postwar period, the AFL betrayed its conception of the freedom of the unions through its relation to the US state. Through most of the following decades, a perverse co-determination of politics in the unions internationally was exercised in tandem by the secret security agencies of the USSR and the US, as joint actors in the cold war system, mutually operated to control the workers. Postwar world conditions placed tremendous obstacles in the way of any project of workers' liberation through an independent workers' movement, which is what Dlamini and Foster had appeared to be advocating in the early 1980s. The metamorphosis of Dlamini from 'workerist' leader of Fosatu to leader of the SACP, and of the SACP from an arm of the 'evil empire' to honoured guest of the AFL-CIO, is thus expressive of profound movements in world and South African politics.

A Brief History of the AFL

The AFL-CIO's present role in international politics began with Jay Lovestone, former general secretary of the US Communist Party. Lovestone led one of two factions that supported the programme of Stalin and Bukharin and in 1928 was 'in the vanguard of the fight against Trotskyism' (Cannon, p 43) helping to secure their expulsion. He broke with Stalin the following year but remained loyal to the Comintern until Bukharin's execution. After the Stalin-Hitler pact and the conquest of Poland, Lovestone disbanded his small political grouping and ceased to consider himself a Marxist. Together with David Dubinsky, president of the New York-based International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), William Green, then president of the AFL, and George Meany, then secretary-treasurer of the AFL, Lovestone set out during the war years to combat the influence of the Communist Parties in the world trade union movement, above all in Europe. From their Free Trade Union Committee, set up mainly with ILGWU funds, and with Lovestone as executive secretary, the international political operations of the AFL took shape in the 1940s with the specific purpose of combating the grip of the Stalinist parties on the unions, albeit from the reformist and pro-capitalist right.

The AFL had historically represented the craft elite of the American workers. Founded in the depression years of the 1880s under the leadership of Samuel Gompers, it had an ingrained hostility to what its leaders regarded as 'political trade unionism', to the politics of class struggle and to socialism of any kind. Its aristocratic disdain for the mass of industrial workers in the factories and mines led to the formation of the rival CIO out of great strike battles in the

1930s, in order to represent this much wider and more oppressed stratum of workers. After World War two, the CIO helped to form the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), which included Stalinist-controlled unions in Europe. The leaders of the CIO – partisans of class struggle through the unions, with views not very different from those of Foster and Dlamini in the early 1980s – hoped that the wartime alliance of capitalist US and Stalinist USSR could continue as an alliance of workers through a single world trade union federation. Members of the small US Communist Party in the CIO strongly supported this conception.

By contrast, the AFL warned that Stalinist parties would attempt to usurp the organization by force and guile, and boycotted the WFTU. The AFL was proved correct. As postwar conditions tore the wartime alliance apart, the hopes of the syndicalists of the CIO were disabused. In the early cold war period the WFTU split, and passed into Stalinist hands. In 1948 the CIO withdrew, and took the lead with the AFL in forming the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) in opposition to the WFTU. In 1955 the two bodies merged.

Between the defeat of nazism and the beginning of the war in Korea, the cold war created conditions simultaneously for the birth of the CIA (founded in its present shape in 1947) and for the international political outreach of the AFL-CIO, operating both independently and through the ICFTU. An ice age of secret political control, centred on Washington and Moscow, and to a smaller degree the Catholic Church, settled over the unions. In Italy and France, the Communist Parties had won great prestige through their role in the partisan resistance and emerged from the war with the leading place in the unions. Germany, with Soviet troops positioned as far west as Berlin, had had one of the biggest Communist Parties in the world at the time of Hitler's coming to power. Under these circumstances, the politics of the workers in these three countries would decide the future of Europe and thus the global fate of the United States. At the highest level, and in great secrecy, the US bourgeoisie through a series of stages refashioned its wartime intelligence and sabotage operations for political warfare against the influence of the Communist Parties in these three countries in particular.

Money was a mighty weapon for the salvation of men's souls in ruined postwar Europe, and money for CIA operations – flowing from the cornucopia of US surplus value – was not lacking. What was needed, however, were people with the right credentials and the knowhow to fight the political war within the west European working class. It was here that the Lovestone-Meany operation came into its own, grounded in Lovestone's inner knowledge of the dirty tricks of Stalinist politics, and funded from the seemingly bottomless treasure chest of the US state. In this way, a trade union bureaucracy resting on a minority of generally depoliticized workers in the US determined the fate of the much more highly politicized workers of western Europe, especially in France and Italy where mass Communist Parties initially had a place in the postwar governments⁶.

Lovestone himself later boasted that 'If it had not been for the AFL, the communists would have taken over in Europe'. (quoted in Wintour, 1979)

There is no reason to doubt his correctness. The same thinking has guided AFL-CIO strategy towards southern Africa. Shortly before the setting up of the AALC, a previously secret US State Department policy document posed the question whether 'in order to oppose a Communist threat' in southern Africa, the US would have to choose between 'cooperating with the South African Government against an African group or permitting a Communist haven to be developed which might threaten much of the continent' (Department of State, p 21). Given the very close long-range identity between US state interests internationally and those of the AFL leadership, the principal task of the AALC was to prevent this situation from arising.

An American-trained labour adviser attached to a South African company, who asked not to be named, was interviewed by a South African student journal. His remarks carry the ring of truth. The AFL-CIO, he said:

[takes] an interest in African countries in a time of transition to African rule.

The notion is to immunize the working class movement against more radical influences and to steer it in directions considered desirable by the American government.

I think there is also an important role for the AALC in the post-independence phase and that is essentially acting as a tool of American foreign policy. In the economic field one obviously wants a working class that will not create a climate that is inhospitable to American business and in the political field one has a tool of action which can be used against governments, as is witnessed by the intervention of American-trained trade unionists in the Brazilian coup of 1964 and the Chilean coup of 1973. (quoted in *Saspu National*, October 1982)

Even before the coup in Chile, a US Senate hearing in 1968 found that in addition to Brazil, elected governments had been overturned in Guyana, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic through the assistance of trade unionists trained ultimately under the direction of the AFL-CIO (Thomson). Latin America was the main field of action in which the AFL's European experience in the 1940s came later into play, and afterwards provided the model for its operations in Africa.

An American Abroad: Irving Brown

Alongside Lovestone and Meany, the third man in the American triarchy fighting the holy war in European labour politics in the 1940s was Irving Brown, a political ally of Lovestone since the 1930s and like him a man well steeped in the skulduggery of the left. During the war, according to Winslow Peck, a former intelligence analyst for both the US Air Force Security Service and the National Security Agency, Lovestone was 'instrumental in placing several Lovestonites and other anti-Communists in the OSS Labor Branch' (quoted in Allen). The Office of Strategic Services (OSS) was the main US wartime international secret operations body out of which the postwar CIA developed.

During the war, Brown directed the Labor and Manpower Division of the US government's Foreign Economic Administration in Europe. He then became the AFL's front-fighter in the European theatre of cold war. He is accredited with having engineered a major split in the French trade unions in the 1940s, denying the CPF a position of overall control by forming the rival *Force Ouvriere*; he set up Free Trade Union Committees in Germany to shut the CP out of the unions in advance of the Berlin airlift; he won a beachhead in the unions in Greece in the civil war under the shield of military dictatorship; and helped flood starving Italy with life-giving dollars, in the period of the massive CIA operation which successfully prevented the CP winning the 1948 elections when an estimated '\$75 million in covert financial aid was channelled to anti-communist parties and politicians'. (Bledowska and Bloch, p 20)

In this crucial period, Brown supplied European unions 'with money, typewriters, technical help and encouragement to resist Communist takeovers' and also 'arranged for the use of strongarm men to meet the strongarm efforts of the Communists to prevent the unloading of ships crammed with Marshall Plan goods' (Kurzman, 1965). Sidney Lens, leader of an AFL building workers local in Chicago for over twenty years, said Brown claimed, when interviewed in 1965, that in twenty years he had donated about \$100,000 to foreign unions. Other commentators said that Brown and the Lovestonites spent a multiple many times higher than that up to the early 1950s (Lens, 1965). Writing in the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1967 under the title 'Why I am glad the CIA plays dirty', Thomas Braden, former head of the CIA's international organizations division, claimed that he had personally given CIA funds to Brown to help in clandestine labour operations.

It was my idea to give \$15,000 to Irving Brown. He needed it to pay off his strong arm squads in Mediterranean ports, so that American supplies could be unloaded against the opposition of Communist dock workers...Thus began the secret funding of trade unions. (quoted in *Work in Progress*, No 24, 1982)

A similar account of Brown's use of criminal gangs, including the Italian Mafia, was later given by Victor Reuther, former International Affairs director for the United Auto Workers Union (UAW) in the US, who was then in Europe as representative of the CIO. Reuther and his brother Walter (also a leader of the UAW) had had first-hand experience of the 'Machiavellian' methods of Lovestone and Brown during the 1930s (Allen).

Brown played a leading part in the formation of the ICFTU in 1948, and directed its office at the UN from 1962 to 1964. CIA operative Philip Agee described him in 1975 as the 'principal CIA agent for control of the [ICFTU]' (p 603). As director of the ICFTU at the UN, Brown played a leading role in founding the AALC in 1964. He was its first executive director until 1973, before returning to Paris to head the AFL-CIO's European operation in advance of a period of major instability in the underbelly of Europe, preceding the overthrow of the dictatorship in Portugal.

Brown clearly retained a major first-hand connection with events in southern Africa. He died in February 1989. The spectre of this quintessential 'ugly

American' must surely have hovered over Mandela and Dlamini as they shook hands in Washington with his successors at the AALC – the victors of the cold war in the world's trade unions.

The CIA in the Unions

Allegations about the role of the CIA in the AFL-CIO appear to be substantial. Investigations by the House of Representatives Banking Committee in 1964 revealed that several US unions had taken CIA money (*Business Week*, 4 November 1985). The 1979 report of the Select Committee on Assassinations of the US Congress, looking into the Kennedy assassination, uncovered a connection between the CIA as well as the Mafia and the largest union in the United States, the Teamsters: a sinister reappearance of relationships forged by Brown on the waterfront in the Mediterranean in the 1940s, and 'Operation Underworld' conducted jointly by the US Navy and the Luciano wing of the Mafia for control of the unions on the New York docks during the war. Under these circumstances, it would be historically inconsistent if the CIA had not funded Brown's European operations in the 1940s. In military terms, Brown's work in the unions was worth several divisions of troops.

The nature of the AALC under Brown, and subsequently under his successor, Patrick J O'Farrell (an ex-Marine), can best be understood from the picture presented by Agee of its counterpart operating in South and Central America, the American Institute for Free Labour Development (AIFLD), a regional sub-division of the AFL-CIO working alongside the Inter-American Regional Labour Organization of the ICFTU (ORIT). Formed in 1961, the AIFLD is the model on which the AALC was founded. (The third of the AFL-CIO's regional organizations, the Asian-American Free Labour Institute, operates in over thirty countries in Asia and the Middle East, focusing particularly on the Philippines. The Free Trade Union Institute and the AFL-CIO International Affairs Department relate to Europe.)

Agee, then working as a CIA agent in Ecuador, gives a diary entry for June 1962 describing the conditions under which the AIFLD was set up, on account of the 'ineffectiveness' of ORIT. The problem for the CIA, he writes, was:

how to accelerate expansion of labour-organizing activities in Latin America in order to deny workers to labour unions dominated by the extreme left and to reverse communist and Castroite penetration. This new programme is the result of several years' study and planning and is to be channelled through the [AIFLD], founded last year in Washington for training in trade unionism.

The reason for setting up this new institution was that labour programmes immediately subordinate to the US state through its Agency for International Development (AID) were 'limited because of their direct dependence' on the US government. They served poorly for the 'dirty struggles that characterize labour organizing and jurisdictional battles'.

The AIFLD was headed by Serafino Romualdi, a 'long-time agent' of 10 Division of the CIA who resigned as the inter-American representative of the AFL-CIO to become the new body's executive director (the post occupied first by Brown, then by O'Farrell in the AALC). 'Principal headquarters' collaborators' on the AIFLD board of directors involved first of all George Meany, who until his resignation as president of the AFL-CIO in 1979 was also president and chairman of the board of the AALC. (Meany's successor as president of the AFL-CIO and of the AALC was Kirkland, who hosted the reception for Mandela and Dlamini.) Agee refers elsewhere to Meany as the '[principal] CIA agent/collaborator in US trade union movement for purpose of the CIA international labour operations' (p 615).

A Model of Political Control

The AIFLD, according to Agee, was modelled on the training school of the Communications Workers of America at Front Royal, Virginia, used by the CIA to control an international trade secretariat of post and telegraph workers, the PTTI. Leaders of union affiliates of the PTTI in South and Central America were brought for training to the CWA school. Day to day control of the AIFLD by the CIA was exercised by Romualdi and William Doherty, 'considered to be one of our more effective labour agents. (Agee, p 302). Doherty was the former inter-American representative of the PTTI and subsequently AIFLD social projects director.

The main purpose of AIFLD, according to Agee, was to

organize anti-communist labour unions in Latin America. However, the ostensible purpose, since union organizing is rather sensitive for AID to finance, even indirectly, will be 'adult education' and social projects such as workers' housing, credit unions and cooperatives. First priority is to establish in all Latin American countries training institutes which will take over and expand the courses already being given in many countries by AID. Although these training institutes will nominally and administratively be controlled by AIFLD in Washington, it is planned that as many as possible will be headed by salaried CIA agents with operational control exercised by the stations. In most cases, it is hoped, these AIFLD agents will be US citizens with some background in trade unionism although...foreign nationals may have to be used.

The AIFLD was also to begin 'advanced training courses' in Washington. 'Spotting and assessment of potential agents for labour operations will be a continuing function of the Agency-controlled staff members both in the training courses in Latin America and in the Washington courses'. (Agee, pp 243-45) These courses in Washington are the type provided through the late 1970s and 1980s by the AALC to South African, as well as some Namibian, trade unionists. The same picture emerges during Agee's assignments in Ecuador, Uruguay and Mexico. The chief purpose of these trade union operations was to strengthen not the workers in these regions but the ruling minorities through which US capital dominated the hemisphere (p 566).

Despite the many revelations, AALC officials such as Meany, Brown, Kirkland and O'Farrell continuously denied any connection with the CIA. Significantly, they appear never to have taken such allegations to court, despite massive funds available for libel action against adversaries possessing few resources. A connection with US intelligence is signaled in other ways. When Jerry Funk, O'Farrell's deputy executive director, resigned from the AALC in November 1978, the *AALC Reporter* (Nov-Dec) which noted this neglected to inform its readers that he had been recruited to the National Security Agency by its then director, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and was immediately sent on a fact-finding tour of southern Africa (*Africa Confidential*, 31 Jan 1979).

Direct, detailed, factual knowledge of a relation of the CIA to the trade unions in South Africa would by its nature be extremely difficult to obtain. In a sense, it is unnecessary, since it is publicly acknowledged that 90 per cent of the AALC budget comes not in any way from workers but from the budget of the US state, principally through the AID. Even under the best construction, the AALC operates only nominally as an organ of the working class: it is an instrument of state, acting on behalf of the prime global power of capital. At the same time there is no reason to doubt AALC officials when they deny running courses of indoctrination and when they insist that their programmes are developed in response to union requests. The AFL-CIO has decades of experience and its international operations are sophisticated, assured and well-funded. Nothing could provide a better culture for intelligence operations than an effective and respected trade union training programme.

The Reagan administration increased state funding to the AALC during the early 1980s, when it identified southern Africa as a region requiring immediate increased intervention. Publicly acknowledged state funds to the AALC rose from \$27,000 in 1981 to \$875,000 in 1984, an increase of more than 3,000 per cent (*African Business*, Jan 1986). Between 1983 and 1984 alone, US state funding to the AALC increased fivefold. In 1982 the CIA director, William Casey, made a covert visit to South Africa and later that year an influential member of the US Senate's Appropriations Committee, Paul Laxalt, apologized in Durban because South Africa had not previously been given the attention it deserved by US foreign policy makers (*Financial Mail*, 29 Oct 1982). He became chairman of Reagan's election campaign in 1984. It was during this period that the National Endowment for Democracy was set up by the Reagan administration, endorsed by Congress and funded from the US budget, to promote such interventions in countries like South Africa.

The Enlistment of Nana Mahomo

What is striking about the AALC programme on southern Africa during the 1980s is the total silence in its official publication, *AALC Reporter*, on the role of the SACP in the ANC and the unions, through Sactu. The AALC was very careful to avoid open polemics, quite unlike the confrontational politics of Brown in the European trade unions in the 1940s. But Sactu was non-operational in South Africa after the repression of the early 1960s: that was the complaint of left-wing dissidents in the ANC (Rob Peterson, Martin Legas-

sick and others), leading to their expulsion in 1985. Yet even when the influence of the SACP and the ANC revived within the unions, the AALC retained its scrupulous reserve. A different period, and a different continent, required a different strategy. At the same time, the AALC oriented itself towards currents in the unions not directly sympathetic to the ANC, the SACP and Sactu, and through these it developed its first foothold in South Africa.

Just as the massive increase in funding from the Reagan administration got under way in the early 1980s, the AALC appointed Nana Mahomo, a former leader of the Pan Africanist Congress from the late 1950s and early 1960s, as coordinator of the AFL-CIO's Program of Action in Support of Black Trade Unions in South Africa, established in 1981. He resigned in 1987, when it was clear the AALC would have to reorient its politics towards the ANC and the SACP, which by then had become dominant in the unions through the inner circle in Cosatu. An effective relation of the AALC to Cosatu was impossible so long as Mahomo headed its South Africa programme.

The rapid expansion in the AALC presence in South Africa, with its immensely expanded scope for corruption – both political and personal – is the fruit of the 'Mahomo years'. When he resigned, the AALC paid tribute to him for having been 'instrumental in helping to establish the AFL-CIO's policy towards South Africa and its program of action in support of black workers' (*AALC Reporter*, Vol 22, No 2, 1987). Yet when appointed in 1981 it was known that he had been expelled from the PAC. It is not my intention to list the many accusations levelled against Mahomo after his appointment to the AALC, by his former organization or by the press. Some of the allegations must await further research and firm documentation. However it seems that Brown's relationship with South African politics over a quarter of a century, was principally through Mahomo. According to *Work in Progress*, 1982, No.24, Brown had established a relation with Mahomo by 1963

when [he] helped Mahomo airlift PAC refugees from Bechuanaland and, later that year, financed the establishment of a training camp in the Congo – now Zaire – under the joint command of Mahomo and Holden Roberto, later to head the FNLA in Angola.

Roberto was a long-time asset of the CIA, according to Stockwell, in his account of the Angolan war in 1975–76., while Mahomo's relation to the AFL-CIO from 1963 onwards includes his role in sending PAC members for military training to the camp at Kinkuzu, near Leopoldville, run by the FNLA – 'another recipient of AFL-CIO generosity', Lodge comments laconically (1983, p 307). After his suspension by the PAC in August 1964, the AFL-CIO 'continued to provide funding for Mahomo's projects' (p 309). In 1966 the PAC accused Mahomo of introducing PAC dissidents to Brown at an anti-apartheid meeting in Latin America (*Work in Progress*, No 24).

Whatever the truth of these allegations, some inspired by intra-party in-fighting, and despite having been expelled from the PAC, Mahomo was able to do the AFL-CIO a major service in the 1980s by assisting it towards the more Africanist current in the newly developing unions in South Africa, especially towards the leaders of the National Council of Trade Unions (Nactu). Hos-

tility to the Soviet Union initially prevented the AALC from developing close relations with trade union leaders who proved more influential in the period of formation of Cosatu, but through Mahomo it did acquire many important contacts and a much deeper familiarity with South African conditions. The end of the Brezhnev era and the collapse of the Soviet Union as a superpower now permit the AALC to approach the central forces in the trade union movement in South Africa in a direct, less oblique manner.

During Mahomo's period, the AALC developed a very much more 'political' stance towards events in South Africa. As it moved towards the golden moment of the tripartite handshake between Kirkland, O'Farrell and Nelson Mandela, headlines regularly appeared in *AALC Reporter* to the effect that 'American unions battle apartheid', 'AFL-CIO calls for more sanctions', 'AFL-CIO rallies assail apartheid', 'American labour protests arrests in S.A', 'Black unions are key to ending apartheid', and so on. This was a major change from its isolation from radical black politics during the 1960s and early 1970s. The AALC now moved closer towards the mainstream of South African nationalist opinion.

With Mandela in Washington

From the published account of the AFL-CIO reception for Mandela and Dlamini, not a word was uttered on either side about the decades of antagonism between the two groupings. No mention by Mandela and Dlamini, of the record of the AFL-CIO as the most resolute organizer against Soviet influences in the trade unions, its role as an auxiliary arm of the US state in international labour affairs and allegations of alliance between it and the CIA.

On the part of Kirkland and O'Farrell, no mention either of the long history of vituperation against the AFL-CIO by the SACP, the ANC and their former trade union arm, Sactu. Questions from members of the AFL-CIO executive board were directed largely towards securing assurances from Mandela and Dlamini for substantive freedom for capital in the future South Africa. These they received. Mandela, who had already given such assurances to a gathering of leading representatives of capital, gave an explicit undertaking:

State participation will not be an option if there are better options. We are having discussions with businessmen in our country. We have had numerous meetings. The point is that even when we will be taking a decision for state participation in any industry, this will be done with the cooperation of the business people themselves... There would be the most careful negotiations and consultation with the business sector (verbatim account, *AALC Reporter*, Vol 25, No 3, 1990).

Such harmony between the ANC, the SACP and the AFL-CIO was a far cry from October 1978, when the AALC organized the first formal meeting between black South African trade unionists and leaders of unions affiliated to the Organization of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU) in Gaborone, Botswana when the AALC's major drive into the South African trade unions

began. Its launch-pad was the operation in Botswana, where trade unions were 'virtually non-existent' before the arrival of the AFL-CIO (*The Sun*, Washington, 26 Jan 1983). By 1983, three cabinet ministers in Botswana had been trained by the AALC, the headquarters of the Botswana Federation of Trade Unions had been built with its funds and a resident official from the US directed AALC activities there. Among the trade union leaders from the OATUU at the Gaborone conference were persons who had for years been trained, funded and feted by the AALC, one of them a Kenyan cabinet minister. These traded unionists, working closely with the AALC in one-party (or rather no-party) states such as Zaire, Kenya and Togo, had defied a decision by the OATUU secretariat that its affiliates should not attend.

The South Africans were from trade unions affiliated to the Reef-based Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions, which took shape in September 1980 as the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA). During the early 1980s, CUSA, with its ideology of black consciousness, was both the largest federal body of black South African trade unionists and the one with which the AALC had closest ties. CUSA's general secretary, Phiroshaw Camay, who attended sessions at the AALC headquarters in Washington on a number of occasions, later in 1985 identified himself more directly with foreign policy aims of the AALC and the US government in expressing support for Solidarnosc in Poland against the Soviet-type regime of General Jaruzelski, in which he saw 'similarities' with conditions in South Africa (interview in *Free Labour World*, 24 January 1985). During this period Fosatu, with Dlamini as president, had very much slighter relations with the AALC.

Between ICFTU and WFTU

The Gaborone conference had first been suggested in 1977 at the annual convention of the AFL-CIO at Bal Harbor, Florida, in the United States, when black South African delegates later to emerge in CUSA objected to a resolution endorsing Sactu as the only representative of South African workers. Though previously the most important federal body of black trade unionists in South Africa, Sactu had been crippled by arrests, killings and banning orders in the repression of the early 1960s. Many of its officials, usually members of the SACP, had been channelled into Umkhonto we Sizwe, with a disastrous effect on its ability to represent the workers as its basic cadre force, went into prison, or into exile, or to the gallows (as in the case of Sactu's Port Elizabeth organizer and executive member, Vuyisile Mini, and his colleagues Zinakile Mkaba and Wilson Khayinga, hanged in 1964).

This diversion of personnel from the trade unions to guerrillaism was a strategic policy decision for which the SACP paid heavily in terms of influence in the unions in the twelve years from the Durban strikes of 1973 to the formation of Cosatu in 1985. In the late 1970s Sactu had a negligible presence in unions within South Africa, while its leadership in exile - weak, morbidly suspicious and in essence the SACP - was very hostile to any development within South Africa not controlled by itself. The anti-Sactu delegates at the AFL-CIO convention pointed out, correctly, that the proposed resolution

excluded other union groupings with substantial backing within South Africa and they suggested the conference with the OATUU, which the AFL-CIO agreed to set up through the AALC. (*Financial Mail*, 27 Oct 1978)

For decades Sactu representatives such as the SACP leader, Ray Alexander (R E Simons), writing from exile in the SACP journal *African Communist* under the pseudonym R E Braverman, had attacked the role of the AFL-CIO in Africa as an extension of imperialist politics channelled through the CIA. Alexander's criticism was aimed against the 'CIA-directed and subsidized strategy of the Meany leadership of the American AFL-CIO', a strategy 'directed against the national liberatory and socialist forces the world over' (*African Communist*, No 29, 1967). This was coupled with SACP denunciation of the class interests served by the AFL-CIO in its relation to 'American monopoly-capitalist mining and other concerns' in South Africa, further strengthening the 'stranglehold of Big Business monopoly capitalism'. (editorial, *African Communist*, No 15, Oct-Dec 1963.)

A persistent source of SACP criticism was that in the 1960s and early 1970s, the AFL-CIO supported the segregated, mainly white and *de facto* racist unions grouped in the Trade Union Council of South Africa (Tuca), as well as individual black trade unionists hostile to Sactu, such as Lucy Mvubelo of the Garment Workers Union of African Women - later the National Union of Clothing Workers (NUCW). The NUCW, with only a small fraction of Tuca's total membership, was its sole significant black affiliate. Tuca had excluded black unions in 1954 under government pressure, and was affiliated to the ICFTU. Sactu had been formed out of the black unions as a non-racial federation and was affiliated to the Prague based WFTU.

Lucy Mvubelo, a founder member of Sactu, had moved its affiliation to the WFTU at its inaugural conference in 1955, but broke with Sactu in 1957. In 1959 she helped set up a marginal body, the Federation of Free African Trade Unions (Fofatusa) with funds from the ICFTU after its representatives had failed to separate Sactu from the ANC (and the WFTU).

There are no published documents that tell the full story, but the Pan Africanist Congress needed a trade union centre and Fofatusa was originally meant to be the PAC's industrial arm. Its chairman, J D Nyaose of the African Bakers Industrial Union, was 'Minister of Labour' in the PAC and central to the formation of Fofatusa. The aim was for Fofatusa to bring the workers out in conjunction with the PAC's Anti-Pass Campaign of 1960, but it failed to do so. Through the intervention of the ICFTU it was very much a cold war creation, though it did not see itself as such - rather as part of the black consciousness current (before the phrase was coined). It failed to supplant, or even seriously challenge, the predominant influence of the SACP in the black unions grouped in Sactu: that function was reserved to the state. Fofatusa was dissolved in 1966, with some of its bigger sections (together with Mvubelo) entering Tuca on a segregated basis.

Until the late 1970s, when the trade union struggle of the black workers in South Africa became irrepressible, the AFL-CIO and the ICFTU worked principally with Tuca. In this period the AFL-CIO and the ICFTU, effectively endorsed the racist principles on which Tuca was organized. Like

Tucsa, it opposed sanctions and favoured abstention from the overwhelming political issues of the time. In 1973, after the Durban strikes, a shift in emphasis became noticeable when Brown attended the Tucsa congress in South Africa, offering it large funds if proper unions for black workers were established. The class concerns of the AALC were apparent. 'Unless responsible black leadership is encouraged', it declared:

the next series of strikes could be disastrous. If the government does not permit blacks to form and run responsible trade unions, industrial chaos and the resulting explosion may in the end destroy the very fabric of South African society. (*AALC Reporter*, June 1973).

When Mvubelo attended the annual conference of the AFL-CIO in Florida the same year together with the Tucsa secretary Arthur Grobbelaar, Ray Alexander described her as the 'star collaborator' for having secured deletion from a resolution of a clause declaring full support for Sactu. (Mvubelo also urged US capital to continue investing in South Africa.) The ICFTU, its affiliates and associates in South Africa, wrote Alexander:

adopt 'economist trade unionism', a reformist approach, insist on gradual, 'responsible' change, and are determined to act constitutionally. They attempt to conceal from the oppressed workers the inseparable relationship they have with the national liberation movement in South Africa. They want to alienate the exploited, oppressed South Africans from the socialist world led by the Soviet Union. (*African Communist*, Jan-Mar 1975)

By the time of the Gaborone conference in October 1978, SACP concern at the turn of the AFL-CIO towards the new unionism in South Africa had sharply intensified. In the first half of 1978, the *African Communist* had articles critical of the AALC in two consecutive issues. In 1981 the journal had another article on the same theme, headed 'Fight US Subversion of Trade Union Movement in Africa!' naming 21 leaders of the black unions in South Africa who had already attended AALC study courses in the US. The article was starkly adversarial, in accord with the global confrontation between the Brezhnev regime and the US over Afghanistan, nuclear weapons, central America and the conflicts in Angola, Mozambique and Ethiopia. The tone reflected the relatively weak position of the SACP in the increasingly powerful unions. In the view of the author, writing under the name R S Nyameko:

The United States conspiracy against the labour movement in Africa and particularly in South Africa has been inspired by three US organizations – the anti-Communist trade union federation AFL-CIO, the African-American Labour Centre established by the AFL-CIO, and the CIA...Every African patriot, every dedicated freedom fighter should become aware of the plotting by the AFL-CIO = AALC [*sic*] to disrupt, corrupt and ensnare African trade union leaders. The AALC, this CIA agency, has established itself all over Africa. At present there are only

three African countries in which they are not operating—Angola, Ethiopia and Mozambique.

The article continued:

The AFL-CIO have not organized the American workers, have not solved the problems of unemployment, poverty and slums in America, but they come to Africa to corrupt leaders and disrupt our unions. Their main interests are to preserve the investment profits for American companies...Their work in Zaire particularly has been advertised as a success story. Indeed it is a success for the multinational companies and imperialism in the citadel of reaction on the African continent. Zaire is notorious as the CIA's most important base in Africa.

It concluded with an appeal to 'our American friends' to help 'clear the international blacklegs out of our ranks and build real international working class solidarity' (*African Communist*, Oct–Dec 1981).

Sactu Revivified

Six years later, following the merger of most of the South African unions into Cosatu in 1985 and its adoption of the Freedom Charter the following year, Nyameko was jubilant. The tone of panic so striking in the article of 1981 had given way to confidence about the restored place of the ANC and the SACP in the trade unions. Cosatu, declared the writer, in an article headed 'Great Advances on the Trade Union Front,' was now 'centre stage in the liberation struggle' (*African Communist*, Oct–Dec 1987).

Under the impact of the rise of the black unions, Tucsa dissolved itself in December 1986. The ANC and the SACP, working through a very small number of key officials in Cosatu's central bureaucracy, had secured a position of overwhelming strength in the leadership of the country's biggest federation. From these heights, the writer condemned the black conscious grouping CUSA—which had since merged into Nactu, refusing to take part in the formation of Cosatu—as a 'divisive force' (ibid). The relative strengths of the Stalinist and black consciousness currents in the unions were now reversed, following Sactu's humiliation in the 1970s. It remains an open question how far CUSA's refusal to merge in Cosatu was approved, assisted or promoted by the AALC. If so, it marked a serious failure of strategy on the part of the AALC, since in the following years CUSA and its successor Nactu dwindled to a negligible force while the SACP and Sactu won back the position of political hegemony they had lost—in a much smaller trade union movement—during the repression of the 1960s.

Instead of the previous open attack on the AFL-CIO, and by implication on trade unionists associated with CUSA, far more attention was given by the *African Communist* in 1987 to the United Workers Union of South Africa (Uwusa), the trade union arm of the Zulu nationalist organization, Inkatha, founded at an Inkatha rally in Durban on 1 May 1986. Uwusa was described

as having been formed as a 'deliberate and calculated response by sections of the state (Buthelezi and Inkatha) and capital – both international and local'.

The relation between the AFL-CIO and South African political and trade union currents is again complex here. In 1982 a top-level AFL-CIO delegation visited South Africa, including Brown and O'Farrell. In the same year, the AFL-CIO made its second-ever presentation of its George Meany Human Rights Award to 'two champions of black rights in South Africa' (*AALC Reporter*, Vol.17, No.6, Nov-Dec, 1982). The award was made posthumously to the Transvaal regional organizer of the African Food and Canning Workers Union, Dr Neil Aggett, found hanged in his cell in police headquarters in Johannesburg in February 1982 after having been tortured, and to Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi, chief minister of KwaZulu and head of Inkatha.

The award to Buthelezi is interesting, since he was described by the AALC as having 'led relentless opposition to the practice of apartheid' (*ibid*). Presenting the award in Washington, Kirkland praised Buthelezi for having been the 'single most potent force in resisting the onward rush of apartheid.' This was because of Buthelezi's refusal as chief minister of KwaZulu, which he ruled by virtue of the place of the Buthelezi clan in traditional Zulu culture, to request 'independence' for his mini-statelet. Inkatha was described in the AALC journal as the 'largest black liberation movement in South Africa, which includes many black trade unionists' and as a 'potentially powerful national political base.'

The AFL-CIO orientation first to Tucsas in the 1960s and early 1970s, then to CUSA in the late 1970s and early 1980s, followed by the shift in focus towards Inkatha needs examination. In a statement on the death of Aggett, the AFL-CIO executive council developed its conception of a political relation between events in Poland and in South Africa. 'As Solidarity provided the institutional vehicle for reform in Poland', it stated, 'the development of strong unions is the best hope for reform in South Africa'. (*AALC Reporter*, Vol.17, No 2, Mar-Apr 1982) The first recipient of the award, made in 1981, had been Solidarnosc in Poland. At this point it seems to have envisaged Buthelezi as a future Lech Walesa of South Africa.

By 1986 the AALC had modified this prognosis. The second largest of the trade union groupings of the previous period, Fosatu, some of whose leaders had attended AALC courses in Washington, had taken the lead in the formation of Cosatu, joined by the largest of the South African unions, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), which broke away from CUSA and some 'independent' unions close to the ANC politically. Cosatu emerged as by far the strongest grouping of black trade unionists. The black consciousness orientation of CUSA became marginal, as did the former 'workerist' or syndicalist politics – independent of the ANC and even hostile to the SACP – which had previously been dominant in Fosatu. Whatever trade union base Buthelezi could develop around Inkatha, it would clearly be no match for the hundreds of thousands of workers grouped in Cosatu under the political direction of the SACP and the ANC.

Once again, as in its previous support for Tucsa, the AFL-CIO had made a strategic error in political prognosis. When Simon Conco—the leader of Inkatha's trade union wing, Uwusa, and a KwaZulu entrepreneur—visited the AALC in Washington DC in April 1986 to plead for financial assistance, he was told by Brown and O'Farrell that individual affiliates should apply, rather than Uwusa itself. The AALC was already manoeuvring towards a future accommodation with Cosatu, which by this time had a membership of nearly half a million by comparison with only about 10,000 in Uwusa.

The Orientation of the AALC

On 6–17 September 1982, a delegation consisting of Brown, O'Farrell, Sol ('Chick') Chaikin, president of the ILGWU, and Frederick D O'Neal, secretary treasurer of the AALC and president of the Associated Actors and Artistes of America visited South Africa. The report is important for the way in which these forthright supporters of the capitalist system, with great experience in labour politics, viewed the rise of the new unions. Given Brown's role in Europe in the 1940s, the document carries weight for its understanding of South African conditions. The following is an extract.

1. The process of economic integration is the basis for most of the reforms in South African industrial relations. The demands of the economy can only be met by the recruitment of black workers since the supply of new white workers is shrinking. This has led not only to cosmetic but real changes and to the *de facto* elimination of job reservation for whites and the beginning of full integration of blacks into the economy.

2. This has led to an increase in union organizing and militancy among black workers which in turn led to the reform of labour legislation. This then has facilitated the recent upsurge of organization of black workers into multi-racial, non-racial or entirely black unions. Employers are being compelled, in various degrees, to deal and negotiate with trade unions. This process is under way in many different forms, with registered or non-registered unions, inside or outside the industrial council system, and through straight employer-employee negotiation starting on the shop level... No matter what form agreement takes, it is within the overall system of the presently state-controlled society in South Africa.

3. [T]he most important aspect of the recent developments is the rise of the black workers as a militant, organized force... The present focus of organization must be on the black workers because they are not only a majority but are the potential for continuing change in the political and social spheres, whether this change is totally peaceful or not.

4. Whether this process is reversible or irreversible can be and is debated... The fact is that the process and its potential exist at the moment. Therefore, one must proceed on the basis that this is an irreversible process or, [that is]... as if there is time to move towards real and permanent change in South Africa. This includes change in the social and political status of the black worker as well as work-related changes traditionally associated with trade union activity. This does not exclude the possibility that the final showdown may be bloody and revolutionary,

for it cannot be forgotten that no dictatorial power such as the present white South African regime will abdicate its power without resorting to every possible device to maintain it.

5. This is where we stand at present... Although many reforms have been undertaken and black workers and their unions have grown in importance, there are still the forces of the state, mainly its security system, which impede, harass, discourage and water down the process of change at every opportunity...

6. In spite of this... there is a booming trade union movement, even though it is divided and fragmented with no single, all-embracing national centre. There are currently over 200 unions with approximately 350,000 members. This reflects essentially the growth of union organization among the black workers... In effect, the trade unions... are going through the birth pangs of a labour movement which in South Africa signifies a virtual revolution in the economy. This must eventually result in political and social changes in the country. This economic change provides the material basis of hope for the eventual disappearance of Apartheid or, at least, the beginnings of a real change which goes beyond Prime Minister Botha's proposals for limited 'power-sharing' involving only the coloureds and Asians (*South Africa Labour News*, Jan-Feb 1983).

This was written before the township revolt, which began in the most heavily industrialized region of South Africa – the PWV (Pretoria–Witwatersrand–Vereeniging) area – a year after the visit of the Brown–O'Farrell delegation. Comments published at the end of 1982 by two trade unionists who had attended AALC courses at Cornell University confirm the primary role of the trade unions in this period, as seen by the AAL, which:

didn't want to have anything to do with the current political organizations, specifically the ANC. The PAC they regarded as more or less dead. A labour movement is what they think should bring about liberation independently of any other organization (Baskin, p 64).

A primary aim of the AALC over this period was to oppose the influence of the ANC and the SACP, seen as advancing the world interests of the Soviet Union. This aim fell away, both because the AALC was compelled to come to terms with the rise of the ANC and the SACP in the course of the 1984–86 township revolt and because of the abdication of the Soviet Union as a global power in the years that immediately followed.

One of the chief results of the 1984–86 revolt was to subordinate the trade unions to the political hegemony of the ANC and the SACP, arising from a social base not principally within the workplace but in the townships. Here the very long drawn-out schools boycott played a major role, releasing tens of thousands of teenagers permanently onto the streets while the workers worked. This force of declassed youth, mobilized most effectively by supporters of the ANC through local bodies affiliated to the United Democratic Front, overwhelmed and ousted the syndicalism of the previous period within the unions and harnessed them to the politics of the ANC. This was reflected

partially in the AALC report. The complex interrelations in this dynamic of political shifts require careful study on their own account.

Mandela on the unions

A guide to the thinking of the ANC in relation to the rise of the black workers in their trade unions—this ‘virtual revolution in the economy’, according to the AFL-CIO—can be gained from Mandela’s reply to a US union leader who asked him at the Washington meeting: ‘How else can we help you to achieve your just end in your struggle?’ Mandela replied:

That is an important question because what we seek from the international community, and in particular from the labour movement, is help in skills and expertise. The labour movement in the US is one of the strongest in the world.⁸ It has immense experience in the organization of trade unions, the methods of negotiation with employers on behalf of the workers, and the training of the workers themselves to be able to articulate their views on the factory floor and generally as an organization in the country.

You can help tremendously by making this experience, this expertise available to our own trade union movement. Cosatu has done exceptionally well. In fact, it has received praise from very unexpected quarters. They have received praise from an organization, from an individual, like Professor Wiehahn of the University of South Africa. He is a man who in the late 1970s was appointed by the government to investigate the possibility of the formation of black trade unions. It was mainly his recommendation that prompted the government to recognize the black trade unions. He was asked for his opinion sometime last year as to what he thought about the responsibility of black trade unions and what was referred to as the numerous and irresponsible strikes that have taken place since the black trade unions were established. He gave an answer that stunned white South Africa. He said that taking into account the problems facing black trade unions and their lack of experience, they had behaved responsibly throughout these years. He was also asked about the fact that black trade unions make no distinction between economic issues affecting workers and politics. He defended that position and said it is because black trade unions can never get their rights in full until the political question is settled.

The other quarter that was surprising in its positive attitude towards Cosatu and the workers was Dr P J van der Merwe, director general of the Department of Manpower. He also complimented the black trade unions for the way in which they have conducted themselves. That shows clearly how positive Cosatu has been. We feel that if Cosatu can get the assistance of the American trade unions or assistance in the fields I have ...identified, it would make an even greater impact than it is making now.

Mandela was followed by Dlamini, who said:

We would even go further and say that the AFL-CIO as a federation should try to encourage its affiliates to have a bilateral relation with their sister unions in South Africa, so that they are able to share ideas and put forward their request on whatever they would want to do in South Africa (*AALC Reporter*, Vol 25, No 3, 1990).

These assurances from Brothers Mandela and Dlamini, as they were fraternally described by Kirkland, show how 'positive' and 'responsible' is the present leadership in the South African trade unions. Mandela and Dlamini were even more conciliatory and respectful than the AALC delegation in South Africa in 1982. Especially Dlamini, given his position in the SACP. This was an acknowledgement of the subordination of the unions to the ANC and of the ANC to the system of capital. Dlamini entered the premises of the AFL-CIO as a mini-Gorbachev, in the wake of the Reagan-Gorbachev 'summit', with due deference to his hosts. For him and his party, all the previous fiery talk about the relation of the AFL-CIO to big capital and the CIA is a thing of the past, a memento of errant youth. This triumphal tour marked a political capitulation. For the assembled leaders of the AFL-CIO, despite the tones of veneration towards their most honoured guest, the reception bore the character of a political coup. Mandela came, he saw and was conquered.

After 45 years, the Stalinist side in the cold war politics of the 1950s has imploded. During this period, the working class was in the last resort manipulated against its own interests from two opposing centres, each with its own secret intelligence apparatus controlling the trade unions. Each essentially spoke the truth about the venal character of its antagonist, so as the more effectively to screen its own venality. The strongest political weapon on the side of Irving Brown and the AALC, aside from money and resources, was the lack of freedom in all operations associated with its Stalinist antagonist, which the representatives of the United States continuously (and correctly) pointed out. The ground has now disappeared from under the feet of this despotic straw man, though it retains reserved positions of strength in South Africa, especially in the unions.

Already towards the end of the 1984-86 revolt, the US government had a very major programme in place on South Africa. Apart from its \$1 million training programme for the unions, administered by the AALC, it operated a \$1 million human rights fund administered by the US embassy going to political, legal and relief causes, an annual \$8 million scholarship programme at university level, a \$2 million programme directed to high school students and a \$3 million programme directed to small black businesses, all with the specific aim of 'helping to develop black leadership', as stated in 1986 by US under secretary for political affairs, State Department, Michael H Armacost.

With the collapse of the cold war, the leaders of the unions in South Africa now have no political bearings other than towards a form of society unashamedly representing the rule of profit. The immediate future of southern Africa is an American future. The Stalinist apparatus in the SACP, the ANC, Umkhonto we Sizwe and Sactu (now dissolved into Cosatu, so as to control it more directly) is compelled to adapt to the uncontested political hegemony of the United States in the region, which was in any case the condition for

independence in Namibia and negotiations in South Africa. After the decades of intense politicization of every aspect of social and personal life, the aspirant black middle class will attend seriously to its own affairs in the hunt for qualifications, jobs and contacts. The Soviet Union has disappeared from view, like a dead sun. Mandela gives solid assurances to capital, while Dlamini is brought along to guarantee that the workers will be kept in line.

Disoriented, lacking their familiar compass points, workers will be compelled to discover a new politics if they are to defend their interests in the post-cold war world. It is a great advantage that South African workers enter this new period, in which all traditional reference points are down, on the same footing as the rest of the class internationally. As South Africa loses its 'exceptional' status in world capitalism, the possibility emerges of an end to the exceptionally rigid, insular, uncritical thinking of the past decades. A new period requires new thinking, a readiness to question the orthodoxies: new ideas to clear out the old. Mandela's reception at the AFL-CIO marks the end of an epoch of generalised bad faith in the unions, a reign of systematized dishonesty characterized by a false dichotomy. Its ending suggests the possibility, but not the promise, of a more honest future.

NOTES

1. Thanks to the contributor who referred me to the literature.
2. Irving Brown, 'Free Trade Union Campaign Against Apartheid'.
3. Agee, p 75.
4. Luckhardt and Wall, p 394.
5. Interview in the Financial Mail, Johannesburg, 26 February 1982.
6. Not least of the ironies in Dlamini's visit to Washington were secondary similarities between present conditions in South Africa and Europe in the mid-1940s. The SACP's record against the apartheid regime, its absorption to the unions through the bureaucratic apparatus in Cosatu but above all its role in the 'armed struggle'—no matter how largely rhetorical—would tend to give it a place in a future government including the ANC in South Africa, similar to that of the Stalinist parties in post-war Europe. A similar response by the US could also have been expected, had not the other leading player in the cold war system collapsed as a world power. The SACP, through no fault of its own, has ceased to be a representative of the Soviet state.
7. Meany played a leading role in securing AFL-CIO support for the US war in Vietnam and its invasion of the Dominican republic: an index of his concern for human rights.
8. Mandela was either misinformed or was excessively diplomatic. No more than 18 percent of the work force in the US is unionized (McKay, p 128).

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Letter to the Editors

THE ANC CONFERENCE: FROM KABWE TO JOHANNESBURG

The Kabwe conference of the ANC in 1985 pleased only the security department of the ANC together with its corrupt leaders. The conference had no grain of democracy.

Throughout the proceedings, chaired by various leaders of the SACP such as Dan Tloome, John Nkadimeng and Jack Simons, the most crucial problems facing the ANC were evaded and some not even mentioned. The division in Umkhonto we Sizwe that was so apparent at the time was not even discussed. The report of the carnivorous security department was not read to the conference. The report of the Stuart Commission [which had investigated the 1984 mutiny in Umkhonto; see Bandile Ketelo et al, 'A Miscarriage of Democracy' *Searchlight South Africa*, No 5, pp 48-9—eds] was also not tabled. Chris Hani [then the army commissar] arrogantly said the Stuart Commission was appointed by the National Executive Committee not the conference, implying that the NEC was above the conference, in violation of one of the basic principles of the ANC. In the ANC the conference is above all.

It is important to note that the behaviour of Chris Hani was condoned by the President O.R. Tambo and Joe Slovo [now general secretary of the SACP], who said nothing to reprimand this despot, their subordinate, who was so rude and uncontrollable in the ANC. When a few elected delegates tried to raise these questions they were shouted down by Hani, who categorically stated that the NEC would guide the conference, thus violating the rights of delegates. That is the behaviour of a Politburo member of the Communist Party, typical of Stalinist behaviour rooted in the ANC. It is unfortunate that the ANC has been under such men, lawyers who courageously fought against Apartheid brutality but on the contrary practised this brutality against their political opponents. Fear and intimidation reigned in the conference.

The ANC Security (*Mbokodo*) was and is still above the law. It has killed, tortured and maimed innocent cadres for smoking dagga [marijuana] and drinking liquor from Angolan villages, claiming that they were doing the work of the enemy. It is important to remember that the Apartheid regime never killed anyone for smoking dagga, but the ANC did, all under the cover of securing the Revolution. In doing this it had the protection of tried and tested O.R. Tambo. No security officer was ever put on trial or questioned for killing. People were killed under the umbrella of securing the ANC. To question or ask for clarification on the behaviour of security could lead one to Quatro [officially, Camp 32]. Talking about the need for holding a conference was only in whispers.

When the conference took place, there were more appointed officials than elected delegates. The funny thing was that the appointees and the delegates had the same rights in the conference: very unconstitutional. Normally officials are not supposed to have the right to vote. They can be elected but they are not supposed to vote because they have no mandate from the people, as they have no constituencies. At Kabwe these officials included not only chief

representatives but members of the security department who attended the conference as journalists or catering staff. They voted without any mandate.

Former prisoners in Quatro hope that the ANC consultative conference in Johannesburg in December and the subsequent national conference in June 1991 will be held democratically, without the intimidations that characterized Kabwe. The security department must be discussed and the war criminals must account for their murders in Quatro. Conference must at least discuss the democratization of the ANC. Secondly, there must be an overhauling of the security department. The butchers cannot serve our people. All war criminals must be removed from office.

Elections of delegates must no longer be determined by the security department or the President like in Kabwe, where he wrote a list for people to elect from. People must elect the leaders of their choice, not according to the taste of the leader. Also, chief representatives and all other appointees must not have the same rights as elected delegates. They can be elected but should not vote, because they have no mandate from the people. Like catering staff and security personnel they should not vote, for they will not be at the conference as delegates but as civil servants. To use them in voting is undemocratic.

Today's ANC is far from being a democratic organization as it was during the time of Chief Luthuli. In exile the ANC entrenched Xhosas at the expense of other nationalities. This led to a clash between Zulus and Xhosas in the sixties at the ANC camp at Kongwa, in Tanzania. Even today no-one can doubt tribalism in the ANC. The first top six men in the ANC are Xhosas. The NEC contains more Xhosas than any other nationality in South Africa. When the late John Pule Motsabi wanted to rectify this at Kabwe, he was ostracized and removed from the NEC despite the fact that he had been on the Transvaal executive committee of the ANC in the fifties, together with Nelson Mandela. Conference must allow open discussion of this problem and publish the statements made by Motsabi.

Next, there should be an honest account of corruption in the ANC. Corruption flared at the Lusaka headquarters for many years, including misuse of young women by old men with high titles. Young women made their bodies available to secure good scholarships and tickets to fly abroad in a much easier way. This misuse of power by many NEC members, with few exceptions, has been one of the thorns in the ranks. Many young couples had to divorce due to clashes with so-called leaders, who suddenly became sugar daddies and playboys misusing their offices. This low morality by the leadership of both the ANC and the SACP leaves much to be desired.

Finally, the participants in the mutiny still suffer all kinds of disabilities for their stand against autocracy in the ANC. None were tried and convicted before being sent to Quatro. The conference must mandate a full and independent investigation of the mutiny, of the events that led to it and what happened afterwards. All barriers must be lifted which prevent the victims of the ANC security from playing a full and active part in the life of the ANC.

Editors' note: The Third National Consultative Conference of the ANC was due to be held in exile in June 1990. Following the unbanning of the ANC it was postponed to 16 December in Johannesburg. It was postponed again in October by the National Executive Committee to June 1991 because it would exclude tens of thousands of exiles, 'including virtually the entire Umkhonto we Sizwe membership' and hundreds of political prisoners. (*Weekly Mail*, 1 Nov, 1990) The NEC stated that if conference was held in December, exiles would not have 'real opportunity to take part in the vital process of debate and policy formulation which is the lifeblood of the branches of the ANC'.

A conference with reduced powers would take place in December, participants to be invited by the organizing committee. Election of a new NEC will take place at the conference in June 1991. The *Weekly Mail* reported that:

over the past year ANC members in exile had been 'increasingly open with the press about their criticism of members of their national executive..Key NEC leaders were accused of a host of sins including incompetence, bureaucratic and undemocratic behaviour and even womanising...?'

Several senior ANC members told the *Weekly Mail* that had the conference gone ahead in June 1990, up to half of the present NEC would have been voted out of office or would have declined to stand.

The letter published above points to fundamental unfinished business from the National Consultative Conference of the ANC, at Kabwe in June 1985.

There was no indication in the ANC's 64-page *Documents of the Second National Consultative Conference*, that a majority of its trained troops in Angola had mutinied in 1984, or that their leading demand was for a democratic conference, or that this had been widely called for in MK since 1980. Those who had most ardently called for a conference of the ANC were either dead or in Quatro; their jailers and executioners packed the conference.

The ANC in exile was not renowned for democracy. In April–May 1969, after serious dissatisfaction expressed among the members of Umkhonto, there was a national conference at Morogoro, Tanzania. Conferences were held in 1971 and 1975 but had no power of altering the executive. By June 1985 the ANC had held no effective national conference for 16 years.

The SACP admitted shortly after the Morogoro conference that it had been 'urgently timely and necessary' because a 'dangerous chasm was opening up between the leadership and the rank-and-file...' (*African Communist*, No 38, third quarter 1969, p 18). No such public admission appeared before, during or after the Kabwe conference about the far more serious revolt against the ANC leadership in 1984. Instead of bringing the ANC security apparatus *Mbokodo* to account, as the mutineers had demanded, it emerged stronger than ever. The democratic facade presented by the ANC leadership to its members and the world at the conference was grossly misleading.

Of the thirty NEC members elected at Kabwe, at least eight were directly responsible for repression or personal interrogation of the mutineers. These included Chris Hani (now MK chief of staff), Joe Modise (commander of

MK), Mzwai Piliso (ANC chief of security in 1984), Joe Nhlanhla (appointed head of the security department in 1987), Moses Mabhida (then general secretary of the SACP, one of the very few on the NEC with unrestricted access to Quatro) and Sizakhele Sigxashe (now chief intelligence analyst of MK, politburo member of the SACP and head of the tribunal which condemned seven mutineers to death). Also elected to the NEC were four of the five-man commission appointed by the leadership to investigate the mutiny. Apart from Sigxashe, these were James Stuart (convenor of the commission) and two members of the SACP: Anthony Mongalo (later administrative secretary of Tambo's presidential staff) and Aziz Pahad.

The SACP emerged from the conference, which it had largely controlled through the chair and through the packing of non-elected delegates, further strengthened within the NEC, in Umkhonto and in the security apparatus. It was a 'congress of victors' over the democracy movement in the ANC. Under the circumstances, democratic debate over any substantive issue was impossible. There is no reference in the published documents to the argument by John Pule Motsabi (mentioned in the letter) that tribalism was a serious problem in the organisation.

Only a single oblique reference was permitted to appear in ANC and SACP publications. In the month of the Kabwe conference, an article in *Sechaba* stated that 'A leading Congressman has circulated a memorandum on tribalism in the ANC...'. (June 1985, p 9) No more. Not a word to indicate the nature of the argument, nor what information was presented in the memorandum to support the claim. The 'leading Congressman' was kept anonymous. His memorandum was not published. The author of the article in *Sechaba*, titled 'Our Freedom Charter', was the leading SACP member, Professor Jack Simons, who helped chair the Kabwe conference. He did not attempt to refute the (unexplained) argument by his (unmentioned) opponent.

Motsabi lost his position on both the NEC and the central committee of the SACP, and died shortly afterwards. He became a non-person in the ANC and SACP press, just as his argument became a non-argument. It was reported after the conference that another leading member of the SACP had also spoken up on the question of tribalism in the ANC, and that this had also been hushed up. Rank and file ANC members were left to read between the lines of *Sechaba* in the same way as the population of the USSR learnt to decipher runic comments in the official press. Rumour and whispers took the place of free, open dissemination of ideas.

Motsabi's career is open to criticism, but he was a trade union leader on the Rand in the 1940s, was an executive member of the Council of Non-European Trade Unions and secretary of the Transvaal ANC in the 1950s. He was banned in 1953 but assisted in launching Sactu. He opposed the Trades and Labour Council plan to organize black workers in 'parallel' unions and called in 1954 for black trade unionists to join 'with the democratic progressive white trade unions to form a militant workers' federation, free from the opportunism which has hitherto crippled the struggle'. (Luckhardt and Wall, *Organize or Starve!* p 88) Forty years after becoming active in the workers' movement, he was silenced — by the ANC.

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